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Growing Up Biracial in a Southern Elementary School

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GROWING UP BIRACIAL IN A SOUTHERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

JULIE KIGHT

(Under the Direction of Cordelia Zinskie)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored the relationship between racial identity of biracial children (defined as fifty percent Black and fifty percent White) and their academic experiences in a southern elementary school setting. This dissertation ventured further to explore the curriculum in a southern elementary school setting and whether it meets the academic needs of the biracial child and includes the biracial child.

This dissertation reflected on artifacts collected and analyzed narratives from the participants involved. These participants included six biracial female students in grades three through five. The current research employed Critical Race Theory as its theoretical framework. Critical Race Theory is an analytical framework which focuses on inequalities related to race, class, and gender. It was firmly based in the field of Curriculum Studies. The researcher provided a history of the south, multiculturalism, and whiteness in the United States. The researcher also included past and current curriculum researchers and the results of their studies as compared to the present research.

Included in this dissertation are reviews of the current research including qualitative data through student drawings and interviews of students as well as parents, teachers, and administrators. It also included quantitative data through the analysis of CRCT scores and administrative records.

The conclusions of the current research were 1) there is a relationship between racial identity and academic experiences and 2) the biracial child was not included in the textbook, however, the biracial child's academic needs were met for purposes of standardized test scores. One hundred percent of the biracial students felt they had a positive educational experience in this southern elementary school. However, the researcher found this not to be accurate after further review of all the data. The parents felt their biracial children were welcomed at this school and while suffering some racial prejudices such as "picking", they felt it was no more than the average elementary child. The teachers acknowledged the lack of information for the biracial child in their textbooks and searched to find information for the biracial child through videos, classroom libraries, and media centers. The researcher notes that while these teachers did attempt to fill the gaps left in the curriculum, it was at a minimal level and much more needs to be done. The teachers in this school system do maintain they incorporate race in the units they are teaching as well as how race relates to all individuals involved in the past and the present. They search out the previous avenues for all children. However, in the case of the biracial child and all children, this must be done on a daily basis and not just when a chapter calls for the discussion.

INDEX WORDS: Biracial, South, Elementary school, Whiteness, Multiculturalism, Curriculum

GROWING UP BIRACIAL IN A SOUTHERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, James Kight, and my son, Chase Kight, whom have loved, supported, and encouraged me throughout this entire endeavor.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. T.G. and Linda Gillis, for teaching me to believe in myself and always encouraging me to reach higher.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Americans' reactions to biracial children often lead to many complicated avenues such as racism, bias, and prejudices. When you are researching the biracial child (defined as fifty percent black and fifty percent white) living in the South, those avenues become even more divided. Adding to these avenues is the fact that the researcher is a white female born and raised in the South. Although there is a much larger population of multicultural children in the United States school systems, I decided to study the biracial child in a southern elementary school system instead of the multiracial child because I felt the biracial child would be more silenced in the South due to the explosive history between the White and Black populations. Root (2001) emphasized the expression, "we all bleed the same color" (p. 116) and while this is true, it has not always been believed that this makes both races equal. The Blacks in the South were once regarded as no more than a domestic animal (Cash, 1969). It is noted that out of the inventions at this time such as the cotton gin came a greedier and more materialistic White man, therefore, securely fixing slavery as an integral component of the southern identity (Cobb, 2005). Tensions that rise this high and dehumanization that cuts this deep are justifiably difficult to overcome.

There has been a significant increase in biracial children over the past years in school systems. These children are faced with students not wanting to play with them because they are "Black" or dealing with prejudices due to a specific, unacceptable skin tone. Francis Wardle (2004) said biracial children, at the elementary age, are primitive thinkers that can only handle one piece of information at a time. He also explained that

when biracial children are born they already have to deal with the world in twos; they will need support from their family, community, and schools to be successful in developing a healthy identity, self-awareness, and self-esteem.

I have seen in the past couple of years a steady trend of biracial children in my classroom that seemed to be more defined by who they were and what they wanted in life. Therefore, I felt that a study based on the biracial child in a southern elementary school and grounded in curriculum studies would be beneficial for these students. This would allow the research to initiate change by exploring the presence of biracial children in the curriculum and addressing the racism and emotional concerns of the children in the classroom. The focus of this study is on the relationship between racial identity and academic experiences as well as whether one southern elementary school system's curriculum met the academic needs and included the biracial child.

Biracial Studies

Many studies have been conducted over the years on multicultural and biracial students, youths, and young adults. Maria Root's (2001, 2003) work on multiracial and biracial people laid the groundwork for changes in the United States Census 2000. Root has studied multiracial and biracial people for over 20 years. The U.S. Census referred to her work in their deliberations that resulted in an historic "check more than one" format to the race question for the 2000 Census. The 2000 Census found there were 41.9% of multiracial children under the age of 18 with 19.7% of those being biracial as defined by white and black.

Another leading researcher in biracial studies is Frances Wardle. Wardle (1992, 1999, 2000, & 2004) has studied multiracial and interracial families and children for over

15 years and much of his research has taken place in school settings. He is the creator of the Center for the Study of Biracial Children in Colorado. Wardle has participated in seminars throughout the United States and Canada and has become one of the foremost authorities on multiracial and biracial issues. School curriculums, administrators, teachers, counselors, and school psychologists have been analyzed in many of his studies. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine have also worked together in many similar studies based on class, race, gender, and social justice in United States schools today (Fine & Weis, 2005). While there are some determined scholars working for this cause, many of the studies performed and cited in the current research are more than ten years old. Therefore, more research is needed on biracial children in educational settings. Research conducted in a southern elementary school setting appears non-existent concerning the relationship between racial identity and academic experiences.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The current research represents an effort to explore the biracial child from many different aspects. The researcher explored biracial students in a southern elementary school to determine if there was a relationship between racial identity and academic experiences. The researcher also explored the curriculum in this school system to determine if the biracial child was included in the standard curriculum and, if not, were the gaps in curriculum filled by the educators of this system. This study not only focused on the biracial child but it went a step further to show how the attitude and behavior of parents and teachers were associated with the educational experiences of the biracial child. The author also explored the lack of representation of the biracial child in many school curriculums and discussed ways through curriculum theory that these educational

experiences could be reconceptualized through action research like the current study and become a topic of conversation among educators. Curriculum theory is said to be the knowing of one's self in the environment that surrounds us (Pinar, 2004). This study explored whether the biracial child has a better understanding of himself/herself and whether the biracial child is included in today's curriculum.

As an educator, I explored the racial experiences of the biracial (White and Black) children in my school. I wanted to educate myself regarding these experiences as well as how the biracial children viewed them. I intended to learn more about their attitudes toward their racial identity and how their family played a part in their attitude as well as their teachers and administrators. These findings will enable me to educate others of these experiences and allow them to better educate the biracial children in schools. By conducting this research, I felt I could give educators needed information to help the biracial children in their classroom have a more meaningful and fulfilling educational experience.

The foundation of this study is derived from a focus on the South, Whiteness, and Multiculturalism. The author discussed the South and the tensions throughout history of the relationship between Blacks and Whites, whether that relationship was of a friendly nature and/or romantically inclined. The author could not explore the South without concentrating on the term Whiteness. Whiteness is what the South was based on in past history. It was only through Whiteness that a person could truly survive. However, there were those individuals that birthed Multiculturalism through their rebellion over the races in general. Multiculturalism was birthed just as the children were birthed of the

romantically involved individuals from different races. Thus, was the beginning of the diverse populations in the United States today.

The author explored the biracial child using the theoretical framework of the Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT holds that the racial background influences people's perspectives of all experiences in any context (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Race is much more than skin color; it is a complex construct of all the aspects of a culture. The study of CRT transforms the relationships among race, racism, and power with economics, history, and self-interest. Many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists, and they use CRT to understand controversies over curriculum and history and school hierarchy. Gillborn (2006) reported that CRT is an analytical framework that takes very seriously the crossroads between race, class, and gender inequities, and it addresses social justice, racial oppression, and identity confusion. He further noted that "Critical Race Theory demands that race and racism never be relegated to the sidelines" (p. 175). If silent suffering and social misery associated with racism are present in a school system, CRT can be used to guide curriculum change in these schools.

Using the lens of Critical Race Theory, the author used Critical Inquiry as the primary research method. Critical Inquiry is embedded in Curriculum Inquiry and has historically focused on educational systems. It is dialectical and based upon social justice defined as fairness to all. "Competent communication" is the core of Critical Inquiry and is based on mutual trust in ideas, facts, values and interests that people share (Gillborn, 2006). Through Critical Inquiry, the author gained insight into the daily lives of six biracial students through exploration of their daily experiences in their school day.

Research Questions

Here are the major research questions that guided the study:

1. Is there a relationship between racial identity and academic experiences?
2. Does the curriculum in this southern elementary school meet the academic needs and include the biracial child?

In exploring this topic the author used additional sub-questions. The student sub-questions were as follows:

- Does this southern elementary school meet the needs, emotionally and academically, of a biracial child?
- Are biracial children in this southern elementary school treated equally compared to the majority population?
- Have these students been treated differently because they are biracial?
- Would the biracial students in this southern elementary school recommend this school to other biracial students?

The parent sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Does your biracial child prefer one race to the other?
- Has your child had a positive educational experience and are they welcomed in this southern elementary school?
- Could Blacks and Whites get along if race was left out of the picture? (i.e., if they communicated as friends, colleagues, or acquaintances rather than members of a white or black race.)
- At the present, are there equal opportunities for all races in the South?
- Is it the school's responsibility to teach the biracial child about his/her heritages?

The teacher sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Do you feel having a biracial student in your classroom means more work for you?
- Do you inquire about race at your parent/teacher conferences?
- Do you discuss specific races in your classroom such as biracial and multiracial?
- Does your current curriculum meet the needs of the biracial child in your classroom?
- Does this southern school system have the resources necessary to meet the needs of the biracial students in this school?

Investigating these research questions was important for explaining the possible oppression these biracial students may experience daily and whether the biracial students of this southern school system have a positive academic environment. It focused on the views of the parents as well as the teachers of these biracial students and what these individuals did to ensure a positive educational experience for the biracial child in this particular southern school setting.

Personal Rationale

As a White female educator, I am deeply concerned about the success of the biracial child in southern elementary schools. Having attended the same school I am researching, I am concerned with the changes I see as an educator. Being a woman of the dominant White power group, I want to be an active researcher doing what I can to make the silenced voices heard.

My mother and father raised me in a rural farming community. They both worked hard in factories all week. On Saturday my dad and I would go fishing or I would play

“teacher” in my bedroom. Sundays were for church and visiting with grandparents. I always say my life has been played out in countless country songs. I was taught to respect everyone and treat him or her as I would want to be treated. I witnessed my family’s respect for others. Even as a child, though, I noticed a difference between myself and other races even if it was just a difference in skin tone. I always knew there was a line between persons of other races and me, predominately black due to the fact that was the only other race in my community. Most of the negative conversations about race were usually triggered by the news, which now through curriculum studies I know to be biased. As I think back on it now, it was ironic that even as my parents spoke of the other race, again usually black, it was never generalized. It was always stated as something bad a black person did somewhere else. However, when it came to the blacks we had known all our lives, they were not the *other* or *them* but rather they were our friends. My parents did not say anything negative about the race specifically. They discussed the actions that had transpired. This discussion is defined by Alice McIntyre (1997) as “White talk” which insulates white people from examining their individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism. By doing this, whites accept other racist attitudes and beliefs, and by remaining quiet, continue to justify racism to future generations.

Growing up as a little girl I cannot remember having any biracial children in my classroom or in my school system. It was at that time when the line between races was drawn. This idea of Blacks and Whites in a relationship of more than a friendship was never spoken of at home or school. It was not tolerated, and this attitude seemed to be in consensus between both Black and White races. However, in elementary school this was not a problem as I remember playing with Blacks and Whites. The biggest problem I

experienced in school was who would get to the swings first. Once we entered high school, ideas began to change. I specifically remember some of my black girl friends saying they wanted a “white baby because they made the prettiest babies”. When I heard this, I could not believe they were saying it, and I surely never thought they would strive to reach this goal. However, over the next couple of years, that is exactly what many began to do. We heard rumblings in the hallways of how this white girl and that black boy got caught sneaking out of their homes to be with one another or vice versa. Many times it seemed to be troubled teens, with very prejudiced parents, who just wanted to be rebellious. The only time it actually became a problem was when a person of the opposite race tried to force another to return his/her feelings. I remember the entire school being in an uproar, building major racial tension throughout the community. I also recall being nervous about going out to a recess hearing rumors that students were going to attack another and knowing if you did not retaliate with your race, it could easily escalate into a battle of your own.

Many teenagers threw caution to the wind and did not obtain any form of birth control, thus becoming pregnant while trying to make a political statement. It was now no longer just rumblings and rumors in the hallway that could be quickly denied and dismissed but rather it was now a fact that, if nothing else, a sexual relationship had occurred. The teenagers were terrified of what this would mean for them. The families were humiliated for what it meant for their name throughout the community. I recall the only concern about this innocent life was who would be taking care of “*it*” if the parents of the teenagers happened to let “*it*” be born. Usually there was not an option of the two teenagers being able to stay together, and a marriage of the two was out of the question.

When I began teaching in the same school I attended ten years before, I found myself teaching many of the children that my friends had given birth to in high school. By this time, most of the parents had never married due to racial tensions between the two families and they were no longer together. One race or the other had claimed the child and was raising him/her as best they could. The families and the children seemed to be faced with many struggles just living from day to day.

I would hear the struggles the students faced and were confronted with their confusion in class discussions. Much discussion was generated when we discussed the chapters on slavery. Many biracial students appeared not to understand that by virtue of the “one drop rule” they would be considered Black and be raised as a slave. They wanted to know “what about the white side of me?”. Some students thought that by being half Black and half White they might be a slave but they would also be able to own slaves as well. Others were confronted with guilt while learning that being light skinned and not having “nappy” hair, they would have been a house slave and treated more humanely instead of working in the hot fields as their darker skinned family members would have been. The misunderstanding, confusion, and guilt on top of troubles at home only added to the biracial children’s struggles.

Over the years, the biracial children in my classroom seemed to have gained a better understanding of life. They appeared better able to define who they were and what they wanted out of life. The past was the past, and they were looking toward the future. The struggles they may have faced in previous years such as racism, biases, and prejudice seem to be gone. Today, these children have many more positive role models, such as Halle Berry or Tiger Woods, both of which are now having their own biracial children. I

sensed that the biracial children in my school now would be better able to define their racial identity. As a researcher I wanted to know if my hypothesis was true, thus was the beginning of my study.

I am truly committed to revealing the academic experiences of the biracial children and gaps in the standard curriculum. Through Curriculum Studies we have made some strides, but there is still much to be done. While focusing on the elementary biracial students, I hoped that through this study educators would be able to affect change in more southern elementary school systems. At the very least, my students' and their parents' and teachers' voices would be heard through this dissertation and that was a beginning.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

This chapter reviews previous curriculum inquires and discourse that have contributed to the understanding of the biracial population in many settings. These include studies of the biracial population of children, youths, young adults, and adults. These also include settings of the general population, schools, work, and personal relationships. The first section focuses on the South, Whiteness, and Multiculturalism. The second section provides research on a reconceptualized curriculum and critical race theory.

The South

By definition, the South was considered a movement. It was a movement away from the segregated blackness of our community into a poor White neighborhood.

I remember the fear, being scared to walk to Baba's, our grandmother's house, because we would have to pass that terrifying whiteness- those white faces on the porches staring us down with hate. Even when empty or vacant those porches seemed to say danger, you do not belong here, you are not safe. (bell hooks as cited in Roediger, 1998, p. 50).

The South has been written about, sung about, analyzed, idolized, and criticized more than any other region in the United States. The South's history ranges from the beginnings of the slave trade to the end of segregation laws. Many think of the South in terms of mystery, rednecks, and stupidity. Others think of history, style, and a high degree of royal code emerging deep from southern plantations. I explored the engrained history of the past, the highly debated present, and the possibility of a predictable future.

The Southern geography ranges from the coast of Georgia, to the plains of Carolina, to the mountains of Tennessee, and with the variety of landscape also comes the variety of attitudes and personalities based on the identity of skin color. The history of the South is one of the most told stories of all time. It is talked about in households today as if it happened only a week or two ago rather than beginning almost 200 years ago. It is a history plagued by the stories of slaves being beaten, raped, sold, and degraded to less of an existence than the regular farm animals. Cash (1969) stated, "The black man occupied the position of a mere domestic animal, without will or right of his own" (p. 85). The actions of those during this period of time have permanently stained the very image of a White person most especially the White man. Even though most white men today never owned slaves or never knew anyone who did, it is thought that actions so brutal could only be engrained in the make-up of the White man himself. It is also thought that the very make-up of White men created many years ago still exists in generations today. This in turn leads to other races, especially the African American, mistrusting and being skeptical of White men.

The first slave ships arrived in Georgia in 1755 by London's approval (Greene, 1991). These ships came from Jamaica, Gambia, Senegal, and the Ivory Coast. Greene said that by 1790, 70% of the population on the Georgia coast was slaves and within months of their arrival they were purchased and pushed into the fields for work.

Slaves were degraded to livestock and sold at auction. The male slaves were "graded" as such. The women were also "graded" according to ability to work, reproduce, and also perceived attractiveness. "A woman who brings a child every two years was more profitable than the best man of the farm" (Cobb, 2005, p. 19). If a slave

was thought to be attractive, she would not have to work in the hot fields. She would work in the house and meet all demands placed upon her. The children were “graded” as well. It was not uncommon for a family to be completely dispersed and to never see one another again. This was traumatizing for the children as well as parents. In many cases the masters fought to keep the families together and were successful in doing so.

However, no matter where the slaves were housed or what work was to be done, it would be done with no questions asked. If the slave rebelled in any way they could be faced with the lashes of a whip until beaten to death. This was an intimidation factor used by many masters. Unfortunately there would always be one slave used as an example for the others.

In discussing the past we have seen the brutality of some, as well as, the oppression of others. We have seen the rise of some to fight for fairness. We have also seen the deaths of many fighting for what they felt was right. In the fictional writings of Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* (1994) and Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* (1982) they tell of young black girls, thought of as ugly by their own kind, looking at the advantages of the white populations of children and dreaming to become a part of their world. The worlds of both Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* and Miss Celie in *The Color Purple* have suffered tremendous blows and degrading actions at the hands of their own families. However, through it all, they found security in their own strength gained through these marginalizations, and discovered they have much to offer. In both stories we see the skepticism of the black generations toward the Whites with due cause. We also see both girls rise above their fears to succeed in a good life of their own making (Morrison, 1994; Walker, 1982).

The Old South is talked about through horrific stories of white terror placed on the black race. Blacks during the time of slavery had no way out. In many cases those thought of for security, such as the police, served as the “master of ceremonies in the application of gasoline and torch or in adjusting the rope to the victim’s neck” (Cash, 1969, p. 309). Many of these people were just in the area where a crime had been reported and an easy prey due to the fact that “neither the state nor local officials made any honest effort to apprehend and punish the true criminals” (p. 309). Many times the true shade of the criminal was white. Cash (1969) stated if for some reason a white man was convicted of a lynching crime, the penalties ranged from fines of a hundred dollars to three months in jail, which were hardly commensurate with the offense of murder.

Then there was the Klu Klux Klan, also known as the KKK, of which no one other than the “master classes” were safe (Cash, 1969; Williamson, 1984). Tales were told of ritual moonlit rides to whip a Black or prostitute, a person found to be committing adultery, a person scanting his earnings on liquor instead of clothing his children, or a person merely straying from the church. These rides could also be to tar and feather a schoolmaster who spoke of his new ideas too much. These rides were feared by most, no matter what the cause (Cash, 1969; Williamson, 1984). The Blacks, Jews, and Catholics feared this White Supremacy for they were dressed in full regalia of white sheets and pointed hoods to protect the identity of all members.

In his latest research, James C. Cobb (2005) had a slightly different perception of the South than Cash (1969). Cobb acknowledged the southern states “embodied the backwardness and crudity the more civilized northern states rejected...actually representing a threat to national progress, integrity, and resolve” (p. 14). With the

invention of the cotton gin, the South became more greedy and materialistic than ever making “slavery securely fixed as an integral component of southern identity” (p. 19). Cobb stated that between 1740 and 1809 slaves accounted for approximately 70% of the wealth in Georgia. Planters made capital gains due to the rising value of their human property. In the early 1800’s there was said to be a “national difference of character” between the North and South.

The difference between Cobb and Cash comes in Cobb’s research where he found that by the end of the twentieth century there were common desires among both Blacks and Whites to reclaim a sense of regional identity. Both had strong religious backgrounds and many had shared common life experiences. At many historical sites across the South, the existence of slavery has been obliterated (Cobb, 2005). It would be a mistake to believe most white people of the South had slaves because they did not. However, many Americans projected racist behaviors anywhere in the nation to a Southern context.

Cash’s picture of the South was violent, intolerant, racist and cruel, but Cobb (2005) stated this picture is “increasingly out of sync with events and trends in recent decades” (p. 338). He said that Cash’s “exaggerated emphasis on racial values” was short term (p. 338). Southerners have resolved many differences or at least learned to respect them. However, we must always strive to improve for the mere sake of humanity.

Melissa Greene (1991) also wrote of these common desires when speaking with elders, the Thornton’s, about this time. They stated, “God make us both, both races, and I feel I’m just as good as the other man” (p. 26). While the Thorntons did feel they were just as good, they also felt they were black and should stay with their black race. They

stated, “We always did get along with the white race because we thought each race should stay, you know, where they are” (p. 25). They were raised not to mix and did not mix at that time. The Thorntons stated the mixing of races was referred to as “the Great White Fear” but the Blacks mostly had the same fear (p. 26).

Margaret Mead and James Baldwin both spoke with great passion in their book *Rap on Race* (1971). The book told of their personal debate concerning race issues. Their discussion on race was enlightening and at times even disturbing. As a reader, you could feel the tension that must have been in the room. Mead and Baldwin both agreed that we have a responsibility to try and make a change in our country for the betterment of all mankind. Where they disagreed was when James Baldwin stated he believed we are all guilty and have the blood on our hands for crimes against all people of the past. Margaret Mead said she felt we all have a responsibility to try and make this a better world but she does not believe that we should feel guilty for crimes we did not commit.

Much of the bitterness from Baldwin is explained when you find out that he was, at the time of this discussion, living in Paris because he felt exiled from America. He felt he was ostracized from America due to his skin color and from growing up with the racial prejudices of being a black man. He tried to tell Mead that by her existence as a researcher, she was also in exile, regardless of her white color. She refused this stance. Mead stated she was at home in America because she was working for the common good. Baldwin, in 1971, did not believe America would ever be a better place while Mead felt that if we all worked together we could make it just that. The most positive thing Baldwin stated toward the end of this book was that “If we don’t manage the present, there will be no future” (p. 243).

Baldwin's frustration can be felt through his text. The same frustration exists today among many African Americans dealing with bias and prejudice. This book has been discarded from a public library in Missouri. Maybe this was due to its date of publication, or because someone was tired of hearing the argument, or maybe because it is still relevant today and someone did not want Americans to know that we have not matured that much since 1971.

It is said that we have evolved from our past. Reading the previous information, have we? In our school systems, the past is told in every Social Studies textbook. However, it is told from the white man's perspective and usually taught from the white teacher's perspective with over 80% of our teachers being white. Educators are taught to teach the past so that the mistakes of the past will not come full circle. Educators are told we must know from where we come as to not go there again. However, when looking at the environment in which we live, we may have evolved from nothing other than the blatant brutality. Many believe there is just as much racism today if not more. It is just performed in a quieter manner.

Whiteness

Into the twentieth century, in the southern states, the populations ranged from a majority of Blacks to up to 40% (Falk, 2004). Some southern counties had over 90% black populations. Today, Jefferson County, Mississippi, is 87% Black (p. 18). This demographic information is not known by most. Even with the majority of the populations being black, those who represent these counties are white.

White in America has always signified who is entitled to privilege. In this sense,

the phrase “white privilege” is a redundancy [since] Whiteness has always signified worthiness, inclusion and acceptance. (John A. Powell as cited in Roediger, 1998, p. 100)

Like the term race, Whiteness is determined by history. The history of Whiteness began with the Europeans in America who discovered the differences in the skin tones of the people around them. The European people believed they were the American supreme and therefore had to distinguish themselves from the “Others”. These included the Irish, Jewish, and Italians, which were all considered nonwhite people. The term of Black was not used until 1680 even to refer to Africans. At this time the racialization of slavery came to be, and the terms “white and black” were used to represent racial categories. This is when the discrete white race began to take shape. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Whiteness was a term used to signify rationality, orderliness, and an elite racial group (Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998). This was viewed as a position of power and those who did not possess this trait yearned for it. Steinberg et al. said that the invention of Whiteness and the new American colony were intertwined. Those who did not have the Europeans’ definition of Whiteness were dwarfed and belittled. They were looked at as barbarians or animals and began being treated as such. All who were not considered white began to be bought and sold into slavery. Steinberg and colleagues stated the slaves were used as “workhorses” and did all the manual labor of a plantation. The term slave meant all women, men, and children who were not white. The labors the slaves endured were fieldwork in the highest of temperatures, housework under the harshest of environments, and submissions to the farthest degree (Steinberg et al., 1998).

“The existence of Whiteness is distinguished from something nonwhite to justify its being” (Babb, 1998, p. 42). The colonists of the New World perceived themselves as the chosen white people and used the differences of the Native Americans and the Africans to create their identity. Babb stated to establish the white norm, the colonists had to determine a degree of Whiteness that would be acceptable. Whiteness, like race again, was more than a physical appearance. It was constructed by blending history, culture, assumptions, and attitudes. To distinguish between those whose physical appearances were White, the terms mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon were often used (Babb, 1998). These terms represent the fractions of speciously documentable nonwhite blood in a being, which would make them be considered nonwhite no matter what their physical appearance. [A mulatto child is a child who is fifty percent white and fifty percent black. A quadroon child is a child with one quarter black blood, and an octoroon child is a child with one-eighth black blood (<http://dictionary.reference.com>, 2004).] While these children or adults may have had the physical appearance of a white person, if their documented history showed different they were considered as nonwhite as the darkest African. They were treated just as any other slave even though in many cases of the mulatto they were a direct descendant of the master.

The life of Booker T. Washington reveals an interesting case. He was born a slave and knew very little of his origin. He once said, “I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at sometime” (Hale, 1998). In actuality Booker T. Washington was born to a black slave woman and a white man. He only knew slavery as a child. When the civil war ended, he was just six or seven years old. However, Booker T. Washington had a keen sense of who he was as a slave and wrote about the means by which slaves had to

overcome to gain their necessities. He provided an example of this kind of modern accommodation.

While traveling through South Carolina, he met a black man who was very anxious to reach the railway train and had only a few minutes in which to do so. He hailed, naturally enough, the first hackman he saw, who happened to be a white man. The white man told him that it was not his custom to carry Negroes in his carriage. The coloured man, not in the least disturbed, at once replied: 'That's all right, we will fix that; you get in the carriage and I'll take the front seat and drive you.' (Hale, 1998, p. 136)

Both men reached their destinations on time. Each was satisfied and the color line was preserved. Washington's tale told to what extent the black man had to go out of his way to accommodate the white man as to avoid causing trouble or friction. He says the white man had no idea and did not realize the inferiority the Blacks felt. This information came from a man who was fifty percent White himself and a direct descendant of his master.

Women slaves also suffered unmentionable crimes at the hands of slave owners. It was not uncommon for a master to occupy the body of an attractive female slave for his own pleasures. The female slaves had no choice but to adhere to the master's rule and were forced into prostitution with no pay (Yancy, 2004). The female slaves were helpless when it came to the master's decisions. The male slaves could not help their loved ones and at times held contempt for them. This was also true of the other black female slaves who were not as fair skinned or attractive and, therefore, not chosen by the master. While the act itself was degrading for the female slave to be forced into submission for her white master's own desires, she was usually given house duties. This

would mean that she would take care of the cooking, cleaning, and any request of the master's and missus's children or the master and missus themselves. She would have a bed in the master's house, which would make her easy prey for the master's midnight strolls. Her people again would hold her in contempt. She was removed from her loved ones and made to care for the loved ones of her master. Usually these slaves were not treated as harshly as those in the fields. However, lashes of a whip or even death could punish them as well. This intimidation factor was always present. At times the house slaves would be made to watch the beating of another house slave or that of a slave who rebelled in the fields. While these circumstances were difficult and harsh, they could have always been worse in a matter of minutes based on the personal decisions of the slave or the master.

Female slaves had no outlets for their distress. They were forced to do as told. The white man and the law protected this ideal. However, these slaves might turn to "sass" which was the talking back to a superior or elder (Pinar, 2004). This term was derived from West Africa and the word's origin came from the poisonous sassy tree. The tree's bark was used as a poison in the trial of accused witches. Pinar stated in a mystic sense sass was thought to kill. The African American women used this sass to defend themselves against the White man. Pinar stated the female slave felt that through sass she could "return" a portion of the poison the master had injected into her. The slave was also able to protect something of her self-esteem by placing distance between herself and her White master. While the slave in this sense was rebelling against the master, usually the house slaves were given more leniencies than that of a field slave. While the field slave would have been beaten or killed for the same words spoken by the house slave, the

house slave was giving the master a pleasure that he would not receive any other way. The master would never ask of his missus what he asked of the slaves nor would he reveal to his missus his desire for the black slave.

Pinar noted that many of the female slaves had a nurturing relationship with the children of the master and missus. In many cases it was not uncommon for a white child to be fed by the breast milk of a black slave. The slave children were also playmates for the white children. Many bonds were made during these times for young children who did not realize the difference in skin tones. Once the master's children came of age, they were told that their lifelong friends were not worthy of their respect or simple friendships. They were also told that the female slaves who had raised them from birth and had taken care of them as their own were not worthy of their admiration. They would have to treat them as the slaves they were.

As the young man reflects on the joys, nurturing, and love he shared with many black friends, in the midst of his memories he is overcome with guilt, shame, and emptiness. He realized that his connection with the Black world was evidence of a failure in the White world in which he lived (Jenkins, 1999). The young white man realized that the very slaves he called his friends were to be treated as any other slave. This meant that he chose to tell his friends what to do, beat his friends with whips if need be, and force himself on female friends who did not desire his affections. This in turn caused the slaves to harbor ill feelings for the white friends and the slaves' trust to wither. Many slaves felt if you cannot trust friends to treat you with respect and to be kind, who can you trust?

While the connections had been made for many years, the connections of the white children were potential problems for the very slaves that looked after them. The white mothers of these children are aware of the bonds made between slave and child that could lead to more abuse and degradation. This was surely true when the mulatto child was born. The missus of the plantation acted as if there was no difference between the mulatto children and the basic slave child. However, her actions at times proved the contempt she felt toward the slave mother as well as the mulatto child. The missus would not dare question the paternity of the mulatto or the devotion of her husband. Nor would she entertain the idea that her husband was sharing desires with a slave that he would never express for her. If she did, this would bring her humiliation to light. However, while the master was away, the slave and mulatto child would usually catch the repercussions of the contempt she was forced to withhold. This is best summed up in a diary entry made by Mary Boykin Chesnut, who was the wife of James Chesnut, Jr. U.S. Senator from South Carolina. The entry reads:

March, 1861 Like the patriarchs of old our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think

(<http://www.multiracial.com/readers/tenzer3.html>, 2004).

Once the white children were old enough to understand the hidden truths, they too would grow to hate the mulatto children. However, these children found an even harder bond to

break. By the time the children grew to understand, they had a bond of friendship that would have to be broken. This led to more emotional problems for all involved.

As a result of the relationships between the slave women and the masters there were many “white slaves” being sold at auctions. Some of these slaves had red hair and blue eyes and in many cases were “much whiter” than the white man himself (<http://www.multiracial.com/readers/tenzer3.html>, 2004). Dr. Alexander Milton Ross spoke of an auction he attended in New Orleans where he saw “one of the most beautiful and exquisite young girls one could expect to find in freedom or slavery... being only one sixty-fourth African” (p. 2). It was very common to see children and adults who were white at sight but from African descent. Today the descendants of these children are expected to be living lives as a white majority. The attractive mulatto girls were called “fancy girls” and usually sold at prices as high as \$2000. These slaves were given no special treatment due to the lightness of their skin. They were treated as any other slave. The color of skin tone had nothing to do with the treatment of the person or with extra privileges given other than the fact that if you were an attractive slave you may get to stay in the master’s house. However, you were forced to be submissive to his wants and desires as well as in many cases the wants and desires of his entire male family. Some may look at this as a privilege; however, others definitely would disagree.

Whiteness in America today is very prevalent to those who will acknowledge “white privilege”. However, Whiteness is one of the least discussed terms in the American conversation. This does not mean that Whiteness is not addressed in some way every moment of everyday. It may be addressed in the way one person views another or in the way one person speaks to another. Nobody wants to discuss Whiteness, especially

those who succeed due to their whiteness. Frankenberg (1999) said that Whiteness is historically constructed and internally differentiated. It is a form of purity. However, Whiteness among whites is equated and reduced to just having white skin. With the term Whiteness comes what is known as “white privilege” which again is not discussed in the American conversation (Wise, 2005). Wise said “white privilege” is so strong that it even determines the frame, the lens, through which the nation will come to view it and the events that take place within it.

Alice McIntyre (1997) stated that White people do not want to acknowledge their White privilege, therefore, not having to acknowledge it exists. If it does not exist, they do not have to feel guilty for doing nothing about “it”. “White talk”, as McIntyre defined, is “talk that serves to insulate white people from examining their individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism” (p. 45). By doing so, white people talk with other whites uncritically and perpetuate acceptance of other racist attitudes, beliefs, and actions. A good example of this is when in a group of white people, a joke is told about another race and instead of criticizing the racist joke, people laugh it off and go on about their business. Another characteristic of white talk is when people acknowledge the myth of America being a land of equal opportunity for all races. People discuss those cases in which a person of color did become successful and imply that if only the rest of “them” would work hard and “develop more inclusive strategies for assimilating themselves into American culture” they too could be just as successful (McIntyre, 1997, p. 61). What many white people do not realize or refuse to accept is the fact that we live in a country that is grounded in a system of racial hierarchy and with this system we must accommodate for its fallacies.

bell hooks discussed a fictional novel by Toni Morrison (1987) called *Beloved*. This novel can assist others in understanding how Blacks view Whiteness. Whiteness to them is seen as death as depicted by Baby Suggs, the black prophet, when she dies because she suffered an absence of color. Sethe, her daughter-in-law, however, sees Whiteness as an intense threat that has been deeply inscribed on her body and in her consciousness to the extent that she killed her young so they would never experience what she knew as terrible. hooks, however, stated that in today's society some Blacks believe the myth that racism no longer exists and therefore Whiteness to them is not a terror. This state of mind she says allows for assimilation and forgetfulness (hooks as cited in Frankenberg, 1999).

David Roediger (1998) edited a book entitled *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White*. This is a compelling book comprised of essays by authors W.E.B. Du Bois, bell hooks, Derrick Bell, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Langston Hughes, and Frederick Douglass just to name a few. In most of these essays, the authors spoke of how Blacks view Whites in regard to terror and how Blacks are always skeptical of the White's motives. Roediger summarized that Blacks are truly the experts on Whiteness due to the fact they have studied it since the days of slavery. He states that Whites have suppressed the Black's knowledge of Whiteness as an imperative of racial domination.

In Alice McIntyre's (1997) study, Whiteness symbolized the "All-American" while people of color were seen as needing to be rescued by whites because they were less fortunate. Whiteness is representing orderliness, rationality, and self-control while people of color indicate chaos, irrationality, violence, and the breakdown of self-

regulation (Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998). The white people have complemented the white man as the savior and the white woman as privileged yet protected from the people of color who are the predators (Frankenberg, 1999). For without the predator, the white man cannot be the savior. White people dominate our media, government, and education thus reinforcing the message that they are the power group. White people also imply that people of color are excluded, marginalized, and do not represent the norm (Kincheloe et al.). White people do not understand the “experience of surveillance” people of color endure on a daily basis. White people defend these actions as saving people of color from themselves; however, it is simply another form of oppression. White people are unfeeling about black suffering (Wise, 2005). People of color, unlike white people, understand that race *does* shape their lives. People of color do not want to be rescued. They simply want respect. Wise said, “the first thing a white person must do in order to effectively fight racism is to learn to listen, and more than that, to believe what people of color say about their lives” (p. 67).

The average white person is not exposed on a daily basis to marginalization, stereotyping, and harassment based on their skin color. White people are “born to belonging” and “have rarely had to prove ourselves deserving of our presence here” (Wise, 2005, p. 3). White people can hardly put a stop to white privilege when they honestly believe it has not started yet. They have the notion that whiteness is a mirage. They truly envelop the myth that every person has an equal opportunity in America. All a person of any color has to do is work hard and stick to his/her goals and he/she can achieve the American Dream. However, for people of color that myth means something totally different. It means you will have to work twice as hard as a white person and you

may be successful; you also have to *not* be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or you will be convicted of the crime. If you get stopped by the law, make sure to keep both hands on the wheel in plain view or you could be shot for reaching for your wallet.

Kincheloe and others (1998) discussed the “unlearning of racism” in their book *White reign: Deploying whiteness in America*. They stated that we must first denormalize whiteness and reinvent whiteness as a notion of racial superiority. In doing so, we must avoid projecting guilt on whites but rather generate a sense of pride in the possibility they can transform a social inequality and reinvent themselves in the process.

Weis and Fine (2005) have conducted much research on white males and their views toward the “other”. In the past white men viewed themselves as the ultimate leaders of the world as they dominated all women and men of color. White men were the providers of their family working in masculine, powerful job positions while women were not to work at all and men of color only worked in jobs that degraded and dehumanized them daily. White men viewed themselves as the power unit of America. They felt they were the people who made this great nation what it was and how dare any “others” try to lay claim to their creation. White men for centuries carried these views, however, as time has gone by women have entered the work force and men of color are performing very well in our societies of today. Today white men are those that are struggling to sustain the relentless belief in a system that is crumbling and eroding their once advantage over all women and men of color. They feel their monopoly on power and privilege has been pierced and they have economically been dethroned, re-gendered and re-raced (Fine, Weis, Addelston & Marusza, 1997).

White men even today draw lines of distinction between themselves and largely the black “other” referring to them as “lazy, unwilling to do what is necessary to get and keep a job, and content to live off government entitlement programs” (Weis & Fine, 1998, p.41). “Blacks are scripted as being involved with drugs; blacks are unacceptable sexually; black men attempt to ‘invade’ white sexual space by talking with white women (Fine et al. 1997, p. 285). In constructing the black “other” with these unpleasanties, they in turn create an authentically earnest, wanting to work mentality of the white male wanting to support his family and only taking government assistance if necessary, therefore, being entitled to the assistance (Fine & Weis, 1998, p. 41).

In Weis and Fine’s research they found that these assaults on the “other” invaded neighborhoods, as well as, the white belief that white women “belonged” to the white man. The white men stated, “We hear about ‘them’ taking away ‘our’ women, ‘our’ jobs, ‘our’ streets and communities” (Fine et al. 1997, p. 283). As people of color have risen in our economic realm they have also relocated to neighborhoods previously dominated by the white race. People of color are socializing more with people in the white race, and as a result many more biracial relationships have developed. The white men feel they are “under siege” by the “others” as they take their neighborhoods and women (Fine & Weis, 1998, p. 45). Many of the men interviewed by Weis and Fine felt a discourse of loss- loss of jobs, neighborhoods, and their felt rightful position in the family. While the white men can find new jobs and move to other neighborhoods, there is a generalized anger toward men of color for being with white women. While the women are blamed for not being in their “place” and are targeted through domestic violence, white men continue to be connected with white women and therefore can not distance themselves from this

situation. However, they can and do distance themselves from the men of color and set them up as the “cause” of so many of society’s problems (p. 58).

The term “Whiteness” also extends into the school classrooms across the United States. Fine and Weis (2004) stated that schools “create and enforce racial meanings” and that out of “whiteness grows quality, merit, and advantage, while ‘color’ disintegrates to embody deficit” (p. 58). Through their essays, Fine and Weis (2005) maintained that school reform had been unsuccessful because communities outside of the school have remained essentially unchanged. It was their belief that a successful school reform was dependent upon the extent to which educators redefined their roles with respect to minority students and communities. There are three inclusive interactions of power relations that play a huge part in this reform. These are as follows:

1. The classroom interactions between teacher and student.
2. Relationships between the school and minority communities
3. The intergroup power relations within the society as a whole

This framework is dependent upon reform of the social and bureaucratic constraints as well as the individual educators accepting their responsibility to challenge the school in relation to minority students and communities.

In school systems today, there is an undeniable hierarchy among races. McCarthy (1998) stated “historically, education has been a principal site for the reproduction and elaboration of racial meaning and racial identities” (p. 60). It is well known among many educators that minority students over populate our special education classrooms. This disempowers and disables minority students as well as their communities by extension of

interactions with the societal institutions. Weis and Fine (2005) discussed schools and power in their essays.

Since equality of opportunity is believed to be a given, it is assumed that individuals are responsible for their own failure and are, therefore, made to feel that they have failed because of their own inferiority, despite the best efforts of dominant-group institutions and individuals to help them. This analysis implies that minority students will succeed educationally to the extent that the patterns of interaction in school reverse those that prevail in the society at large. (pp. 106-107)

Fine (1997) has invited others in their research to consider not only the unfair disadvantages that accrue institutionally to darker hues, but the profit that surrounds and grows by “white”. She states that “social scientists need to interrupt the cultural gaze” (p. 64).

Educators see this daily as when a minority student fails in a certain area, he or she is always compared usually to the best white student. It is stated that if *that* student was taught the lesson then the teacher had done her job and the reason why the minority child was not taught the lesson was simply because he or she was not as smart as the others in the class. Many times, especially if it relates to different races, it has nothing to do with how smart a student is but rather how the material was presented. Some educators view their role as subtracting or replacing the students’ primary language and culture with that of the educator. These are the educators that provide “insufficient exposure” of minority cultures by passing out a couple of pictures and adding inadequate dialogue just so they can say they taught the subject. However, it is those educators that

see their role as adding a second language or cultural affiliation to their students' repertoire that are likely to empower students more. These are the educators we as researchers need to target. They will be the ones to cross those cultural lines and bring the minority students and communities to the forefront of educational reform.

Multiculturalism

It would be interesting to make a comparison between so-called white civilization and the civilizations of darker races in the light of absolute fulfillment of human happiness. (James Weldon Johnson as cited in Roediger, 1998, p. 151)

As you look in classrooms across the nation you will see children that do not fit in a single racial box. These are children that straddle dual or multiple races and cultures. These children transcend simple racial categorization and represent a growing population of Americans redefining how our society views race and diversity.

Mixed race children are nothing new to the United States. However, what is new is the fact that being multiracial is not the effect of a slave rape by a master and the "one drop" rule does not confine these children to a legacy of slavery. Nor is it a couple that found love on the opposite sides of a racial divide. Being multiracial today means enveloping the races which you are made up of and celebrating the cultures of each race.

Maria Root has studied multiracial and biracial people for over 20 years. Root's work on multiracial and biracial people laid the groundwork for the United States Census 2000 marking the first time in history the "one drop rule" did not affect the results of the racial data. Her work was referred to in the U.S. Census deliberations that resulted in an historic "check more than one" format to the race question for the year 2000. For the first time in 210 years, the Census allowed people to check multiple races in 2000. While the

“one drop rule” is no longer a federal policy, many Americans still classify people according to one race. Over time this can be dehumanizing for a person of mixed descent to have to deny one of his/her parents. What does this do to a biracial child? The hope for the current study was to explore this question and in turn share these findings with teachers to enhance the educational experience of biracial children.

We must recognize the ever growing “biracial baby boom” and the “multiracial baby boom” as Maria Root calls it (1992, p. 1; 2003, p. xv). The rise in interracial couples and mixed race children is undeniable. The result of this rise has been a growing societal acceptance of a mixed race identity. Root (2001) suggests that the expression “we all bleed the same color” acknowledges that ultimately we have more things in common than things that divide us (p. 116). The present generation of biracial children has a growing number of resources from which to draw from that prior generations did not have. They have books and developing organizations for multiracial people. They also have many celebrities and intellectuals that identify with being multiracial and are bringing the acceptance of their identity to the nation through the media. Therefore, the biracial and multiracial children of the present do not feel as though they are alone but rather an important member of an ever-growing mixed race cohort.

Census 2000 found there are 41.9% of multiracial children under the age of 18 with 19.7% of those being biracial (white and black). The only other multiracial category that was larger than this was 27% (white and some other race). The data also highlighted the multiracial trend with 41.9% of multiracial individuals being under the age of 18 and only 5% being 65 years and older. This distribution may be the result of societal changes such as the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to strike down prohibitions to interracial

marriage in the 1967 court case of *Loving v. Virginia*. It may also be due to a growing number of interracial marriages with children and the growing acceptance of these identities.

This acceptance has not always been the case. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* made it possible for race mixing to occur with fewer obstacles and some legal legitimacy. However, along with this came heightened anxiety among white persons who could no longer rely on the laws to prohibit the mixing of races. The likelihood of interracial relations depended upon geographic locations, the region's racial history, and the proportions of racial populations. The lowest rates of interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites can be found in the South with the highest in the West according to the 1989 Census (Root, 2001).

Biracial children in our schools must integrate dual racial identification while also learning how to develop a positive self-concept and a sense of competence (Herring, 1992, 1995). This compounds the normal ethnic socialization problems for biracial children. Conflicts about biracial identity are the most widespread conflicts encountered by these children. Herring stated that this is why in our school settings we need a strong counseling base for these children. We no longer have biological races, stated Cruz-Jansen (1999), but now we have "social races". When a group of biracial children were asked what was needed to support biracial children in schools they all agreed it was curricula that are truly multicultural, inclusive, and humane. Curricula integrates all groups that comprise our society and explores the true meaning of American (Cruz-Jansen, 1999).

Francis Wardle, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Center of the Study of Biracial Children in Denver, Colorado, has done much research on biracial children, their identity awareness, and their school experiences. Wardle (1992, 1994, 1999, 2000, and 2004) stated that a biracial child has two main time periods in which issues of identity, self-worth, and self-esteem seem to be very important. These two time frames are in early childhood and adolescence. [For the purpose of this study, I focused on the early childhood time period.] Wardle stated these children are primitive thinkers handling only one piece of information at a time. At this age, they also need an open, supportive and honest environment to explore their identity. From the time of birth of a biracial child, the world comes in twos. They know they are not as black as the black children but not as white as the white children. Therefore, being concrete thinkers makes this time even more difficult to handle.

When a biracial child is born it throws the family into a whole new game. As stated previously, a child makes this union more real because there is now evidence of the relationship. As with Wardle, the family may start to be the victim of bias or prejudice before they leave the hospital to bring their bundle of joy home as nurses asked how they planned on raising their child and to what race would the child belong. Wardle (1999) stated the prejudice his family has experienced came from minority groups and not the White population. However, the family must make some decisions as to how they are going to raise this child. They must decide as all parents on the religion of the child, the schools they want them to attend, and start preparing for their futures. The parents of a biracial child must make one more decision and that is what race they will choose to raise their child. Many factors may influence this decision such as demographics, family

involvement, community involvement, and parental attitudes. Wardle said the family is the most important influence on developing children. He shared that a healthy family needs to be open to the needs of the biracial child. This strong family unit sets the stage for their moral code and how they will handle prejudice and tolerance. The family will be the support group for these children as well as their extended families. The family must give the child responsibilities and freedoms that foster self-respect, independence, and racial pride. Above all, the parents must let the child know they are always going to be there for them and they will always be honest with the child. The child needs to know his/her family provides a safe place without judgment.

The community of the biracial child must also be a supportive member of this child's environment. The parents must become advocates for their children in the community groups. The community must make the biracial child a part of their activities and experiences. The relationships these children have among their communities will travel with them all their years. The community as well as the biracial child needs these experiences and relationships to be positive influences for the child.

Wardle (1999, 2004) also takes you through the early childhood experience from the teacher training to the teacher/parent conference. Basically Wardle stated that as an educator, school systems need to be aware of the ever-increasing number of biracial children in their school settings. They need to train their teachers accordingly. The school systems need to make opportunities for their teachers to be more educated on the terms of the biracial children in their classrooms. The teachers need to first be aware of their own biases and how that may affect these children in their learning experiences. Once the teacher has faced his/her own prejudices and addressed them he/she can then

move on to ways to help the biracial child in her classroom learn more. When teachers are at conferences, they must ask for materials for these children if they are not presented. They must inquire why these children's needs are being ignored. In many cases it is up to the schools to search out qualified companies with materials for all. If the school falls short on their responsibilities, it then falls to the teachers to step up to the plate.

Wardle (1992, 1999, 2000, and 2004) said that during the initial teacher/parent conference the teacher must inquire and discuss how their child's identity is viewed at home and how they support their child. A teacher must not assume anything in these meetings. The teacher needs to ask the parents how they would like her to support their child's identity needs at school. She must also know how the parents handle racial prejudices directed toward their child.

While it does seem the teacher is educating herself, she may also use this time to educate the parents. In many cases the parents may not have answers to the previous questions. The teacher may need to provide the parents with information on supporting their child's full racial and ethnic identity. She can also ease the tensions of the parents by letting them know she will be a supporter of their child and she will enhance their child's learning experiences through many venues.

The curriculum in early childhood has almost a total lack of information for the biracial child. Over the years we have improved by having posters, dolls, and some storybooks of biracial children. However, the amount of this material is relatively minimal. The teacher will have to find these materials and make them available to her students. The teacher as always will have to incorporate many ideas of her own to reach all the children in her classroom. For the biracial child this can be done through role-

playing, videos, photos, and books. The teacher can also incorporate activities for the class such as creating family trees, provide activities for mixing colors, and making collages of the student's physical characteristics. The teacher can encourage discussions and make her classroom a community of learning. The classroom needs to be more of a family where negative behavior toward any differences is not tolerated. The teacher must realize she is the ultimate role model in the classroom and her actions will be modeled. Teachers today can bring more role models to the biracial child's attention. We are lucky to have intellects such as James McBride (award winning writer and composer), Rebecca Walker (writer, daughter of Alice Walker), and Lani Guinier (prominent civil rights advocate and legal scholar), as well as celebrities such as Halle Berry (actress), Paula Abdul (singer), Mariah Carey (singer), Tiger Woods (golfer), Derek Jeter (baseball player), and American Idol winner Jordin Sparks (singer) (who by the way won by popular vote from the American people). We now have a biracial president, Barack Obama, who was also elected by popular vote of the American people.

While people do realize teachers do not determine the curriculum of the school, we know they play a vital role in supporting the healthy identity development of our biracial children and in supporting their academic success through the curriculum. This venture begins with the teacher's own self reflection, understanding racism, and reforming teacher preparation programs. White teachers dominate the world of education, Banks (2006) stated this will not change in the foreseeable future with the vast majority (80%) of the students enrolled in college and university programs that prepare teachers are White. Wardle (1999) believed this is where the teacher's venture should begin at the

college level with the reeducation of many college faculty, the implementation of biracial departments, and support groups and activities for these children.

Banks (2006) also reminds us that while we are discussing the wrongs of diversity, we must realize that diversity offers opportunities to our nation as well. Diversity enriches our nation, communities, schools, and classrooms. We have all heard it said that if everything were the same color what a boring world this would be. Diversity provides significant contributions to American society as well as ways to identify, describe, and solve social, economic, and political problems. Diversity also allows our school environments to enable students from many different groups to engage in discussions and make decisions related to living in a diverse world (Banks, 2006).

Grant and Sleeter (1986) performed many studies based on specific school systems. Cameron McCarthy (1990) also focused on the school setting. He differed some from Grant and Sleeter in that he views the schools related to history as “a principal site for the reproduction and elaboration of racial meaning and racial identities” (p. 77). Apple and Weis (1983) made one of the most significant contributions to an understanding of racial inequality and its advanced operations when they criticized the tendency of mainstream to separate society into different domains of structure and culture. They contended that race is not a “category” but rather a vital social process, which is integrally linked to other social processes and dynamics operating in education and society. Apple and Weis also stated that there are three dynamics in understanding schools and other institutions, which are class, race, and gender. They stated none of these dynamics are reducible to the others, and class is not necessarily primary.

A number of elements or dynamics are usually present at the same time in any one instance. This is important. Ideological form is not reducible to class.

Processes of gender, age, and race enter directly into the ideological moment... It is actually out of the articulation with, clash among, or contradictions among and within class, race, and sex that ideologies are lived in one's day-to-day life (p. 24).

They also stated there are three spheres in which these dynamics interact -economic, political, and cultural. McCarthy (1990) stated that mainstream educators reduce the problem of racial inequality to the issues of underachievement and minority social and cultural deficits. He argued that we must treat minorities as homogeneous and undifferentiated groups. McCarthy also said that if the problems associated with racial inequality are to be meaningfully addressed it will involve minorities, women, teachers, student and administrators in a broad-based offensive against inequality in education and society. McCarthy (2005) stated the following:

minority cultural identities are “fluid”, as well as, the processes by which they are represented, reconstructed, and reinvented- in daily life, in the school, in the workplace, in the media, in textbooks, and in school curriculum. Minority identities are therefore defined in the content of inter- and intragroup conflicts, encounters, and struggles between minorities and dominant white groups on the ideological terrain of education. (p. 290)

In researching more of McCarthy's work I found that in his later work his views have somewhat merged to other concerns. While still focusing on race, culture, identity, and education, McCarthy (2008) made some very valid points concerning education and

popular culture of today. He stated that the lines of culture and identity have become blurred through technology, popular culture, and current events. McCarthy referenced the events of 9/11 and how we were no longer individuals searching for racial cultures but rather we were Americans under attack by terrorists. He discussed such events as *The No Child Left Behind Act* and how it has affected education placing schools under enormous federal pressures to respond to standards. Young people of today must navigate through complex realities and negotiate a world that is truly cosmopolitan. They must coexist with difference.

The lines of identity have blurred due to popular culture of today. McCarthy (2008) discussed “neoliberal imperatives” in our school systems today. We have white rap artists that are women and men dressed in elements of hip hop culture designed by Tommy Hilfiger that will then be taken into inner city areas to be sold for profit. We have Black cowboys dressed in hats, boots, and plaid singing country songs. McCarthy stated,

Our evolved reality is quite different- that of eternal and complex encounters between disparate ideas, ideologies, and peoples. Our schools must therefore prepare students to be ‘world citizens’ in the most humble, partial, and reflexive sense of the term. (p. 336)

He said it is not surprising that our young people are not searching our school systems for knowledge but rather searching the fashion, music, and film worlds. We must decide what counts as a “meaningful” education for our youth today.

Stated by Grant and Sleeter (1986), students’ interracial friendship patterns and cultural knowledge about race are influenced primarily by the racial makeup and

distribution of the community, and the community's values for getting along. They learn about race relations from their experiences in their own communities. Students' cultural knowledge about race is closely aligned to that of their parents. The views of their parents may be accepting of full racial mixing or to the extent that they will not allow another race in their homes. Most students stated that their parents accept racial mixing up to a certain point. That point usually is interracial dating or mixing with members of a particular group for extended periods of time.

Grant and Sleeter noted that in their studies the schools conscientiously taught students that individuals are equal regardless of race. The school system prepared students to direct their own destinies, taught them about social issues and political action, and had discussions with the students about their particular futures. They also noted that the students related positively to teachers who were pleasant to them personally and did not relate or related negatively to those teachers who did not.

While Grant and Sleeter are researchers, they also took action by developing a book that actually gives educators multicultural teaching plans for race, class, gender, and disability. They based their multicultural educational approach on two ideals: equal opportunity and cultural pluralism. Their approach includes the following:

1. To promote an understanding and appreciation of American's cultural diversity.
2. To promote alternative choices for people regardless of race, gender, disability, or social-class background.
3. To help all children achieve academic success.

4. To promote awareness of social issues involving unequal distribution of power or opportunity.

Their question regarding this approach is what the classroom teacher can do to accomplish these goals (Grant & Sleeter, 1986).

To answer the above question, Grant and Sleeter (1986) focused on three components, which are curriculum materials, curriculum content, and multiple perspectives. The materials that teachers should use to accomplish the above goals should portray the contributions and perspectives of a variety of American cultural groups and both sexes, and should do so in a nonstereotypic manner. All groups should be included substantively and white males should not dominate the roles in the text. The curriculum content is broader than the materials but the same considerations apply. The educator should examine the content she plans to teach to determine if it reflects cultural diversity and both sexes. Also, the educator should look at the curriculum to see how well it connects with the students' interests and experiential backgrounds as well as what the student would like to learn more about. The educator may also want to perform a type of pre-test to inquire what the students already know about the curriculum that is going to be taught. They may also use the expert knowledge of the student's communities such as parents, grandparents, or community leaders to help in this endeavor. This is where the cultural pluralism comes in through multiple perspectives. The cultural diversity we have in our classrooms today is truly a goldmine of knowledge if the educator will tap into it and use that expert knowledge to make his/her job easier as well as make the learning of the students' more interesting and adequate. This helps the students realize there is more than one way to interpret or view an issue, more than one

side to a story, and more than one “right” cultural practice. This helps students develop a flexible way of thinking and an appreciation for the similarities and differences among different cultures.

A very informative book entitled *Dear Senator* by Essie Mae Washington-Williams (2005) told of a young biracial girl who did not know she was biracial and in fact did not know who her father was at all. She had lived with an aunt and uncle all her life thinking they were her parents. She had always noticed she was shades lighter than either but did not put much stock in this revelation. However, when her real mother came to tell her the truth it all made much more sense. Essie Mae was eighteen on this day when her mother decided to introduce her to her father. Essie Mae walked to town and to a lawyer’s office thinking her father must be the janitor or doorman for the lawyer. When Essie Mae and her mother were ushered into the lawyer’s office in South Carolina she was introduced to her father who was none other than Strom Thurmond, a White well respected lawyer in town.

Essie Mae was shocked to say the least. The visit was very pleasant as were many other visits throughout Essie Mae’s life. It seemed that while Essie Mae’s mother Carrie was a maid in the Thurmond household at the age of fifteen, she and Strom fell in love and conceived Essie Mae. Times were hard then and Carrie’s sister took Essie Mae to raise. Over the years Strom Thurmond never denied the paternity of Essie Mae, and in fact financially supported both mother and child throughout his life. However, he also never made it publicly known.

Through the years, Essie Mae found her father to be very health conscious and politically driven. He became a Governor and Senator and even ran unsuccessfully for

President of the United States. This is why Essie Mae's mother never made it publicly known that Essie Mae was his daughter. She states he never asked either of them to keep the information quiet but it was understood how badly this information could hurt his political dreams.

Essie Mae did not tell anyone of this knowledge, except her first husband, until after Strom Thurmond's death at the age of 100. At this time she was urged by her children to fight for what was legally hers due to the fact nothing was left for Essie Mae in Senator Thurmond's will. The Thurmond family did acknowledge the heritage of Essie Mae and she is now listed as Senator Strom Thurmond's eldest child conceived from a maid in the Thurmond household in his biographical facts.

Like Essie Mae, the biracial children of today find themselves stuck between two cultures not knowing what to make public and what to keep quiet. They live a life of secrecy and many unknowns. In Maria Root's (2001) research she found that for biracial children, race becomes the center of their lives. Ladson-Billings (2003) said, "Psychologists tell us that children develop awareness of skin color differences as early as three years old" (p. 2). They are not white enough for the White world and they are not dark enough for the Black world. For their parents, they are a symbol to the families on both cultural sides that the two adults will not be separate again but forever joined by a child. Once the child is born there is no turning back from the interracial relationship. This child is bonded for life with another racial group. Even if the relationship or marriage fails, the child still remains. The child makes it even more interracial because instead of an interracial couple it is now an interracial family.

The parents found many of the experiences their children had to go through hard to deal with because they did not live through them. These experiences are not unique to persons of mixed race. The recurrence of themes of racial purity, foreignness, racial boundaries, and racial authenticity conveys the multiple ways in which race is constructed. The children learn about race from home, school, places of worship, and neighborhood experiences. The biracial children are in many ways torn as to what to do and how to act. Root (1992) calls this the area of “in between”. The parents at times do not know how to deal with this state. Most biracial children state their parents really had no idea how to raise a biracial child but they did the best they could. They stated they had no idea what they were getting into at that time. Parents can help their children by discussing and sharing family stories and experiences. This will equip their children for the hazing, bullying, and racial attacks that will inevitably happen (Root, 2001). Parents have to acknowledge this fact in order to help their biracial and multiracial children.

Maria P. Root (2001, 2003) stated that identity is fluid, flexible, situational, context-driven, and generation-driven. This means that to understand oneself you must understand within the context of social relations as well as one’s worldview. This understanding one’s identity can change over time depending upon the racial experiences of the person. What one feels is his/her identity at an early age may change completely by the time a child reaches early adulthood due to the experiences the child has as he/she grows over racial issues. This identity may also be different in different situations and this fluctuation is normal as long as a sense of core values and relational attachments are sustained.

Physical appearance and assumptions shape the myriad of experiences of racially mixed heritage people. The most common experience is the “What are you?” question with the distress and frustration of those asking when given an answer more complicated than a one race answer. It is true that our biracial children are resilient and do mostly get through these prejudicial experiences. However, as educators we must realize that not all children are equally resilient and we must educate ourselves so that our racial consciousness deepens the understanding aspect of the multiracial experience.

Reconceptualized Curriculum

If you were to put a whole bunch of us together, you would find so many different attitudes and so many different mentalities. I think a lot of it is economics, who you were raised by, what your surroundings [are], and what company you keep. I think those are four factors in determining an identity. [Valerie, 18, perceived as black] (Korgen, 1998, p. 50).

I wish I were one way or the other. I wish I were all black so I could just know that I’m a black person or I were all white so I could just be a white person. But since I’m neither, it makes it harder because I have to be Yolanda. Maybe everybody should just be who they are instead of what their race is... But being both black and white means a part of your identity is not established. [Yolanda, 18 perceived as black] (Korgen, 1998, p. 73).

The evolution from a preoccupation with curriculum development to a concern with understanding curriculum began in the 1970’s. Ralph W. Tyler developed a rationale involving the use of data about the learners themselves, their society, and subject-area

experts to develop purposes for schools to attain (<http://www.randallburks.com/critique.htm>). Educational experiences were then selected based on the likelihood of attaining the educational goals. These goals were organized to obtain the maximum cumulative effect and the curriculum was improved and refined by a process of evaluation. This became known in education as the Tyler Rationale.

Curriculum theory became more public when scholars such as William Pinar, William Reynolds, Patrick Slattery, and Peter Taubman (2002) dutifully delved into the field of curriculum studies. These scholars have noted that while the out-of-date curriculum textbooks are still around and are still being taught, this in turn has silenced the younger, more complex scholars such as feminists, poststructuralists, and phenomenologists. Educators found that the classroom was filled with Eurocentric curriculum. However, it was not filled with Eurocentric populations of students. This initiated a profound paradigm shift in the way educators viewed curriculum.

Educators have become more aware that there is much more to curriculum studies than the development of curriculum. Rather, educators need to focus more on theoretical and historical aspects of curriculum and the accumulation of knowledge and the enhancement of understanding to create a connection for ourselves as well as our students (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002). Educators also need to focus on the discourse of the student's understanding of the curriculum. For a student to truly grasp the concept of a skill, he/she must be able to relate to the skill in everyday life. A student must see the need for the skill and the need for his/her understanding of the concept in order for usage and generalization to take place. If a student does not see this correlation, the student will see no need for understanding. These correlations for

students come from their everyday experiences. When a student finds curriculum useful, he/she will invest in the curriculum for a profound understanding.

One aspect of curriculum theory is discovering oneself and how that self relates with others. Curriculum theory is also about discovering how school subjects correlate with one's self and society (Pinar, 2004). It also rejects the business mentality that all students are the same and teachers can produce the same educational results of all students.

Our school boards as well as those in control of school funds are predominantly compiled of mostly white business leaders. Therefore, those who are making decisions about our educational systems are often basing their knowledge on business backgrounds. Their sole purpose for school systems is to prepare students for jobs to enhance our economy and in many cases enhance their bank accounts. These leaders say all students are the same and all students can learn at the same rate. It even goes as far as President George W. Bush who stated that “no child would be left behind” meaning all students would be on the appropriate grade level. These business minds can make bold statements such as these because they already have the teachers to take the blame if a student is left behind or if a student does not learn at the same pace as the others. President Bush created a *No Child Left Behind Act* to hold each teacher accountable by law if a student does not achieve at the same rate as his/her peers.

No Child Left Behind created a “complicated conversation”, i.e., “what knowledge is of most worth”. The answer to this question changes according to the project, person, nation, or moment in time. In the past, this question has been answered as Grumet (1988) stated, “curriculum is what the older generation chooses to tell the

younger generations” (p. 20). In the present, the school curriculum answers this question by choosing what we want to remember of our past, believe about our present, and hope for the future. Debate about the school curriculum of the present often turns into a debate about the American national identity.

In education today the curriculum is based on research from a White perspective of which African Americans are skeptical. Grumet stated, “after all, this is the same research that in the past has found African Americans genetically inferior, culturally deprived, and verbally deficient” (p. 31). So in saying this, what student of color would want to invest in this knowledge?

In the classroom many teachers feel their way is the only way. This belief disempowers the students and denies them their own expert knowledge. A “White” teacher can not possibly know more about the African American culture than those who are African American or part thereof. This is where it can be extremely confusing to the biracial students who are experts in both races. These students possess a wealth of knowledge, which could help us understand how both races relate to each other. After all, the biracial child sees this relationship everyday in his/her home. Therefore, educators must allow the expert knowledge of the students to surface in the classroom. It is possible for the student and teacher to both be experts in their own learning experiences.

Biracial students bring a wealth of knowledge to the area of learning. The biracial child is undeniably the most complex student in the classroom today. This is the student who is half culture of power and half the most oppressed in our nation. The biracial child cannot deny either culture due to appearance but either culture can deny and in many cases does deny the biracial child. All of these aspects affect the academic experiences of

the biracial child. Teachers are the ones that determine whether a student will succeed. If the teacher is not receptive to curriculum theory, the student will most likely be silenced. However, if the teacher is receptive to curriculum theory, which allows the biracial child to be the expert in the classroom, and is willing to engage in the “complicated conversations”, then the student will make great strides in his/her academic experiences and flourish. Other students will also gain expert knowledge and learn how to communicate without racial bias. They will learn how to talk, ask questions, and most importantly to listen.

The United States Census Bureau indicates there has been a tremendous increase in the number of interracial marriages during the past decade over the preceding one. This indicates that the total population of biracial children is also increasing rapidly. This could mean that the acceptance of biracial children has been more apparent or possibly, as Peter Salins (1997) stated, that the biracial child has learned to assimilate well. However, when one looks at the portrayal of the black race in movies and the irrevocable racist attitudes and behaviors toward the black race, the assimilation theory seems unbelievable. I will note that Salins has stated that “explicit racism is sharply declining” but what effect will this have on the biracial child (p. 173). The research on race awareness in these children show that race awareness develops gradually from early childhood and that there are individual differences between children in the developmental process (Gunthrope, 1998). It is often stated that biracial children are likely to be confused about their racial identity; however, there appears to be a scarcity of published research investigating their attitudes toward their identity.

The persons involved in a biracial relationship have been described as “race traitors” and the product of that relationship a “bastard race” (Moya & Hames-Garcia, 2000). These children are generalized due to their genetic make-up and no evaluation is given to the individual. Moya and Hames-Garcia stated a person’s identity comes from the individual experiences of the person. By labeling these children before we allow them to experience, we are silencing and oppressing them more. A good analogy of this is to cut a butterfly’s wings before it has the opportunity to fly. We are cutting these children’s wings and not letting them develop but rather forcing them to adhere to the “normalization of society”, which has been created by white man, of which the biracial child does not belong (Korgen, 1998). Noting here that the only reason the biracial child does not belong in our society is due to what the white man made acceptable. The way this was done was to define “black” in degrees of non-whiteness within the black group (Wilson, 1987). This has also been known as the “one drop rule”.

Let us focus on curriculum as a racial text. The first thing we must realize is that our text used in schools today is only an interpretation of history. We must also realize it is mainly the “White man’s” interpretation. “This was legitimized by homogenizing cultural discourse...to safeguard the interest and power of the dominant group” (Giroux, 2000, p. 127). “The school curriculum communicates that which we choose to remember about our past and that which we choose to believe about the present” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002, p. 328). This view of education is silent and excludes the “other” groups from the narrative mainstream history and culture (Giroux, 2002). The White man refused to incorporate the African-American knowledge into the mainstream school curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum is based on fiction and the repression of the

“other”. This is not an oversight but done willfully. Due to this willful act, the African-Americans in our society have been denied access to their history and culture in school (Pinar et al., 2002). This needs to be rectified. The students need to know that when looking through a textbook what is written may not be accurate. Appearance in print does not make information truthful or reliable. Most students today believe that if it is in a book, on television, or in a newspaper it must be based on fact. Well, maybe, but the question is whose fact? What bias came with the publication? The students today need to read between the lines and learn to look at sources. That is where the true facts and information will come from.

The biracial children are faced with even more controversy. They are pulled in both directions and in many cases this can make a child have a love/hate relationship with himself. These children see the so-called good that is supposedly fifty percent of their heritage but then they also hear of the repressed percentage of their heritage. What these children do not understand is that they will not be able to understand their identity without understanding that the term “ ‘White’ is a fabrication made possible by the construction of ‘Black’ ” (Pinar et al., 2002). The two terms coexist and intermingle among one another. Therefore, the biracial child is the entity of the “other”. These children are the beginning. They are proof of both races acting as one and producing one.

These children must not accept not knowing. They must push forward for more understanding. Then the need will be for them to teach what they have learned. Through their education we can only hope our societies will prosper and the oppression will disintegrate.

Critical Race Theory

In my research I used critical race theory as my theoretical framework. This is an analytical framework that takes very seriously the crossroads between race, class, and gender inequities and it addresses social justice, racial oppression, and identity confusion (Gillborn, 2006). Gillborn stated, “Critical race theory demands that race and racism never be relegated to the sidelines” (p. 175). It was used to reveal the possible silent suffering and social misery of our biracial children in our school systems today. Through critical race theory I hope to make the voices of our biracial children heard by communicating with White and Black teachers about the experiences of the biracial children in our school.

Critical Race Theory, also known as CRT, is an “educational protest, as well as scholarship intended to provide new insight and opportunity for educational praxis” (Stovall, 2005, p. 197). Stovall stated the purpose of CRT is to “identify White supremacy in education and to develop a praxis to counter hegemony” (p. 197). CRT is based on a simple understanding that racism is persistent in the lives of people of color. Through CRT, narratives are collected based on an individual’s personal experiences. Stovall said the critical race theorist must then critically assess the thematic trends in relationship to the disciplines and articulate the experiences of people of color with racism. CRT is a response aimed at changing the realities of racism in public institutions such as education.

CRT uses the experiences of the participants involved in the current system to determine their own needs and responses to the situation. These efforts of the disciplines are essential to new developments in approaches to education. Stovall (2005) stated that

through CRT the researcher accomplishes “naming, exposing, giving voice, and reanalyzing” (p. 200). Critiquing is not enough but rather students, parents, teachers, and administrators must address the needs and concerns for these students. Stovall said, “Colorblindness is an illogical concept” in our society (p. 203). There is no such thing as colorblindness when discussing the aspects of race. One must see color to make conscious decisions about color. The idea is to include contributions of people of color through narratives to shed light on the complexity of racism.

CRT challenges the existing paradigm to be “action researchers” and through discourse, narrative, and practice to address the function of racism and how it impedes people of color to function in school. Educators must deconstruct the negative realities in public schools while also maintaining a child’s self-worth and importance to the world.

Critical Race Theory has been around since the post civil rights era (Tate, 1996). In all of my readings, the definition of Critical Race Theory that was most profound was written by Cornel West (1993) which stated:

In short, Critical Race Theory is an intellectual movement that is both particular to our postmodern (and conservative) times and part of a long tradition of human resistance and liberation. On the one hand, the movement highlights a creative--and tension-ridden—fusion of theoretical self-reflection, formal innovation, radical politics, existential evaluation, reconstructive experimentation, and vocational anguish. But like all bold attempts to reinterpret and remake the world to reveal silenced suffering and to relieve social misery, Critical Race Theorists put forward novel readings of a hidden past that disclose the flagrant

shortcomings of the treacherous present in the light of unrealized- though not unrealizable- possibilities of human freedom and equality (p.xxi).

Derrick Bell is regarded as the founding father of Critical Race Theory. Bell was a legal scholar who was deeply concerned with the “snail pace” progress of the racial reform in the United States (Delgado, 1995). Bell (1993), concerned and dismayed that any gains made by civil rights laws of 1960 were quickly being eroded, began to fashion arguments that were designed to change existing laws. Bell argued that racism is a permanent fixture of American Life. The critical race theorists want to unmask and expose racism in its various permutations (Ladson-Billings, 2003).

Etiology of Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory has its etiological roots in critical legal studies and is an alternative to the civil rights approach to combating racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Critical Race Theory is a calmer means of making a point. Critical Race Theory has many prominent figures. Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Mari Matsuda are regarded as founders of this framework. Kimberlie Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrence, Patricia Williams, Richard Delgado, and Frances Valdes are other important figures. The proponents of Critical Race Theory are culturally, ethnically, racially, and intellectually diverse.

While Bell was one of the most influential contributors, the major criticism of his work was that it was done in narrative form. Delgado, in defense of Bell’s narrative style, argued that persons of color speak from an experience framed by racism. Therefore, the researcher needs to give them a voice that is different from the dominant culture (Delgado, 1995). Many African cultures learn their history through storytelling. This is

how they passed their history through the years. Many cultures still use this form of passing information on to the next generation. This is a very effective form of writing in which every aspect of the story can be revealed. The narrative form of writing was accurate and very informative giving the White American people insight into a culture they knew nothing about. With America being predominately White they did not want this information to get out. Therefore, what better way to stop it than argue the format was not scientifically correct. This was a “loose” criticism. However, their criticism is rooted as always in racism. The narrative format is considered one of the best ways to tell research. It is descriptive and as accurate as a researcher can get. The information is what was said, how it was said, and in the context it was used. The narrative format allows a researcher through the use of storytelling to look at familiar issues in a different direction. As with any research there are biases and those are dealt with but that is not due to the narrative format used.

Critical Race Theory has found broad applications in other disciplines than the law from which it originated. CRT is increasingly being applied in the field of education. Delgado (2001) addressed this in his text, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* where he writes:

Although CRT [Critical Race Theory] began as a movement in the law, it has rapidly spread beyond that discipline. Today, many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT’s ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, controversies, over curriculum and history and IQ and achievement testing. (p. 3)

Critical Race Theory examines racial inequities in educational achievement by centering the discussion within the context of racism (Ladson-Billings, 2003).

In the book *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory*, Francisco Valdes, Jerome Culp, and Angela P. Harris (2002) offered ethically, gendered, and racially diverse perspectives that follow Critical Race Theory. The editors of this text sought to amplify the many voices that currently comprise the field. These editors revealed that “CRT [Critical Race Theory] continues to reject at least three entrenched, mainstream beliefs about racial injustice” (p. 1). The first belief is the notion that colorblindness is the way to ameliorate race relations and eradicate racism. Ralph Ellison (1935) wrote, “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me” (p. 3). Using “colorblindness” is a weak attempt to deny seeing the color of others, therefore, denying that race has a significant bearing on their decision making (Ladson-Billings, 2003). The second belief is the contention that it is personal racism, not institutional racism, which pervades society. As educators, we ignore that institutional racism shapes our American lives (Ladson-Billings, 2003). The third belief is the assertion that there is a hierarchy of oppression.

This chapter has presented information on the South, Whiteness, and Multiculturalism. This chapter ventured further to include the theoretical framework of the current research which is Critical Race Theory and its etiological roots in critical legal studies. The information within this chapter was used to create a foundation for the current research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

This chapter describes the method used to address the research questions in the current study. The questions refer to the stories of biracial female students in a southern elementary school as the main source of data. Critical inquiry, which will be considered first, is the method used to guide the collection and analysis of in-depth information about the participants.

Short (1991) stated, “critical inquiry is the basis of professionalism and the professionalization of educational practice” (p. 243). In my qualitative research study, I used critical inquiry. I believe this form of inquiry is compatible with my research focus of biracial children. The major advantage of critical inquiry, as stated by Short, is that it is embedded in curriculum inquiry and has historically focused on educational systems. This focus has spanned from the educational system, the educators, the students, and finally to the curriculum. Critical inquiry looks at each curricular query in a broad capacity. Short stated critical inquiry is dialectical and therefore is compatible with a qualitative research style. Critical inquiry works with the theoretical framework of critical race theory.

To be critical one must focus deliberately on the underlying human ideologies and interest. Critical inquiry is based upon social justice, which is defined as fairness to all (Sirotnik, 1991). As Americans we stand and pledge for “liberty and justice for all”. However, over the years we have seen social justice extinguished even from the beginning of civilization in America. Social justice is an ethical stance and has been since

the beginning of time “do to others as you would have them do to you.” Luke 6:31 (The Holy Bible). When used with critical inquiry, it is based on values, beliefs, and human interest for study and action. Short stated that knowledge may well be rejected, while moral and ethical responsibilities are focused on in a critical inquiry study.

I feel critical inquiry, critical race theory, and social justice are interwoven and work to enhance one another. My study of the racial identity and academic experiences of biracial children focused first on social justice, was framed by critical race theory and used critical inquiry to collect and analyze data. From this data, I gained an insight into the daily lives of biracial children in my school system today. I explored their daily experiences, which included home life, curriculum, relationships, or bias.

Being an educator, I witness the oversights of their biracial heritage and the neglect of biracial contributions in our curriculum. I experience having to fill these gaps with more material and allowing time for the biracial child to describe his/her beliefs and experiences.

Research Questions

The overarching research questions guiding this study were:

1. Is there a relationship between racial identity and academic achievement?
2. Does the curriculum in this southern elementary school meet the academic needs and include the biracial child?

The student sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Does this southern elementary school meet the needs of a biracial child?
- Are biracial children in this southern elementary school treated equally?
- Have these students been treated differently because they are biracial?

- Would the biracial students in this southern elementary school recommend this school to other biracial students?

The parent sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Does your biracial child prefer one race over the other?
- Has your child had a positive educational experience and are they welcomed in this southern elementary school?
- Could Blacks and Whites get along if race was left out of the picture?
- At the present, are there equal opportunities for all races in the South?
- Is it the school's responsibility to teach the biracial child about their heritages?

The teacher sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Do you feel having a biracial student in your classroom means more work for you?
- Do you inquire about race at your parent/teacher conferences?
- Do you discuss specific races in your classroom such as biracial and multiracial?
- Does your current curriculum meet the needs of the biracial child in your classroom?
- Does this southern school system have the resources necessary to meet the needs of the biracial students in this school?

Role of the Researcher

The researcher must note that qualitative research contributes to our knowledge base only when it is conducted with a sense of trustworthiness and validity. Schloss and Smith (1999) made several recommendations for reliability and validity within qualitative research. Reliability is the consistency of measurement and the extent to which

observations can be replicated. I maintained tape recordings that depicted everything that was said during the interview process. I also made distinctions during the interview with the use of notes reflecting precisely what was stated by the participants. Some of my notes were based on observed behaviors and attitudes of the participants.

Validity addresses the extent to which research measures what it purports to measure (Schloss & Smith, 1999). They recommend to increase validity, the researcher be in the setting for a period of time before formally collecting data. This gives the participants the opportunity to acclimate to the researcher's presence. It is important to establish a rapport with participants as this increases the participants' comfort level. This will help participants interact naturally with the researcher even if the researcher is in a "power" position over the participants.

Setting

I live in a rural middle Georgia farming community with a population of 6,854 in 2001 (2000 Census). The county school system serves the needs of approximately 1,234 students in grades PK-12. The system has one elementary school housed on two campuses, the Pre-K campus and a K-5 campus. The student population is approximately 40% African American, 50% Caucasian, 9% Multiracial, and 1% either Asian or Hispanic. Seventy-three percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch rate of the 1,234 students who attend the system in grades P-12. The faculty and staff population is approximately 20% African American and 80% Caucasian. My county has a median household income of \$25,003, which is less than the state average of \$42,057 by \$17,054. The county's poverty rate is almost double the state average. Its unemployment rate

exceeds the state average by almost two percent. The school has \$560 less per student than the average school systems in the state to spend for public education.

While approximately 82% of Georgia's residents have completed high school, our county has achieved a completion rate of only 63.3%. The graduation rate is only 57%. The predominate figures in our town are White men. The configuration of the town is made up of "the bottom" where mostly lower class Blacks spend their time. Whites are told not to ride through this area for if seen there, even riding through, the rumors of being a race traitor begin. There are "the projects" where those in need of government assistance live. The rest of my small farming community is country fields and small country roads leading to homes reflecting the images of the old plantations of the South to the moderate homes of today.

The school system is over 50 years old. I teach in a school that I attended as well as both of my parents. The faculty, staff, and students of my elementary school segregate themselves. If you walked into a faculty meeting at my school you would see the Black teachers at one table in the cafeteria and the White teachers at another table. The students are a little better than the adults. However, at least once or twice a month teachers are made aware of a confrontation between students over racial issues. If you were to visit Treutlen Elementary School at recess you would see mainly a segregated playground with the exceptions of one or two groups. You would see a group of predominately black boys playing a form of basketball by throwing a water bottle filled with dirt through a set of monkey bars. You would also see a group of predominately white boys playing a form of football with a water bottle filled with dirt and imaginary field lines. The black girls usually get in groups of about ten and make up cheers or songs and specific dance moves

that go with each, while white girls are also in groups doing gymnastics. You notice minority students in each group, but you are also aware that the majority of each group runs the show. You would not see any balls, jump ropes, or any toys brought in from the outside due to the fact that when these objects were used arguments and fights usually broke out. In saying all of this, it makes me wonder if we have learned from our mistakes or if we want to move on. I do not see either side wanting to come together. In fact, Falk (2004) has interviewed many people over the years on the topic of race and one Black female said, "I believe things were better when they were equal but separate, even when we got the leftover books (p. 83). From talking with other educators in the South I find that in many cases, their school systems look very similar to my own.

Participants

The participants consisted of six female students that are biracial (defined as fifty percent Black and fifty percent White). These students were in grades three through five. Two students were eight years old, one student was nine years old, and three students were ten years old. Parents or guardians of the students and teachers (4 Black and 11 White) in grades three through five were also participants in the current study. There were no male participants in this study due to the fact we had no male biracial children in grades three through five at the time of this study.

Instrumentation/ Materials

The first method used for my study was a creative thought test (see Appendix C). This method was derived from *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children* by Vivian Maria Vasquez (2004). Vasquez developed a critical literacy curriculum while working with elementary age children. She found that by reading narratives, collecting

the artifacts of the students, and allowing the students to discuss the artifacts she was able to deal with issues of social justice and equity issues.

The second method the researcher used with the children was an interview based on general information, activities, real identity, and stereotypes. The demographic information was basic name, age, sex, and race (see Appendix D). Other questions involved general preferences of the students. The activities questions included items that asked the student to choose other children to do an activity with her. The student was allowed to choose who ever she wanted, and she could choose the same person more than once. The identity question asked if the student could be anyone she wanted to be, would she want to be herself or would she choose to be another person. Then the researcher explored why she would want to be that person instead of who she was. The last section dealt with stereotypes and included several occupations. The student was to tell the researcher what race she thought about first when the occupation was read to her.

The creative thought test and the interviews were chosen because this inquiry method would be the most appropriate in an early childhood setting. The materials and questions of the test were familiar to the students and non-threatening. This allowed a more open and honest research session.

The interview process gathered a wide variety of information across a large number of subjects. This process is described by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 80). Through this conversation the researcher got to know each participant, their views, and environment away from the school.

The parents’ questionnaire (see Appendix E) consisted of four sections which include items asking for factual information and frequency and quality of contact with

other people. There were also three sections attempting to elicit racial categorization and attitudes.

The first section of the questionnaire was a quick battery of questions requiring simple factual answers, such as name, age, occupation, etc. Two items also dealt with whether or not the respondent's parents are alive. The second section contained questions concerning the frequency and quality of contact the parents had with neighbors, friends, and relatives. They were asked to name the people they see regularly, their closest friends, their child's closest friends, and anyone in the area who was particularly unfriendly to them and their children. The information contained in these questionnaires enlightened the researcher on the child's home environment and the racial attitudes. This environment is crucial in the education of the biracial child. The environment must be a positive environment for the biracial child as well as the environment at the school setting. This information will give much needed direction to the educators in this rural southern school. The third section of the questionnaire served to explore the parent's more specific attitudes. Now the respondents were asked to describe the racial situation in a southern elementary school setting in their own words. The two main areas of interest were the racial labels used to designate different groups and the parent's view of the amount of hostility and discrimination that existed in this setting. The question was deliberately vague and unspecific so that the researcher could obtain an idea of the parent's racial viewpoint. In section four, the parents were given sixteen statements, covering various aspects of their racial attitude to which they were asked to give their level of agreement.

The questionnaire (see Appendix F) for the teachers in grades three through five consisted of questions regarding their attitudes toward the biracial children in the school and the curriculum they teach. The researcher asked if the curriculum was inclusive of the biracial children in the class, and if not, what the teachers did to ensure that the curriculum was truly multicultural.

The current research utilized the students' state test scores and discipline records to determine how the biracial children in our school setting performed academically and whether they had any discipline referrals. If needed, the researcher also questioned administrators for more data to validate the information obtained.

From the above information the researcher determined relationships as well as biases the biracial child had encountered in her school setting. This helped the researcher determine the overall educational experience of the child, specifically whether it had been a positive experience or a negative experience. It also helped her determine the overall atmosphere at this southern school toward biracial children and how this could be affecting their curricular experiences.

Procedures

First, I obtained IRB approval through Georgia Southern University research services (see Appendix A). The researcher's timeline for this study was approximately six weeks for the interview process. This allowed her one week per child and parent to collect the data and focus on one interview at a time. Each interview session was tape recorded for future reference. This study was completed in approximately a three month period. This allowed ample time to collect the data, analyze the data, and get the data recorded for completion. The data was recorded on a data sheet, questionnaires were used

with the interviews, and a tape recorder was used to record the entire period of interaction between the student and researcher. The students, parents, administrators, and teachers were questioned by the researcher.

The current research began with choosing the student participants and describing the study to the parents. The parent and child's participation was solicited and a parent consent form was signed (see Appendix B). The study then continued and consisted of four stages 1) drawings from the children, 2) an interview with the child, 3) a questionnaire for the parents, and 4) a questionnaire for the teachers in grades three through five. The study was conducted at the elementary school setting in the researcher's fourth grade classroom. The classroom consisted of approximately 25 student desks, a teacher's desk, three book shelves, and four computer tables.

The researcher and the student sat comfortably in student desks. The researcher placed a sign on the door stating "Do not disturb, testing in progress". She also turned her cell phone off to ensure no disturbances. The researcher interviewed each child at her planning period on Monday of six consecutive weeks. The parent questionnaires were sent home and returned the same week.

First, the researcher talked with each child for a moment to get her settled and reassured her this was not a test where there were any wrong answers. The researcher asked the child to relax and follow her directions for each step. The researcher also told the child that if at any time she had a question to feel free to ask her.

The researcher read each child different scenarios (see Appendix C). The child drew a picture for each scenario with multicultural crayons as well as the original eight count box of crayons by Crayola. Crayola has been a well respected color company since

1885 and has played a major role in education since that time. As our classrooms have become more diverse over time, Crayola developed a Multicultural line of products such as the Multicultural crayon specifically designed with skin tones of the world named apricot, burnt sienna, mahogany, peach, sepia, tan, black and white for hands-on learning about self, family, and community. The Multicultural crayons have not been used in any research of this kind to the knowledge of this researcher. The researcher was hoping to evaluate whether the students chose the basic black and white crayon or whether they would choose a more realistic skin color making them aware of skin tones and accuracy.

Once the pictures were drawn, the researcher allowed the child to discuss the pictures with her taking note of the child's responses to questions about the picture. The researcher asked why she drew a character a certain color or whether this event may have ever taken place in the child's life. Each scenario was introduced in the same pattern to create less anxiety for the child.

From the questionnaire, the child was asked to choose children to invite to a party and to participate in various activities. Following the ideal identity was elicited and then further preference questions (stereotypes) were asked. From these questions, the researcher was able to determine which race the child relates to more and feels most accepted by. She was also able to determine the basic stereotypes the child has encountered or has been taught from home. This method allowed the researcher to focus specifically on the child's environment and how the child's attitude may affect her educational experience (see Appendix D).

The researcher spoke with many parents about an interview session. However, many said they would not be able to attend this session due to work and other

responsibilities. The researcher decided to send a questionnaire (see Appendix E) home for ease of parent to response. The questionnaire consisted of sections on demographics, friends, relatives, school, and preference questions (how the parents feel about certain ideas). From these questions, the researcher was able to gather information about the student's home life and those in her community which influenced her. The researcher noted education of the parents as well as how the parents felt the child interacted with friends and relatives. This method allowed the researcher to look beyond the school environment for these children and into the homes and communities from which they came.

The researcher gave each teacher in grades three through five a questionnaire (see Appendix F) for recording their information. The teachers did not have to place a name on the questionnaire. The researcher felt that if the information was given in an anonymous manner, the teachers would be able to speak more freely. The researcher noted how many years of teaching experience each teacher had. She also asked many informative questions concerning the teachers' feelings about having a biracial student in their classroom and how this affected their teaching. The researcher questioned procedures the teachers used in their classrooms and noted why they used these procedures. This method allowed the researcher to explore the teachers' attitudes and practices that the biracial children witnessed and experienced while in their classrooms. This information gave the researcher new insight into the daily school experiences of the biracial child.

Data Analysis

The critical race theory framework was chosen because it should lends itself more productively to the current research. The critical race theory framework allows for racially diverse perspectives and amplifies the voices in educational research. Critical inquiry was used because it is based in the curriculum context, and it was an asset to the current research. Critical inquiry added more reliability and validity to the current research and allowed for competent communication throughout the study. Critical inquiry was used through a series of questions and activities to identify and understand the problems, if any, faced by the biracial child, to understand the history of the problems, and to confront the significant educational issues.

Multiple data sources including student drawings, field notes, tape recordings, and questionnaire data were analyzed for each individual participant as well as across participants. Data reduction allowed for the common themes to address research questions. Critical analysis of the findings in light of the CRT framework completed the critical inquiry process.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between racial identity and academic achievement. This study also investigated whether this school system's curriculum met the needs of its biracial students and included them in the curriculum. With these purposes in mind, the researcher gathered data from six female biracial students in grades three through five, their parents, teachers, and administrators. The researcher also examined the data from these students' standardized tests and discipline referrals.

The overarching research questions guiding this study were:

1. Is there a relationship between racial identity and academic experiences?
2. Does the curriculum in this southern elementary school meet the academic needs and include the biracial child?

The student sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Does this southern elementary school meet the needs of a biracial child?
- Are biracial children in this southern elementary school treated equally?
- Have these students been treated differently because they are biracial?
- Would the biracial students in this southern elementary school recommend this school to other biracial students?

The parent sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Does your biracial child prefer one race over the other?
- Has your child had a positive educational experience and are they welcomed in this southern elementary school?

- Could Blacks and Whites get along if race was left out of the picture?
- At the present, are there equal opportunities for all races in the South?
- Is it the school's responsibility to teach the biracial child about their heritages?

The teacher sub-questions addressed in this research were as follows:

- Do you feel having a biracial student in your classroom means more work for you?
- Do you inquire about race at your parent/teacher conferences?
- Do you discuss specific races in your classroom such as biracial and multiracial?
- Does your current curriculum meet the needs of the biracial child in your classroom?
- Does this southern school system have the resources necessary to meet the needs of the biracial students in this school?

Power Positions and Research

Sirotnik (1991) stated, "competent communication" is the core of critical inquiry and moreover the process of improving school systems. Competent communication is based on mutual trust in ideas, facts, values, and interests that people share. These children, especially those living with their black parents, have probably been modeled to believe the white people are unfair and unjust when it comes to the black race. This idea has also been proven over and over again through our "White privilege". These children had to gain trust in me as a white researcher. I hoped this would be an easy adjustment for the children in my study. Sirotnik noted that critical inquiry is known as "dialectical" and delves into the complex questions and issues related through the research. The children, as well as their parents, have seen me throughout their years at our elementary school. I

believe these children and parents already have a mutual trust and respect for me as a person, however, they had to transfer that same trust and respect to me as a researcher. For critical inquiry to be effective, it was necessary for them to trust me with their values, beliefs, and human interest. Therefore, dual role of researcher and teacher in this school system could create a power relationship that impacted the data in this study.

The researcher of this study does note the possibility of her power position as a teacher in this school system to influence the data given by the students and parents. However, the researcher took every precaution to eliminate any distractions from this research. The participants in this study do know the researcher well and have related to the researcher as a teacher in this school system for many years. While the students and parents seemed to be comfortable with the researcher and talked with the researcher openly prior to the research process, the researcher used strategies throughout this study to enhance its validity.

First, the researcher consulted the information by Schloss and Smith (1999) making sure the students were comfortable in the area of the study. She also introduced all scenarios and questions in a routine manner so the students knew what to expect. The researcher made the students aware they could at any time ask her questions for clarity in any part of the study.

Second, the researcher utilized more than just the student's responses in her data analysis. The researcher also questioned parents, guardians, teachers, and administrators of the students to gain multiple perspectives regarding the student's experiences. The researcher also used the drawings of the scenarios to enhance her understanding of the

student's true feelings. The researcher was then able to triangulate all data to determine consistency and trustworthiness of findings.

Student Profiles

The researcher's questioning method allowed a variety of ways the students, parents, and teachers voices could be heard. None of the students in this study had any discipline referrals for the current year. None of the students in the current study lived in what is considered a "nuclear" or intact family. All of the parents of the current students had separated since the birth of these students. The parents or guardians had educational levels as follows: three graduated high school, two received their grade equivalent diploma (GED), one graduated college, and two attended some college. The current work status of these parents or guardians is as follows: one retired, one disabled, two employed full time, and two not employed. Below are individual profiles summarizing the results for the children in this study.

Janet

Janet, age 10, is a fifth grade student at Treutlen Elementary School. Her mother is Black and her father is White. Janet met the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Reading, Language Art, and Math for the current year. Janet's scenarios consisted of a White mean teacher and a White mean student. Janet stated that she knew two people that she thought about when she created her drawings. Janet also drew a White nice teacher and a Black nice student. She stated that she also knew two people these drawings represented and that her Black friends were nice to her. Janet used the multicultural crayons for her drawings. She stated this southern elementary school did meet her needs as a biracial child in curriculum. However, this was not by using the textbook alone. She states, "My teacher has books in her room that did not

come from the library about different races that she lets us read. We have also been able to watch videos through the Internet about different races. Everyone here is nice.” When asked if she felt that students, administrators, and teachers treated her equally at this school, Janet replied, “My teachers treat me like everyone else. They do not see a mixed child, they just see a child.” Janet said she mainly played with Black children because most of her friends were Black. Janet was asked if she would recommend this school system to other biracial students. She stated, “It is a good school and no one would treat them any different either.”

Janet’s parents felt their child was welcome at this southern elementary school. They stated “Everyone is always eager to help you.” These parents talked with their daughter in regard to being biracial saying, “I teach my children to love and respect both races.” These parents did not feel it was the school’s responsibility to teach their child about being biracial. They felt there were equal opportunities for both races in the South and both races could get along without race being an issue.

Connie

Connie, age 10, is a fourth grade biracial student at Treutlen Elementary School. Her mother is White and her father is Black. Connie met the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Math and she exceeded the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Reading and Language Arts for the current year. Connie’s scenarios consisted of a Chinese mean teacher and a “mixed” (term used by students) mean student. Connie stated that she did not know why she chose these races. They were just the first to come to her mind when she created her drawings. Connie drew a “mixed” nice teacher and a “mixed” nice student. She stated that she did

not know a “mixed” teacher but that she drew the “mixed” student to represent her brother who was always nice to her. Connie used the multicultural crayons for her drawings. She used the primary colors for hair color only. She stated this southern elementary school did meet her needs as a biracial child in curriculum. She said, “My teacher talks with us about racial issues” such as respect for all races and not to pick on someone different. Connie felt the ability to communicate with her teacher and classmates about issues concerning her race. When asked if she felt that students, administrators, and teachers treated her equally at this school, Connie replied that she was treated equally in this southern elementary school by administrators and teachers. However, she was not treated equally by some of the students. She referenced to a situation where a child would not play with her because she was “black”. This happened when she was in first grade, but she still remembers the hurt she felt being rejected by another student. When asked do you prefer to play with Black children or White children and why, Connie stated, “My mother teaches me not to judge other people by their color. I have two best friends, one is White and one is Black. I play with both of them”. Connie said she would recommend this school system to another biracial child because she said, “People are nice here”.

Connie’s mother also felt that Connie had a positive educational experience in this southern school system. She felt Connie and herself were welcome at the school. She stated, “Everyone is always friendly and speaks to us as we walk through the school.” This parent talked with her daughter in regard to being biracial saying, “My kids are taught not to see color. My children are taught to be strong in character because they will face more prejudice than a black person or a white person!” This parent did not feel it

was the school's responsibility to teach her child about being biracial. She felt there were not equal opportunities for both races in the South but both races could get along without race being an issue.

Angie

Angie, age 9, is a fourth grade student at Treutlen Elementary School. Her mother is Black and her father is White. Angie met the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Reading and she exceeded the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Math. However, Angie did not meet the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Language Arts for the current year. Angie's scenarios consisted of a White mean teacher as well as a White nice teacher. Angie's drawings represented actual teachers within our school system which Angie named on her drawings. Angie drew a "mixed" mean student and a Black nice student. She stated that she did not know why she chose a "mixed" mean student but that she drew the Black nice student to represent a friend who was always funny. Angie used the multicultural crayons for her drawings. She used the primary colors to color clothes on the drawings. She stated this southern elementary school did meet her needs as a biracial child in curriculum. She said she enjoyed learning in this school and felt that she was included by her teacher in the curriculum. She could discuss being biracial in the class and how her experiences affected her life and choices. When asked if she felt that students, administrators, and teachers treated her equally at this school Angie replied, "We are all treated the same. They are all nice to us." When asked do you prefer to play with Black children or White children and why, Angie said she mainly played with Black. "I have a black mother and I thought I was supposed to go by her color. I live with her and I am mostly around black children so that is who I play with." Angie was asked if

she would recommend this school system to other biracial students. She stated, “Yes, we feel welcome in this school. They have both white and black teachers and they have some mixed students already that would play with them and help them at recess.”

Angie’s parents felt their child was welcome at this southern elementary school. They stated “My children say they are always treated like everyone else here.” These parents talked with their daughter in regard to being biracial saying, “I teach my children to love and respect both races. ... You get the best of both worlds, is what we say at home.” These parents did not feel it was the school’s responsibility to teach their child about being biracial. However, Angie’s mother stated that she felt if she did not discuss these issues with her daughter no one else would. She felt there were equal opportunities for both races in the South and both races could get along without race being an issue. Angie’s mother said, “In the eleven and a half year interracial relationship we had (herself and her husband), we were in peace.”

Christy

Christy, age 10, is a fourth grade student at Treutlen Elementary School. Her Mother is White and her father is Black. Christy met the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Reading, Math and Language Arts for the current year. She lives with her grandparents, who are both White. Christy’s scenarios consisted of a White mean teacher as well as a White mean student. Christy stated she did not know why she drew this race as mean; there was “no reason”. Christy drew a “mixed” nice teacher and a “mixed” nice student. She stated that she did not know why she chose a “mixed” nice teacher or student. Christy used the multicultural crayons for her drawings. She used the primary colors to color clothes on the drawings. Christy was

very creative with her drawings and colorful. The researcher noted that even though she used many primary colors she did not use them for skin tones. She preferred the multicultural crayons for the skin tones (see Appendix H). She stated this southern elementary school did meet her needs as a biracial child in curriculum. She said she was included and asked about her experiences in her classroom. She felt as if she were a part of her classroom and her teacher made it a point to treat her classroom as a community of learners. Christy said her teacher stated they were “family” in their classroom and they would be there for one another throughout the school year. When asked if she felt that students, administrators, and teachers treated her equally at this school Christy replied, “The teachers treat us all the same but sometimes the students can pick. It is the same for the white and black students too. They don’t treat us any different than the other students. We can also visit the counselor if we need to talk with someone. The teacher does not ask any questions, she just lets us go see the counselor.” When Christy was asked, do you prefer to play with Black children or White children and why, Christy said she mainly played with Black children. She stated, “I live with my white grandparents and I play with mostly white children at home so when I come to school I play with black children.” Christy was asked if she would recommend this school system to other biracial students. She stated, “Yes, it is a good school”.

Christy’s grandmother also felt that Christy had a positive educational experience in this southern school system. She felt that both Christy and she were welcome at the school. She stated, “The teachers are eager to help you find who you are looking for.” This grandparent talked with her granddaughter in regard to being biracial saying “she has handled things well and has a positive outlook on life...I speak positively to her”. Her

grandfather stated, "I think her attitudes and all other things work out well." This grandparent did not feel it was the school's responsibility to teach her grandchild about being biracial but did feel that the school did a great job including her granddaughter through the curriculum. She mentioned hearing her granddaughter discuss many topics previously discussed in her classroom and how her teacher had included her in the discussion. Christy's grandmother stated, "she was always eager to help her granddaughter's class out because her teacher had been so good to her." She felt there were equal opportunities for both races in the South and both races could get along without race being an issue. She stated she and all members of her family had never had any problems with the opportunities of the South, this even being the case when her daughter was directly involved with those of the Black race.

Brook

Brook, age 8, is a third grade biracial student at Treutlen Elementary School. Her Mother is White and her father is Black. Brook met the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Reading, Math and Language Arts for the current year. Brook's scenarios consisted of mean teachers and students as well as nice students all being "mixed". She stated there was no reason why she chose that race. Brook drew a "Mexican" nice teacher and again did not have a reason for doing so. Brook used the multicultural crayons for her drawings for skin tones only. She used the primary colors to color clothes and hair on the drawings. The researcher noted again that even though Brook used many primary colors she did not use them for skin tones. She preferred the multicultural crayons for the skin tones. Brook chose one of the darker multicultural crayons for the skin tone, which was close to a brown primary color.

However, she did not use the primary brown color for the skin. She stated this southern elementary school did meet her needs as a biracial child in curriculum. She said, “Our teachers help us learn and it don’t matter what color we are or our parents they just treat us all the same.” She said even though her teacher this year was Black, she called on her to discuss her expertise of being biracial. She felt she was included in curriculum even if not directly in the textbook. She felt her teacher did a great job including her through discussion and classroom resources. She stated, “My teacher has many books that we can look through and read about different races.” When asked if she felt that students, administrators, and teachers treated her equally at this school Brook replied, “They don’t care I am mixed.” When asked do you prefer to play with Black children or White children and why, Brook stated that she mostly played with Black or other “mixed” children. Brook stated she did not know why she chose the friends she did, “They were just nice.” She had remained friends with the same girls for several years and they happen to be Black and “mixed”. Brook said she would recommend this school system to another biracial child because she said, “We have a white assistant principal and a black principal so they would not treat us different.”

Brook’s parents agreed their child was welcome at this southern elementary school. They were always treated well whether they were coming to pick their child up from school or whether they had a question for the teacher. They also agreed her educational experiences had been positive, meaning she had not been teased. These parents did not feel it was the school’s responsibility to teach their child about being biracial. They felt it was their responsibility as parents to give that information to their child. However, they also wanted their child included in the curriculum which they felt their child’s teacher

did. They felt there were not equal opportunities for both races in the South and both races could not get along without race being an issue. These parents did not elaborate on this subject but felt that if a person was willing to work hard and do their best they would have the opportunity to do so in the South. They did not feel the South would be any different than any other region.

Linda

Linda, age 8, is a third grade biracial student at Treutlen Elementary School. Her Mother is White and her father is Black. Linda met the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Reading, but she did not meet the state mandated score on the Criterion Referenced Competency test in Math and Language Arts for the current year. She lives with her grandparents, who are White. Linda's scenarios consisted of mean teachers and students being White. She stated she knew a White teacher that her drawing represented but she did not state why she drew a mean student. Linda drew a White nice student and a "mixed" nice teacher but again did not have a reason for doing so. Linda used the multicultural crayons for her drawings for skin tones only. She did not use any primary colors. The researcher noted that Linda was very detailed in her drawings including voice captions, tears, chalk boards, and sharing among friends (see Appendix G). She stated this southern elementary school did meet her needs as a biracial child in curriculum. She stated that the teachers taught her well. When asked do you prefer to play with Black children or White children and why, Linda stated that she mostly played with Black children. Linda did feel that she was more accepted by the Black children than the White children. Linda said she would recommend this school system to another biracial child. She felt they would be treated well and would learn a lot

at this school. Researcher Note: I could not help but notice how Linda's perception of the school and the facts did not correlate. This is a child that has not met the state mandated scores in two out of three curriculum areas but Linda still feels her needs are being met through the curriculum. If her test scores do not meet the state mandated scores then Linda's needs through curriculum are not being met. Linda also stated she was "treated well" at this school but in the following information from Linda's grandparents this also does not correlate to the facts given.

Linda's grandmother felt that Linda had not had a positive educational experience in this southern school system due to the fact that Linda had been picked on at times but noted these instances were mainly on the bus. She felt that both Linda and she were welcome at the school but noted Linda had trouble with some students. This grandparent talked with her granddaughter in regard to being biracial but states that Linda has had some trouble with "picking" from other students. She states, "She (Linda) was called a nigger". This grandparent did not feel it was the school's responsibility to teach her grandchild about being biracial but felt it was the school's responsibility to shield Linda from racism related to her being biracial. She felt there were not equal opportunities for both races in the South and both races could not get along whether race was an issue or not. These grandparents had had many issues dealing with rejection throughout their communities and from both Black and White cultures. This family was dealing with many anger issues over these situations of Linda not being accepted. It was very hard for the grandparents not to be able to give Linda what she wanted, which at this time in her life was to be completely White.

The researcher was able to determine from the amount of data gathered on this student and the comparison of Linda's drawings with those of other students, such as Christy, that "Linda" was not truthful with her about her answers (see Appendices G & H). Linda's drawings were much more detailed compared to the other students, revealing a troubled student. Linda depicted a student being sent to detention and a student being scolded by a teacher. Linda's drawings were negative overall. While Linda responded in the interview that her educational experiences had been good and she had not had any problems, data gathered by her guardians told differently. The other five student's data correlated with all others interviewed, as well as their drawings, and thus the researcher felt that power did not influence these student's responses.

Summary of Student Profiles

The researcher noted that the majority of the students and parents interviewed felt their child has had a positive educational experience in this southern elementary school. By the term positive, the researcher means the children were not rejected socially and their academics mostly met or exceeded state mandated scores. While there were some areas such as reading for some and math for others which needed improvement, the researcher notes this could be associated with differences among the children's intelligences. These deficiencies could also be related to areas outside of the school such as in the homes of the children themselves such as whether the student had anyone to study with and someone to work on the student's deficiencies throughout the year.

The majority of the biracial children in this study associated mostly with children of the Black race. This was due to many reasons, being that they played with only White friends at home and Black friends at school, or that they lived with their Black parents

and played with those they played with outside of school. Each student had her own reasons for playing with whom she did, however, no student stated that she felt rejected by any other race as to why they associated with who they did.

Most of the students also drew a mean White teacher and in some instances stated this was because they knew or had been taught by a White teacher that was mean. The researcher would like to note this information could have been influenced due to the fact in every grade there is only one and no more than two Black teachers, as compared to four to five White teachers in every grade. The biracial child would have a greater chance of being taught by a White teacher and they would have more encounters with White teachers throughout the school system due to this majority.

Most of the children said they would recommend this school system to other biracial children. The responses were due to the people at this school being “nice” to them. They stated they did feel the people at this school would not treat them any differently than they had been treated. The children did feel this was a “good” school to attend.

Most parents stated it was their responsibility to speak with their children about their race and share their knowledge with their children. The researcher could see the struggles through the writings of the parents even more so than the interviews with the students. The parents wrote of their child being called, “a nigger”. However, the researcher was surprised to find that these instances only occurred with a couple of students. Most parents felt that their children had gone through the normal childhood experiences of being called names; this was the common consensus among the parents.

They did not want their child singled out or taught any differently than any other student. They just wanted them to be treated fairly and not to be judged by their skin color.

As the researcher reviewed these results, she noted that parents did not want children singled out. The parents did not want the school to teach their child about their heritages. The parents felt this was their right and were doing so. The researcher also noted that due to this study being researched in the south, the mentality may be to “leave well enough alone”. Since their children were welcomed at the school and treated equally as defined by the parents, then that was “good enough” for them and they were not going to ask for more such as a celebration of diversity. The parents must not be relieved of their responsibility to their biracial children. They too must be held accountable for the inclusion of the biracial child in the classroom today. If their children are not being included then it is the parent or guardian’s responsibility to make this inclusion happen. They must bring this to the attention of the teacher as well as the administration. The researcher feels that more knowledge is needed in regard to the parents or guardians in these situations. The parents or guardians need to be informed that the celebration of their child’s diversity is not asking for “more” from the classroom, however, it is the responsibility of this school system to include their child on a daily basis in every educational experience. The researcher feels that more education in this area is needed for parents or guardians of biracial children especially in the south.

Teachers

The current research gathered information from 16 teachers in grades three through five of this southern elementary school in which these biracial children attended. The teaching experience of these respondents ranged from one year to thirty-one years.

Overall, none of the teachers felt that if a biracial child was in their classroom it meant more work for them such as having to do anymore for the biracial child than they would do for any other child in their classroom. One teacher stated, “I don’t consider race a factor in having to do more work. I don’t decide that until I see where they (the students) are and which (subject) areas may need extra emphasis.” Twenty percent of the teachers inquired about race at the parent/teacher conferences. All the teachers stated they had parent/teacher conferences at the beginning of the year but stated, “This was not for the purpose that they were a biracial child”. They did this with all students’ parents. The teachers stated this was a time to meet the parents and have the parents meet them. It was also a time to find out if the students may possibly need any extra services such as special education students or those students in need of speech rehabilitation. If there was a concern regarding the race of the biracial child, it would be welcomed at this initial meeting. However, the conference itself was not for the purpose of discussing race, but rather the best means of educating the child no matter the race of the child. The researcher feels this is a “don’t ask, don’t tell” situation where if the teachers do not inquire about the racial identity of the student then they can be naive about any situations that may occur in the future. The teacher must inquire and open the conversation path for these parents and guardians. The parents and guardians in the teacher’s domain and the teacher is in charge of the situation. Therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to inquire. If he/she does not inquire at this time and allow dialogue then the teacher is marginalizing racism and sidelining the issues at hand.

Seventy percent of the teachers stated they did discuss race in their classrooms and how it related to individuals, while the other thirty percent did not. Those that did

discuss these issues stated that if a situation arose about race, they would discuss it with the class keeping the well being of the students in mind. The teachers stated they never pressured a student to discuss their race. However, if a student felt they wanted or needed to do so, their views were welcomed. The researcher does note that those teachers who did not discuss racial issues at all did so for the reasons above. They were afraid of emotionally hurting a student or felt that it would embarrass the student if the discussion was engaged. Most stated the discussions were led by the curriculum such as in Social Studies in the unit on slavery. The researcher is obligated to say that this is not acceptable in our classrooms today, for the biracial students to only be included when they feel they would like to discuss their race or when a chapter studied once a year leads to the discussion of their race. The biracial students must be included in classroom discussion on a daily basis in order to be truly justified and a member of the classroom community.

Ninety percent stated the current curriculum does meet the needs of the biracial children in their school system. However, this was not by textbook alone. This was through the teachers utilizing the classroom libraries, the media center, and current video choices such as, through united online streaming. The teachers noted that the resources today are better than in the past with more books published on the biracial child to bring into the classroom, as well as, biracial skin toned dolls, biracial posters, and bulletin board displays. The teachers validated this information on the state mandated test scores. If the students met or exceeded these test scores then the teachers of this school system felt the child's academic needs were being met. However, what one must consider is the fact that because a student meets or exceeds a score on a state test this does not justify the fact that their academic needs as a student were met at all. From the previous information

we see that the biracial students of this southern school system are indeed silenced throughout the school year as to where they belong in this school community. One hundred percent stated that this southern elementary school had the resources to meet the needs of the biracial child. However, they also noted that while the resources were available, it was the teachers' responsibility to search them out and make them accessible to the students.

We must realize while scanning these results that even though these students and parents stated their children were welcomed at this southern school, many others would see these results as a means to sideline racism. Critical Race Theory states that we must have an understanding that racism is persistent in the lives of people of color including the biracial child. While these students have not been faced with blatant racism, the fact that the majority of these six students feel more comfortable with their black counterparts than their white counterparts lends the researcher to believe racism is present, even if indirectly.

The researcher does note that the teachers have taken some steps in the classrooms to include the biracial child, however, this school system has not done enough through CRT in changing the realities of racism in public institutions such as education. CRT uses the experiences of the disciplines involved to determine their needs and to develop new approaches to education. Stovall (2005) stated that through CRT, the researcher accomplishes "naming, exposing, giving voice, and reanalyzing" (p. 200). Critiquing is not enough but rather the school systems must address the needs and concerns for these students. This school system does have "action researchers" who are

demonstrating an attempt to focus on the negative realities in this public school but much more must be done.

Summary

These students have faced minimal racism directly. They feel they are accepted and welcomed and their needs as a biracial child are being met by this southern elementary school. The parents feel their children have had a positive educational experience in this school system. While they are aware of racism their child has had to endure, they state it is no more than an average child. The teachers feel their school does not have adequate textbook material to support the biracial children in their classrooms and are taking the necessary measures to ensure the biracial children in their school system do not lack sufficient materials in the classroom by using videos, classroom libraries, and individual reports. The teachers must also include the biracial student daily. This is not something that can be done a couple times a year or when a student would like to discuss their race. If that is the case as it is in this research the educators are sidelining the racial issues and doing nothing to include the biracial child in meaningful ways. While this school system is trying to make a difference it does have more that needs to be done such as desegregating the student body as well as the faculty. It must also begin to include the biracial student and their families from the first meeting and into the daily conversations in the class. The biracial child must feel as though she belongs to feel accepted.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the current research and the important conclusions drawn from the data. It provides a discussion of implications for action of the research as well as the author's recommendations for future research in this area. The author grounds the conclusions in the very words of the participants involved in the study and through research by scholars such as Pinar, Wardle, and Root.

Summary of the Study

This study explored two major questions: 1) Is there a relationship between racial identity and academic experiences? and 2) Does the curriculum in this southern elementary school meet the academic needs of the biracial child and include the biracial child? The current research focused primarily on biracial female students in grades three through five in one southern elementary school. The diversity they bring into the schools lends much needed information to the classrooms. However, many times this diverse population never gets the opportunity to share the experiences of what they may have encountered throughout a school day. Educators are left to fill in the gaps of our educational systems to ensure that all diverse populations are present and accounted for in the classroom curriculum. The educators must use the knowledge these students bring with them to class to gain an understanding of all students involved. They must also borrow instructional tools from media centers, classroom libraries, and video libraries. It takes educators, as well as, parents and communities to create a positive educational experience for our diverse populations. The question is can this be achieved for a biracial

child in a southern elementary school system? The researcher was truly committed to revealing the academic experiences and gaps in the standard curriculum. The researcher's purpose for this study was to contribute to the understanding of the issue of a southern elementary school meeting the needs, through curriculum, of its biracial students and giving them positive educational experiences as related to their racial identity.

Investigating the research questions was important for explaining the possible oppression these biracial students may relate to daily and/or whether the biracial students of this southern school system have a positive academic environment. It focused on the views of the parents as well as the teachers of these biracial students and the lengths they must go to ensure a positive educational experience for these biracial children in this southern school setting.

The framework used in the current qualitative research was Critical Race Theory. This is an analytical framework that analyzes the merging lines between race, class, and gender inequalities and it addresses social justice, racial oppression, and identity confusion (Gillborn, 2006). CRT is rooted in education. Stovall (2005) states CRT assesses the thematic trends to articulate the experiences of people of color with racism. CRT is aimed at changing the realities of racism in public institutions such as schools. Critical Race Theorists are changing the realities of racism in public institutions such as educational systems today. The methodology used in the current researcher is Critical Inquiry, which was used dually with Social Justice to create "competent communication" among the students and the researcher (Short, 1991, p. 248). This "competent communication" was based on a mutual trust in ideas, facts, values, and interest that people share. The researcher questioned students, parents, teachers, and administrators

asking many questions to get an accurate picture of the educational experiences of a biracial child in the south. The researcher analyzed the data from all parties through questionnaires, tape recording, and educational data. The researcher feels that the combination of critical theory, critical inquiry, and social justice work to enhance one another thus contributing to the current research. Through the data gathered, the researcher was able to gain insight into the daily lives of the biracial children in her school system and explore daily experiences, which may be due to home life, curriculum, relationships, and/or bias. The researcher used this data to determine whether the participants' needs were being met through the curriculum and whether they had a positive educational experience in a southern elementary school system.

Discussions of Findings

Most of the biracial students in this southern elementary school reported positive educational experiences. The researcher does note that while this was the consensus of the majority of students, this was not a unanimous conclusion. The researcher did determine that with at least one participant, power played a part in her answers. The researcher noted that the curriculum allows the biracial students to succeed academically based on state mandated test scores; however, the researcher concluded that the biracial child was indeed absent from the current curriculum in this southern elementary school. The teachers did attempt to close curriculum gaps by searching for educational materials such as videos, classroom libraries, and posters in order to include a child in the classroom discussions. Many times the curriculum of school systems ignores diverse populations all together. This appears concurrent with previous and current research. While the teachers of this school system did attempt to fill the gaps of the curriculum to

include the biracial child, the standard textbook had virtually sidelined the biracial child. Biracial children have been in America since the beginning of slave times so why are they not included in the American classrooms today. Also, the small amount of information that is in the curriculum is of a time when being biracial meant rebelling and “doing something wrong”. Therefore, how can these children feel they are accepted in our classrooms and in our societies? It is unacceptable that the biracial child is absent from our textbooks and more must be required of the textbook industry. The teachers in this school system as well as others must also include the biracial child on a daily basis in all classroom discussions in order for the biracial child to become a part of the classroom community.

It can be concluded that some biracial students in this southern elementary school have been faced with prejudices from other students. The students in this research maintained they had faced prejudices due to their biracial heritage. They had been called names, teased and at times purposely left out due to their skin tone. CRT addresses how racism impedes people of color to function in school. While these students and parents did feel that the students involved in the study were no different than an “average” child growing up, the researcher feels it is notable that these students were victims of racism, which is something a white child usually does not face. Wise (2005) refers to this as “white privilege”. These students were victimized due to a genetic makeup out of their control. The biracial child being genetically different, neither black nor white, but rather a combination of both opened the door for racism among peers. Also, only having a small number of biracial children in each grade allowed students to voice their biases toward the biracial child even more. Children are quick to point out genetic differences and with

the biracial child these differences are prevalent from the first meeting. These differences, along with the location of this study and the history of the rural south, leaves one to question how prevalent racism is in this situation, even though, all participants stated racism was not a major issue. These prejudices are not new and the researcher also notes that for children to bring these prejudices to school they had to be taught in the home, therefore, validating the fact that racism in America is alive and well. Kincheloe (1998) stated we must denormalize whiteness and unlearn racism.

The researcher also concluded that in the case of “Linda” there were emotional concerns about her biracial identity. The guardians spoke that Linda “wanted to be white”. Why? If Linda is not a victim of racism and her educational needs are being met then why would Linda want to be white? Does Linda think her life would be better if she was all white? The researcher is left to question the data received from Linda. The researcher also concluded that those in power positions influenced Linda and she said what she thought the researcher wanted to hear. This information was not necessarily truthful. While the other five students did not seem to have an issue with power nor did they seem to have an issue with their biracial identity the conclusion is that one of the six participants did have an emotional issue with her biracial identity. Therefore, when thinking of all the biracial children in America it is safe to say there are many with emotional concerns that need to be dealt with in the educational systems in the United States. Dr. Wardle (1992, 1994, 1999, 2000, and 2004) stated that in his research children did receive some prejudicial treatment but for the most part they were accepted. In the current study these students did receive some prejudicial treatment they were

mostly accepted and felt welcomed throughout this school from administrators and teachers to the students.

Wardle, Root (2001), and Herring (1992, 1995) also discussed how these children perceived their acceptance through their communities, families, and schools. These three components played a huge role in the lives of biracial children. Wardle states parents must be an advocate for their children and all children have issues of identity, self-worth, and self-esteem. Wardle brings our attention to the fact that teachers must be aware of their own biases in truly being supportive of the biracial child's learning experiences. All the students involved in this research talked of their family and community strengths as well as their acceptance in school. They discussed how they were not looked at as a "color" but rather as a person. The researcher notes that by their color not being acknowledged this is still a form of racism. The students were not aware that by them being treated as everyone else, they were not being treated for who they are.

The current research also correlated with prior research of scholars such as William Pinar (2002, 2004) who discuss the diversity of the classrooms but the non-diverse curriculum. The data gathered found as much with very little discussion of the biracial population in our classroom textbooks nor are there many materials for educators to gather additional information. Had the educators not ventured beyond the classroom materials for their biracial populations, they would have been marginalized as unimportant. While the teachers in the current research did attempt to find material their efforts were insufficient for the biracial child by not including the biracial child in class discussions on a daily basis. Educators must allow the expert knowledge of the biracial students to surface in the classroom.

Researchers such as McIntyre (1997), Kincheloe (1998), Frankenberg (1999), Wise (2005), and others all speak of an uncaring white majority, which is unfeeling and knowingly unaware of the challenges faced by minority groups and a profound “white privilege” used to further oppress and dehumanize this diverse population. The researcher found in this study the white majority also acted in a knowingly unaware manner to justify reasons why they were doing all they could to include the biracial child.

The current research differed from previous research in that it primarily focused on biracial children rather than a multicultural population. The current research went even a step further by defining the term biracial to incorporate only those being fifty percent white and fifty percent black. The current research was conducted in the south whereas the majority of the research read by the author was conducted in the north or Midwest.

It is the researcher’s hope in curriculum studies this study will help in bringing the Eurocentric classrooms to the forefront of people’s minds. Scholars such as William Pinar (2002, 2004) have discussed the Eurocentric classrooms but the non-Eurocentric curriculum for many years. As seen through this researcher’s study, we see again how the biracial child was left out of the curriculum and not included on a daily basis throughout the curriculum. Educators must focus on the discourse of the student’s understanding of the curriculum. A student must see the need for the skill and the need for his/her understanding of the concept in order for usage. When these students find the curriculum useful, they will invest in the curriculum for profound understanding. In doing this, the researcher hopes these conclusions promote change in our classrooms. One aspect of curriculum theory is discovering oneself and how that self relates with others. Curriculum

theory is also about discovering how school subjects correlate with oneself and society and teachers not allowing themselves to be “exploited by their political vulnerability” but rather stepping outside of the box to include the biracial students in their classrooms (Pinar, 2004, p. 239). Included in this paradigm shift is the realization that racial prejudice still exists. Wardle (2004) suggested a “prejudice reduction” allowing students to analyze their own biases toward “others” in order to accept the “others” point of view. Educators must understand that the classroom textbook alone is not sufficient for the biracial students within a school system. In the classrooms teachers must not feel their way is the only way. By doing this, it disempowers the students and denies them their own expert knowledge (Grumet, 1988). Teachers receptive to curriculum theory and those willing to engage in the “complicated conversations” will make great strides in the academic experiences and their students will flourish. The community of the biracial student and the school system must work together for the betterment of the biracial child, and the educators, administrators, and parents must reach far beyond the educational walls for our biracial students to have positive educational and life experiences. It is also the researcher’s hope that through research such as this we can erase the bias and view people as just that, members of a living, breathing, feeling, society. Wise stated that one way to include members of the biracial population and ensure their growth through identity, self- worth, and self-esteem is to simply listen to what they have to say.

The overall themes in the current research imply that this southern elementary school has created a positive educational experience for the biracial population according to the participants involved. They all described themselves as “mixed” being fully aware of the two races they were a part of and proud of each race. Even though, when each

student had a choice, the student would always gravitate toward the black race. This in turn would lead the researcher to conclude that there is a certain degree of racism prevalent even if it is not visible. They all felt as though they were welcomed at this school and their teachers were fulfilling their academic needs. This southern elementary school has also ventured beyond the classroom to incorporate knowledge from the students as well as media centers, video libraries and classroom libraries. However, Cruz-Jansen (1999) states curricula integrates all groups that comprise our society and explores the true meaning of America. This school does not include biracial curricula in everyday classroom activities. They must incorporate a multicultural curriculum for their biracial race. As local school boards and educators look toward enhancing the education of the biracial student, it is the researcher's hope that they will use the conclusions of this study to create positive learning environments for their biracial students and choose curriculums that target the biracial students in their textbooks.

The majority of the participants chose friends from the Black race. Grant and Sleeter (1986) stated students' interracial friendship patterns are influenced primarily by the racial makeup and distribution of the community. They learn about race relations from their experiences in their community. They also noted that students related positively to teachers who were pleasant to them personally and did not relate or related negatively to those teachers who were not pleasant to them personally. In this southern school system the teachers segregated themselves at faculty meetings, lunch, and other school functions. Not always but a majority of the time, the teachers associated with like colors. Students in turn could notice this, especially the biracial child, searching for

acceptance. Teachers must be aware of their own biases toward other races to allow a truly supportive environment.

Also, this segregation remains prevalent in the community outside the school system. For example, in church, blacks and whites are almost always segregated. Segregation is also noticed in town hall meetings, spectators at sporting events, beauty pageants, and other festivals, parades, and public events. Although, these separations of race are usually peaceful, one would think these segregations are influencing the children who are attending these events, especially the biracial child. While educators may not know the degree of confusion for the biracial child, nor can they change the previous generations, educators can make a difference in the early childhood setting among the present generation to include the biracial child in the daily curriculum.

Curriculum theory brings to the forefront the realization that most local school boards are empowered by business minds. However, all members of the decision making body must realize our children are not products produced through factory production lines. If there are no classroom textbooks in publication that target the biracial child, it is the school's responsibility to enhance classroom libraries, videos, and media centers to cover the neglected areas of education. It is also the teachers' responsibility to search these avenues of education and use the productions in their classrooms. The teacher must also not forget that the biracial child brings a wealth of knowledge with them to the classroom. They are the experts on the subject of biracial children. Educators must allow these students their time to share their experiences daily and as a society listen and learn from them. We must not continue to silence the oppressed but empower them to flourish and enhance our society as a whole. Not only limiting the discussions just to biracial

children but also making the black race and white race aware that this genetic make-up is now a part of our society and is here to stay. This genetic make-up of fifty percent black and fifty percent white is not going to disappear; rather it is going to grow in numbers throughout our society. Through the engaging in curriculum theory educators can open a world of knowledge in the classroom. Through social justice we can create a new evolution of education.

The parents of these students also said their children had positive educational experiences within this southern school system. The parents were aware of what their children may face in a school system being a biracial child. They discussed with their children situations such as racism or bias that they may face being a biracial child. The parents also discussed with their children positive ways of dealing with these situations such as ignoring the other person's ignorance and how to feel positive about themselves by telling them they were the best of both worlds. The parents felt their children were welcomed by this school system as were they. The parents did believe their children were being included and that the teachers were filling the gaps within the standard curriculum. However, it is noted from a researcher's and educator's point of view, this would not be the case in this study. The research has shown how the children were not included as they should have been and while the teachers did attempt to fill curriculum gaps, much more needs to be done, such as including the biracial child in daily discussions and not just pulling them in on a chapter about slavery.

The researcher notes that the above themes do relate to the purpose of the study. She determined there is a relationship between racial identity and academic experiences. This is based on the data that all the students performed well on the state mandated test

with the exception of the student that had the worst experiences in school related to racial identity. The researcher also notes that while the school's standard curriculum did have educational gaps in reference to the biracial child, the teachers of this school system attempted to fill those gaps by exploring other means of education for academic purposes only such as test results. The teachers did not feel having biracial students in their classroom meant more work for them. The teachers allowed the biracial students to enhance classroom discussions and searched for literature that included the biracial child, however, limited time and effort was implemented in these discussions.

The reality is that most biracial children are educated through our public educational setting. Teachers and administrators have an undeniably difficult profession being in a classroom under probation, being categorized by scores of mandatory state regulated testing, and having students that may have to fend for themselves at home. However, this does not absolve them from their responsibilities to these biracial students. Teachers must continue to ensure that each student reflects his/her own self worth and his/her importance to the world while also dealing with pressures from an administration that is state test score driven. Administrators have their own pressures from superintendents and the bureaucratic hierarchies of local school systems. Students, however, have all of this to deal with as well as many trials at home. We must ensure that the educational experiences the biracial students have are positive and deconstruct the negative realities in public schools. We have to bridge the gap and combine all races to create one equal society.

As stated best by Dr. Martin Luther King:

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Implications

The current research implies the need to reeducate college faculty and implement biracial departments within the colleges (Wardle 1999, 2004). We also need to create activities for college students to become aware of biracial students and their educational experiences such as seminars or in-services. We must make opportunities for teachers to be more educated about biracial children. Teachers must inquire about educational materials for the biracial children and ask why they are not included. Teachers must also research grants in order to provide classrooms with all the materials to enhance learning of the biracial child. Administrators must incorporate accountability for educators and they must evaluate their teaching abilities for biracial students. This may be in the form of including a section on weekly lesson plans and being aware of inclusion of the biracial students during observations. It may also be included as local requirements toward certification. Teachers need to have recent credits or professional learning units in

biracial studies. We also need to develop support groups for biracial children within our school systems. All school systems, administrators, and educators must be held accountable for ensuring a positive learning environment for our biracial students. Classrooms must have the proper materials and teachers and administrators must have the proper knowledge for including the biracial child.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the understanding of the issue of a southern elementary school meeting the needs through curriculum for its biracial students and giving them educational experiences related to racial identity. With this purpose in mind and the results obtained from this study, the following recommendations are made.

Because data for this study was limited to one southern elementary school the researcher would recommend a comparison of two or more elementary schools in the south, in other words a larger, funded, multi-site study.

The researcher would recommend a larger sample size including both males and females because this data contained only six female biracial children. This is recommended in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the biracial child as a whole from the male and female prospective.

Due to the fact that this data was gathered from only one county, the researcher would recommend comparing two or more southern elementary schools from surrounding counties, in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the impact of curriculum and a positive educational experience on the biracial students in the south.

The researcher would also suggest conducting a study with a researcher who is not in a power role within the school system. This would determine if the results would

be different and also verify whether power may have played a part in the data that was collected.

Since this research was conducted in only the elementary setting, the researcher would recommend comparing an entire school setting from the elementary school to the high school to acquire differences among student ages and schools.

This research was conducted in a low socio-economic, rural, southern region. The researcher would also recommend comparing schools of higher socio-economic regions, as well as, comparing geographical regions to one another.

There is a need for further exploratory research to examine the relationship between the biracial child's racial identity and his/her educational experiences in the South. These studies may provide greater clarity and unity in the educational community for the biracial child in the South. This research will also help educators better understand the needs of the biracial child as well as the benefits of having a biracial child in our classrooms.

Concluding Thought

The current research has proven that in this southern elementary school system the educators are attempting to be "action researchers" of the future. They have brought the expert knowledge of our biracial population into the classroom; however, this is not enough. They must include these students on a daily basis and not just when they feel like talking about being biracial or when they happen to be on a unit about slavery. The educational system as a whole must have a multicultural curricula that is inclusive and human (Cruz-Jansen, 1999) to fill voids in the current curriculum. This needs to be implemented for grades K-12 as a standard operation and not left to the teacher's

discretion as to when they feel it should be implemented. The teachers utilized supplemental materials from outside the classroom to bridge the gap between the insufficiency of the textbook and the ever-sufficient classroom of knowledge. It is the researcher's belief and inspiration that this study be one referred to by other school systems in search of marginalizing diversity among its school's population. In doing so, others will see that while attempting to include diversity those involved must not be naïve to justify the reasons for their actions. They must accept the responsibility, make the necessary changes, and move on to a more accepting society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Veazey Hall 2021
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Julie Kight
109 Red Fox Trail
Dublin, GA-31021

CC: William Reynolds
P.O. Box-8144

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: December 7, 2007

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H08091**, and titled "**Growing up Biracial in a Southern Elementary School**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



N. Scott Pierce
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

Appendix B
Parental Permission Form

Current Date _____

Dear Parents:

I am a doctoral student in school curriculum and leadership at Georgia Southern University and I am writing my doctoral dissertation on race awareness in biracial children. My interest in this subject is professional. I am currently a fourth grade teacher at Treutlen Elementary School.

What is generally known about race awareness in children is primarily based on research that has been conducted in the Northern and Western states. We know very little about how biracial children develop awareness of racial identity in the South. The research study in which you are being asked to participate has not been conducted in a southern elementary school setting. I think it will be an important contribution to our knowledge in education.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to allow your child and yourself to participate in my research study. It will consist of an interview with yourself and your child at the school, as well as picture drawings by your child. I will also need your permission to view your child's State test scores, discipline records, and counseling records for comparison with overall school population. The data collected will be of a confidential nature and any reports or publications made on this research will disguise your identity as well as your child's identity.

I am requesting that you sign this statement to indicate that you understand the conditions of the study and are willing to participate and allow your child to participate. If you have any questions please feel free to ask them at this time.

PARENT _____

EXAMINER _____

DATE _____

Appendix C Scenarios/ Child Drawings

“Now I will read each scenario for you twice giving you time after each to draw your picture. I want you to listen to each scenario carefully and then draw the first picture that comes to your mind based on the scenario read. If you need the scenario read more than twice please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

Scenario 1: There is a teacher. The teacher yells a lot at the students. The teacher is not friendly in the hallway. The teacher does not care about the students.

Scenario 2: There is a teacher. The teacher is very nice and understanding of the students. The teacher listens to the students and is concerned about their education.

Scenario 3: There is a child at school who is a bully. This child is always pushing other students around and calling them names. This child is not fun to be around and other students are afraid of the bully.

Scenario 4: There is a child who is always thinking of others' feelings. This child is very nice and always shares with everyone. This child is fun to be with at school.

* After each scenario is given the child will be allowed time to draw their picture. The discussion about the pictures will be at the end of scenario 4. This discussion will be letting the child tell me about the pictures they drew and why they drew the characters as they did.

Appendix D
Interview Questions for Child

“Now I would like to ask you a few simple questions. Please answer each question. If you do not understand a question please feel free to ask for my assistance in explaining the question. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

(A) Demographic Questions

Name _____

Age _____

Sex _____

Race _____

1. Who would you say are your three best friends?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. Imagine you are having a party that you can invite four children to at your house. What are the names of the four children you would invite?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

3. Do you feel white students and adults accept you at your school? Black students and adults at your school? If no, explain:

4. Do you relate better with whites or blacks?

Why? _____

5. How do you feel about being biracial?

6. How do most of your teachers react to you and has this affected your educational experience?

(B) Activities

Now choose two children you would like to do each of the following activities with. You may choose the same child as many times as you would like. You do not have to choose a different child for each activity. Think about each activity carefully before you choose two children to do it with.

1. Sit next to in class _____, _____
2. Share your snacks with. _____,

3. Go on vacation with your family _____,

4. Have on your team in a game _____, _____
5. Play with one day on the playground _____, _____
6. Invite for dinner with your family _____,

7. Lend a pencil to in class _____,

8. Spend the night at your house _____, _____

(C) Real Identity

If you could actually be one of these children which one would you rather be? Why?

(D) Stereotypes

Can you tell me what race you first think of when you hear the following job descriptions?

1. Farmer _____
2. Mechanic _____
3. Teacher _____
4. Principal _____
5. Doctor _____
6. Janitor _____

Appendix E
Questionnaire Questions for Parents

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. If you do not understand a question feel free to ask me to explain the question to you.

Demographic Questions

1. Name _____

2. Date of birth _____

3. Country of birth _____

4. Marital status: M/S/D/Single _____

5. Number of children _____

6. Mother's parents: Alive		In this country
YES/NO		YES/NO

7. Education: Did you graduate high school? YES/NO

Did you receive a GED? YES/NO

Did you graduate college? YES/NO

Did you attend some college? YES/NO

8. Are you currently employed? YES/NO Part Time or Full Time?

What is your job? _____

(A) Neighbors

9. Do you feel white students and adults at your school accept your child? Black students and adults at your school? If no, explain:

9. Does your child relate better with whites or blacks?

Why? _____

10. How do you feel about your child being biracial?

11. How do most of your child's teachers react to them and has this affected your child's educational experience?

12. How many families and single people do you know within 10 minutes' walk of where you live? _____

13. Is there anyone near where you live that regularly keeps your children? _____

14. In what way are your neighbors unfriendly? _____

(B) Friends

15. Who would you say is your child's best friend in the area? _____

16. How often does your child have friends over to your house? _____

17. How often do you have friends over at your house? _____

18. Do your friends and your husband's friends get along with one another? _____

19. Are both sets of friends over at your house at the same time? _____

(C) Relatives

20. Which relatives does your child see most often? _____

21. How often does she see these relatives? _____

22. Which relative would you say your child is the closest to? _____

(D) School

23. Who would you say are your child's three best friends at school?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

24. Has your child ever suffered from any racial prejudice at school? If so by whom?

Briefly

explain. _____

25. Would you say your child mostly interacts with more white children, black children, or interracial children? _____

26. At this time please write any further comments that you feel I could use in my study such as attitudes, academic concerns, curriculum concerns, or anything you would like to add. _____

(E)

I would like to know what you personally think about these statements. Please say whether you disagree/agree/or do not know.

1. Some colored people use their race as an excuse. _____

2. Biracial children living in southern Georgia are going to be treated as colored when they grow up. _____

3. Parents of biracial children should not try to talk to them about what race they belong to. _____

4. I sometimes think white and black will never live in peace in southern Georgia. _____

5. "Black is beautiful" is a good slogan to teach biracial children. _____

6. There is no real conflict between races in southern Georgia and if people would quit calling attention to race, there would be no conflict at all. _____

7. Southern Georgia offers equal opportunities to all races. _____

8. My advice to parents is to encourage your child to state the race he/she *looks* more like. _____

9. Biracial children should be taught as much as possible about both parents. _____
10. It is the schools responsibility to teach biracial children about their heritages. _____
11. Teachers at this school show no biases toward biracial children. _____
12. My child has had a positive educational experience. _____
13. The teachers at this school go the extra mile to teach biracial children in a non-threatening manner. _____
14. As a parent I feel my child is welcome at this school. _____
15. The teachers inquire about my child's racial identity. _____
16. I feel my child is more accepted by one race than the other. _____

Thank you so much for your help and support in this study.

Appendix F
Teacher Questionnaire

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. If you do not understand a question feel free to ask me to explain the question to you.

Name _____

Grade Taught _____

Teaching Experience _____

1. Have you ever taught in another school system? _____
2. How did that system compare to this one in meeting the needs of biracial children? _____
3. How do you feel when you realize you have a biracial child in your classroom?

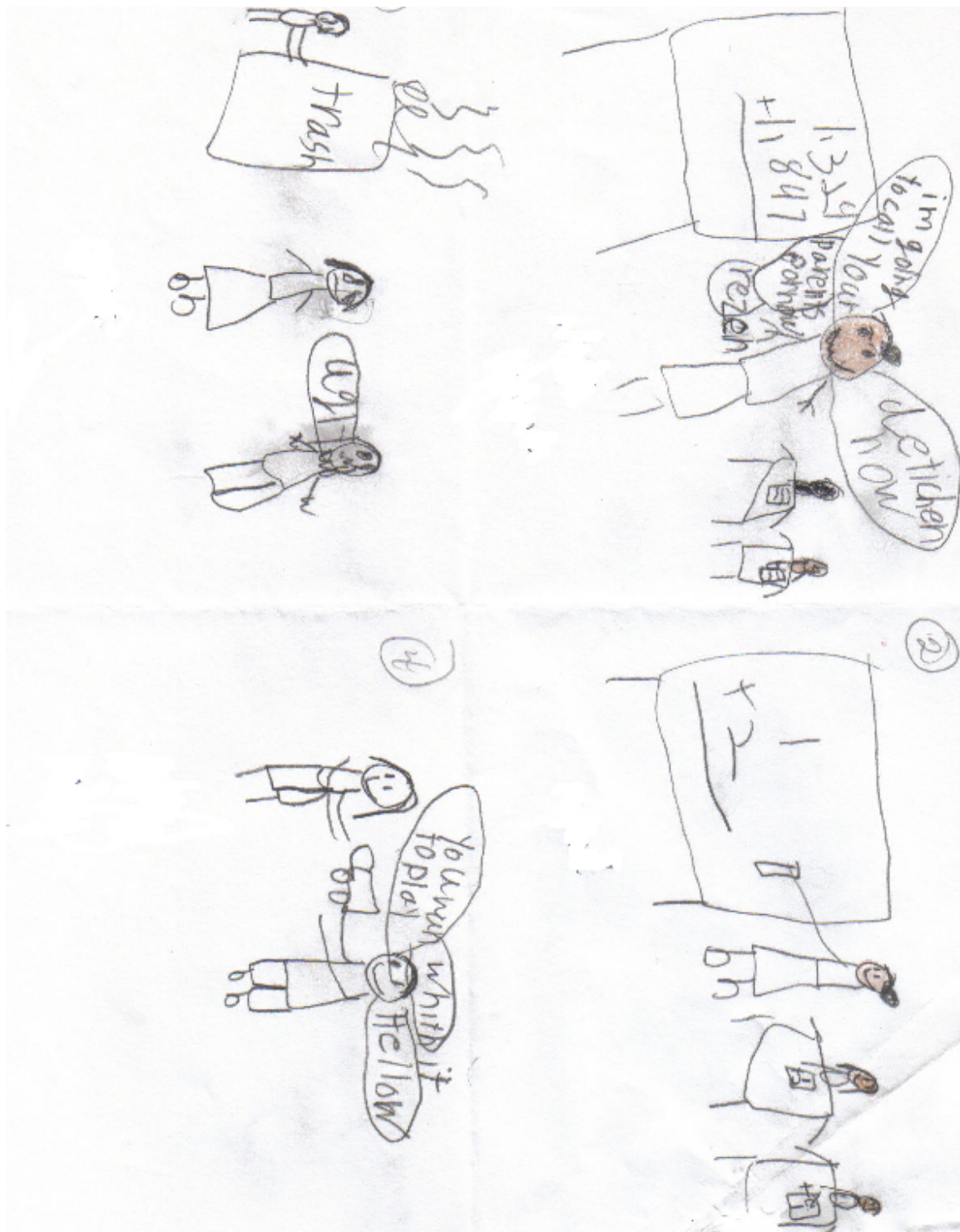
4. Do you feel you will have more work to do because of this child being in your room? Why or Why not?

5. Do you meet with the parents of your students? _____
6. When you meet with the parents of a biracial child do you inquire as to what race they are being raised? _____
7. Does your curriculum meet the needs of the biracial child? _____
8. If you answered "No" to question 7 what do you do to ensure that the biracial child in your classroom learns of their heritages in a secure environment?

9. Do you discuss racial issues in your classroom? Why or Why not?

10. Do you feel this school system meets the needs of biracial children?

Appendix G



Appendix H

