Dissertations

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Seeing Polar Bears in a Snowstorm: Examining Racial Equity Work in a Predominantly White Suburban School

Timothy Hayes

SEEING POLAR BEARS IN A SNOWSTORM: EXAMING RACIAL EQUITY WORK

IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SUBURBAN SCHOOL:

PROGRAM EVALUATION: UNDERSTANDING WHITE SYMBOLIC
INTERACTIONISM WITH RACE: IMPROVING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF BEYOND DIVERSITY

CHANGE LEADERSHIP PLAN: ALLOWING STUDENTS TO SEE THEMSELVES
AND OTHERS IN THE CURRICULUM

POLICY ADVOCACY: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GREATER
CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Timothy S. Hayes

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGraw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

August, 2016

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

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DISSERTATION ORGANIZATION STATEMENT

This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership Ed D is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006). For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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3.14.14

For Marianne, Ben, and Sophia.
Yes, I'm finally done writing.

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ABSTRACT

This program evaluation examined the implementation of Pacific Educational Group's

Beyond Diversity Workshop at Spring Valley High School, the pseudonym for a

predominantly White, affluent, suburban, Illinois school district. The researcher used a

symbolic interactionalism framework to understand White faculty members' reactions to

the workshop. Using data gathered from a survey and a focus group, the program

evaluation offers recommendations for improving teaching staff engagement with future

offerings of this workshop.

PREFACE

For this dissertation, I selected topics that would inform my work as the administrator leading the racial equity work at Spring Valley High School. The year prior to writing this program evaluation, the district required all staff members in leadership positions to attend Pacific Educational Group's Beyond Diversity Workshop. The responses from the predominantly White leaders at Spring Valley following the workshop were mixed. Some found the workshop valuable while others seemed to have a negative reaction to the workshop that seemed disproportionately angry. It was my responsibility to decide if we should continue to offer the workshop. In order to make that decision, I first needed to understand why there had been such a polarizing reaction.

Completing this program evaluation provided me with invaluable insight into what was needed if Spring Valley was to truly embrace racial equity work. With nearly 85% of our students and staff identifying as White, we could not afford to simply dismiss White negative reaction to the equity work. Ignoring that reaction would put the entire initiative in jeopardy. The research that I conducted allowed me to understand what had elicited negative reactions in White staff members and how I might be able to better structure the racial equity workshop experience to promote engagement.

As a result of my research, equity program personnel made several important changes. Spring Valley offered a pre-workshop experience to familiarized participants with basic critical race theory concepts. We also explicitly named and discussed the feelings that participants might experience so as to normalize the discomfort that White participants might feel, and we provided a post-workshop opportunity to process the experience. The reactions to the racial equity workshop were very positive, and since

then, we have offered the workshop every year, with high levels of voluntary attendance

from staff members.

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A Lesson in Race

As one component of the Pacific Educational Group's Beyond Diversity Workshop, participants are asked to share their racial autobiographies. They reflect and then share their earliest and most recent experiences with race and racism. For me, the memory that came to mind is one that has been a touchstone for my work as an educator.

When I was in high school, every sophomore at my school was required to take physical education. The worst part of each day that year was my experience in the locker room before and after class. In addition to the challenge every adolescent boy experiences when trying to change clothes in front of his peers, things were more difficult for me because of one student—Miles. Miles was the smallest boy in our class. He was also Black. As some bizarre daily ritual, Miles worked alphabetically through the locker room starting fights with every boy in my class.

The day that Miles fought Tony Gardner, I knew that my turn had come. On schedule, Miles confronted me in the restroom area of the locker room and demanded, "Fight me!" Surprising both of us, I said "no." He paused for a moment and made the demand again. I replied more empathically that I would not. We began yelling at each other, our voices growing louder and louder. My heart was pounding. Miles was incredibly angry. Finally, the teacher called for us to head upstairs.

As we entered the gym and lined up, Miles launched himself at me and knocked me to the ground. I found myself lying on my back holding both of his fists in my hands. "Let go of me!" he screamed. It struck me as the most ridiculous demand. I said, "Why would I possibly let go of you so that you can hit me?" Miles screamed in anger. The

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teacher finally noticed what was happening and yelled, "Stop horsing around with Miles, Tim!" We stood up and got in line.

I do not remember talking to Miles again until our senior year. He stopped me in the hallway right before graduation and said with a smile on his face, "Well, we made it, Tim!" I was stunned. I nodded and stammered out some response. I was sure that we were enemies. Had he not tried to punch me just a few years before? Then he walked down the hall.

That was the last time that I saw Miles, but I have thought about that moment again and again over the years. Why had I not fought him? I was nearly twice his size. I certainly would have won. When I told him that I would not fight him, I was as surprised as he was. It felt like more was happening in that moment than I understood at the time. I remember thinking that it was just wrong.

Reflecting back, I can see now how much was going on in that moment. Miles is Black, and I am White. Our community was segregated, not by law but by geography. Whites mostly lived on the north and west sides of the city. Blacks lived in the south and east. More and more, White families were moving to the suburbs to escape having their children attend the "city school" where my memory is that our class was roughly 60% White and 40% Black. Racial tensions ran high in the community and in our school. It was not unusual for fights to break out in the hallways. The year before I arrived, there had been a brawl in front of the school. When we competed with other schools in the area, we always had a sense that they were afraid of us.

In this context, none of our teachers ever talked about race. I cannot remember a single discussion about this in any of my classes, not even social studies. My gym

teacher's response was pretty typical. No one ever acknowledged the racial divide within our schools. In my advanced and AP classes, there were only two Black students. Though I do not know the statistics, my memory is that Black students were much more likely to be suspended. I cannot remember a single White friend being suspended from school. And yet, when we graduated, the assistant principal stood and proclaimed that we were the worst class to ever attend our high school. Race and racism was impacting our daily experience. It permeated our school, and every White person that I knew walked around ignoring it.

What I remember hearing in Miles' voice as he yelled at me was pain and desperation. He needed me to fight him. It was that need that I reacted to that day. Whatever was causing him so much pain, I did not want any part of it. I had no reason to dislike him. He had not, until that moment, done or said anything mean to me. Not only was he the smallest boy in my class, he was Black in a school and community where Black students were having a very different experience than me. Though my parents were just scrapping by, my sense was that Miles came from a much poorer home than mine. I said no to his challenge to fight because I just did not want to be a part of some cycle that, at the time, I did not understand but could see was wrong.

Consequently, at my first Beyond Diversity Workshop, I thought of Miles as I shared my racial autobiography. And remembering it, I was angry. I was angry at my school and teachers for not having done more to help students like Miles. I was angry at myself for having spent so many years blind to something that clearly impacted my experience and the experiences of everyone around me. I vowed that I was going to do what I could to give my own students something better.

This program evaluation examines Spring Valley High School's (pseudonym) attempt to improve educators' understanding of race and racism through the implementation of the Beyond Diversity Workshop and the reaction that it received. While most participants found the experience positive and impactful, a small group of leaders reacted very negatively. This led to some resistance to continuing to offer the workshop. As the person charged with overseeing this program, this evaluation was my attempt to understand why that resistance occurred and to find some ways to improve the implementation of this professional development experience.

In 2004, a group of teachers, support staff members, and school leaders began meeting to consider ways in which Spring Valley High School could bring greater diversity to our school. The group met in response to concerns regarding the difficulty the school was having in recruiting and keeping educators of color at Spring Valley, a predominantly White school. The concern was that our students and staff were missing the multiple perspectives on issues and the role modeling for students of color that can occur in a school with a racially diverse staff. The group noted that all other high schools in the area had diversity statements that were often prominently displayed on their websites and in publications (J. Seldess, personal communication, October 19, 2011). The idea for a diversity statement arose from the suggestion that Spring Valley needed to increase awareness of and support for diversity at the school, and that we should be more vocal in professing our commitment to recruiting and supporting a diverse employee population.

As a result of this group's efforts, the board of education adopted a Diversity Statement that affirmed the democratic ideals of justice and equity and committed the

district to delivering a progressive educational and work environment for all students and staff in the areas of diversity and social justice. The statement underscored the responsibility of academic institutions to offer students a diverse set of experiences and perspectives that will better prepare them to successfully navigate the rapidly globalizing world community of the 21st century. To reflect more holistic and realistic perspectives of the world at large, the statement expressed a commitment to actively recruiting, supporting, and retaining people of diverse backgrounds across each level of the school district. The prevailing belief was that providing a diverse experience was further evidence of the school community's dedication to shaping inquiring minds, compassionate hearts, and lives of service for the benefit of humanity. The statement went on to specify that a diverse school community includes representation by individuals of varying race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, ancestry, marital status, and disability.

Even though this statement clarified the district's commitment to hiring and retaining a diverse staff, the school continued to struggle with this goal. In fact, several people of color who were members of this group had left to work at other schools.

During this time, the district was also engaged in a strategic planning process. This strategic plan called for focused work, or strategies, in six areas, and within each strategy, more specific action plans were created. One area of focus or strategy called for the identification, communication, modeling, and reinforcement of ethical conduct and responsible global citizenship. Two action plans in this particular area related to diversity and equity: increasing the recruitment and retention of diverse staff members and identifying and creating a plan for each course in each department so that global

citizenship could be illustrated and reinforced. The term global citizenship was undefined. The district's belief was that hiring and supporting a diverse staff would generate the varied experiences students needed for life beyond high school. Implementing these goals, as was true with all parts of the strategic plan, proved to be challenging.

The Diversity Coordinator

After these action plans were established, a part-time diversity coordinator position was created in 2006. Rather than filling the position, a committee met during the 2006–2007 school year to refine the description of this position and revise the goals of the district's diversity program. In spring 2007, the position was re-posted and, after a lengthy and extensive search, a coordinator was selected. This diversity coordinator was given office space at both campuses and began meeting with staff members within the school.

After a year of meeting with teachers and support staff, the diversity coordinator created an Equity Team during winter 2008. She then sent selected staff members invitations to join the team, which were written on purple paper. For the remainder of that year and into the next year, the Equity Team met with the help of an outside consulting group to share and record the experiences of staff members. The diversity coordinator was working to construct an Equity Team as defined in Singleton and Linton's (2006) *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Singleton and Linton (2006) described the membership of the Equity Team as "emerging leaders who wish to develop their will, skill, knowledge, and capacity

necessary to support their colleagues in understanding race and deinstitutionalizing

racism" (p. 231). These authors suggested the functions of an equity team:

1. Engage in a process of investigation to discover how race impacts one's

   personal and professional attitudes and behaviors.

2. Lead the school or central office staff in the examination of individual and

   institutional culture as it relates to equity and anti-racism.

3. Establish a professional learning community in which adults can effectively

   develop skills and knowledge necessary to improve student performance and

   eliminate racial achievement disparities. (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 231)

Rev. Smith's Visit to Spring Valley

   In September 2008, Rev. John Smith received national attention when he arrived

at Spring Valley High School with busloads of students from the city with the intent to

enroll in the high school. His goal was to draw attention to inequitable school funding in

the State of Illinois. As an assistant principal at that time, I was assigned to oversee the

logistical planning for this event. My goal was to ensure that the visiting students and

their families arrived safely, were treated with courtesy, and that the educational day

would continue without interference for our students. I was photographed and quoted in

the newspaper greeting passengers coming off the first bus. The day went smoothly

without any of the ugly incidents of overt racism that some of our parents feared the

school might display.

   I have included this moment in this history partly for personal reasons. It marks

the beginning of my involvement in equity work at the school and, when I reflect on the

event, I feel a mix of emotions. Though I am proud that there were no logistical issues

with the event, several staff members, including the diversity coordinator, argued that we had missed an opportunity. They pointed out that the students who arrived on buses that day were almost all Black students from the metropolitan area, thus providing an opportunity for greater understanding between our students and those students. Reverend Smith was clear about his purpose to challenge inequitable funding in Illinois. I am not sure if greater understanding between our students was high on his list of priorities. However, we never asked, and so I will never know. While we treated them as guests, I viewed them at some level as uninvited guests.

I am struck now by what I see as the impact that race had on our planning for the demonstration and the reaction of our parents and the media. What hung in the air that hot September morning was a worry that the school might appear racist. The police prepared for the worst, stationing officers in uniform and in plain clothes around the campus. I could feel the television and newspaper reporters eagerly waiting for something controversial to happen. I heard our parents worry that we might embarrass ourselves. When that did not happen, the television trucks packed up and left, and the Black students who came that day rode home to schools that could not provide the same opportunities that Spring Valley offered. When speaking with one student that morning, he explained how it was not that he really wanted to go to Spring Valley, but rather that he wanted his school to be more like ours. The inequity remained, and I am not sure what lessons our students learned that day.

The Diversity Coordinator Leaves

At the end of the 2009 school year, the diversity coordinator had become increasingly frustrated with the position. She cited several problems that she felt

impeded her work. Though the job description stated that she would be involved in the process of hiring and retaining staff members, she felt that she was frequently shut out of that process. Overall, she felt that she was ignored and sidelined by the district administrators. She pointed out that she had not been included in the planning for Reverend Smith's visit, though her title seemed to guarantee her a place at the table. When it became clear that she could no longer continue to work as a part-time employee, she sought an additional teaching assignment in the Social Studies Department so that she could become a full-time employee. When she was denied that position, she applied for the newly created Director of Student Life, a position I would assign in my new role as an assistant superintendent. During the selection process, department leaders and administrators in the school spoke to me about the difficult interactions they had with her. It became apparent that some of those leaders had excluded her from decisions because they felt she was overstepping her authority. When I did not select her for the director of student life position, she left the district and became a teacher in a neighboring high school.

The members of the Equity Team were angry and at least some of their anger was directed at me. The members of the team felt that she was being driven out of the school because she had made people feel uncomfortable. They argued that rather than working through our discomfort, the school was trying to get rid of the person who was raising difficult questions that deserved answers. As she attended her last few meetings, she reinforced that impression by challenging participants to consider why people of color frequently left the district. By the end of the year, she had decided to leave the district, and I hurried to post the now vacant diversity coordinator position. This angered

members of the Equity Team further, who felt that the position needed to be rewritten to include greater authority to ensure that the next diversity coordinator was not excluded from leadership decisions in the school. Clearly, our Diversity Statement was not enough to attract and retain a racially diverse staff at our school. Since then, we have not been able to hire a diversity coordinator. Without this position, it became my responsibility to lead our equity work.

Working With the Equity Team

One of the most difficult times in my career was my first Equity Team meeting. The Equity Team members were angry, and their anger was directed at me and the administration. I listened carefully, expressed my sincere desire to participate with the group and do what I could to help the initiative, and tried my best to keep my ego in check. For the rest of that year, I attended every meeting, slowly becoming a part of the group and realizing that I had a lot to learn about how to lead equity work. The Equity Team continued to meet monthly, but the team's focus shifted from gathering anecdotal evidence of inequity in our school to developing their skills as equity leaders.

At the end of the first semester, the team expressed a desire to present a short skit at the Institute Day that would explain the purpose of the team, why they had joined it, and then share some of the things that they had learned while members of the group. The superintendent was asked to make a statement of support following the skit, which she did. At this point, the Equity Team was functioning to address the first purpose outlined by Singleton and Linton (2006): "Engage in a process of investigation to discover how race impacts one's personal and professional attitudes and behaviors" (p. 231). The Equity Team members wanted other staff members to join them in this investigation. As

the team left the stage, there was a sense that they had accomplished an important step by challenging other staff members to reflect on the impact of race on their attitudes and behaviors.

By the end of that Institute Day, it was clear that many staff members had not reacted as the team had hoped. Some staff members expressed suspicion regarding the group. They wanted to know what we were doing at all of those meetings. Several department chairs expressed anger. They presented a different version of the events leading to the formation of the Equity Team. Several of them told me that they had participated with the group that had created the Diversity Statement and selected the diversity coordinator. When the diversity coordinator then formed the Equity Team, she sent purple envelopes with formal invitations to respective members. Several department chairs said that they had not been invited. They claimed that they had been snubbed by the group. Interestingly, this version did not match that told by other individuals who had worked closely with the diversity coordinator when the group was formed. They stated that all of the department chairs had been invited but had chosen not to participate. To this day, I am uncertain how two completely different versions of these events have come to exist. What was clear to me, however, was that the "snub of the purple envelope," real or imagined, was keeping some of our most powerful leaders from participating in the equity work of the district.

Bringing Beyond Diversity to Spring Valley

At this time, a school leader who had been engaged in equity work outside of the district for some time suggested that I attend a workshop run by the Pacific Education Group called Beyond Diversity. He encouraged me to attend and to take a few staff

members with me. I did and explained to those staff members that I wanted them to let me know what they thought of the program. Each of them agreed, and we all attended.

The Beyond Diversity Workshop seeks to raise awareness of the impact that race has on the educational experiences and achievement of students and presents a protocol for working to address the impact of race. The workshop teaches participants the Courageous Conversations Protocol that is outlined in Singleton and Linton's (2006) book. The Courageous Conversation Protocol consists of three major components: Four Agreements, Six Conditions, and the Courageous Conversation Compass. The compass helps participants identify how they are approaching a discussion of race: emotionally, intellectually, morally, or socially (pp. 19–20). The Four Agreements are the norms that are established during that discussion: stay engaged, speak your truth, experience discomfort, and expect and accept non-closure (p. 17). Finally, the Six Conditions "outline the content and progression of Courageous Conversation" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 18). Those conditions are:

1. Establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate.

2. Isolate race while acknowledging the broader scope of diversity and the variety of factors and conditions that contribute to a racialized problem.

3. Develop understanding of race as a social/political construction of knowledge and engage multiple perspectives to surface critical understanding.

4. Monitor the parameters of the conversation by being explicit and intentional about the number of participants, prompts for discussion, and time allotted for listening, speaking, and reflecting. Use the Courageous Conversation Compass . . . to determine how each participant is displaying emotion—mind,

body, and soul—to access a given racial topic.

5. Establish agreement around a contemporary working definition of race, one that is clearly differentiated from ethnicity and nationality.

6. Examine the presence and role of Whiteness and its impact on the conversation and the problem being addressed. (Singleton & Linton, 2006, pp. 18–19)

Singleton and Linton (2006) defined the purpose of this protocol as: "Utilizing the agreements, conditions, and compass to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in order to examine schooling and improve student achievement" (p. 16). At the heart of the protocol is a definition of race as a social and political construction: "We refer to *race* as the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including by not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 39).

The following year, I had the opportunity to attend Beyond Diversity II in Minneapolis. Again, I traveled to the workshop with a team of staff members, this time from the Equity Team. At this workshop, I had the opportunity to really consider the implications of my own race. If I had not really understood the social construction of race before Beyond Diversity, I certainly had not really considered what it meant for me to be mindful of my own race as a White man. By this point, I had come to understand that I did not need to be an overt racist to benefit from racism. I wondered if this kind of workshop might help further the goals that had been expressed in our Diversity Statement by helping us consider the impact of "Whiteness" in our predominantly White school.

When I returned from Beyond Diversity II, I immediately began to meet with a group of administrators to discuss how we could bring Beyond Diversity to Spring Valley. We decided that the superintendent would begin the next school year by announcing that all administrators and school leaders would need to attend one of two Beyond Diversity Workshops. We knew that making that requirement would mean some pushback from leaders. As the date of the first workshop approached, there was at least one angry exchange with a department leader about attending the workshop, but all administrators and leaders did attend at least one session.

Following the second Beyond Diversity Workshop, I sought feedback from participants regarding their experiences. The reactions from participants ranged widely. Some found the workshop informative and engaging. They were eager to find ways to follow up on the workshop and implement the protocol. Those participants were of different racial groups: Black, White, and Asian. Some White participants, however, had a negative reaction to the workshop. Several of the staff members in this group expressed concern that a focus on race was too narrow and did not allow room for discussions of other forms of difference. A few responded that they were offended and that the workshop had made them angry. They stated that they felt they were being blamed for racial injustice. In our conversations, they shared with me their frustration that they had been raised to be "color blind" but at the workshop, they had been told that being color blind was bad. A few even remarked that they remembered or had participated in the civil rights marches of the 1960s and felt this approach to race was counter to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They demanded to know when we would talk about sexual orientation or gender. After all, they said, we have so few Black students. How

would we ever be able to look at their testing data? These White staff members were a minority of the total participants at the two workshops but possessed both positional authority within the school and were viewed as respected, experienced members of the staff. As the year ended and we considered whether to run another Beyond Diversity Workshop, I heard from other administrators that staff members were saying that surely I would not try to bring Beyond Diversity back again after it had been such a disaster.

Why was it that these White staff members had had an experience so different from mine? They were all White just as I am. They had attended Seeking Educational Excellence Through Diversity (SEED), our year-long diversity professional development in the past, as had I. How had I, and many of the other White participants, had such a positive experience, and they had not? In addition, their positional authority within the school would make any further work potentially more difficult. I believe that the answer to those questions lies in the meanings and emotions that I had come to attach to discussions of race. I had not felt the negative emotions many of the other White participants had. Somehow, I had been better able to navigate those emotions and remain engaged. I pondered this question: "Is there a way to prepare White participants for this kind of discussion about race and racism so that they are more likely to remain engaged and less likely to leave the discussion feeling judged, attacked, or angry?"

Purpose

This program evaluation focuses on the Equity Initiative at Spring Valley High School, and specifically considers the impact of White staff members' emotions on their willingness to remain engaged in discussions of race and racism. Given that our staff was predominantly White, that engagement by White staff members was imperative if we

were to successfully examine the impact of race and racism on the experiences of our students. As a specific example of a discussion of race and racism, this program evaluation focused on Pacific Education Group's Beyond Diversity Workshop that was offered twice that year. The reaction to this workshop was mixed. People of color and many White participants found the workshop interesting and helpful. A group of White staff members, however, reported that they found the workshop offensive, and very few staff members had actually begun using the protocol for examining the impact of race. It was my belief that the negative reaction to the workshop and the reluctance to discuss race or utilize the protocol was related to the emotions that White participants attached to discussions of race. This study, therefore, examined the reactions of White participants to discussions of race and proposes changes that can be made to the use of the Beyond Diversity Workshop that will encourage White participants to engage in an examination of race in our school.

Demographics and District Information

At the time of this study, Spring Valley High School District served students in several suburbs near a large Illinois city. Several separate public elementary districts and several private schools fed into the high school district. In School Year (SY) 2011, 4,181 students attended Spring Valley at either the freshmen-only campus or the sophomore through senior campus. The school was known for high levels of academic achievement and for the size and successes of its extracurricular program. The mean composite score on the ACT for the Class of 2011 was 27.5, placing Spring Valley students in the upper 10% of schools in the nation. During SY 2011, Spring Valley's athletic teams won multiple state championships. In SY 2009, the operational expenditure per pupil was a

little more than $19, 000. Student racial demographics were 85% White, 0.6% Black, 1.8% Hispanic, 8.4% Asian, and 4.2% Multiracial. Only 3% of the student population was listed as "low income." On the 2010 Prairie State Achievement Examination, all subgroups made Annual Yearly Progress, except students with disabilities. Though well above the state average exam score in every racial group, White students scored consistently higher (more than 90% met or exceeded standards) than Hispanic (80%) and Asian (83%). Too few Black students attended Spring Valley to be identified on the state's School Report Card.

School climate had been a focus for the district for more than 10 years. Several climate surveys had shown that students and staff felt physically safe at Spring Valley. However, fewer staff and students reported feeling socially and emotionally safe. Some staff members reported that they felt belittled or ignored by their peers. This had been especially true for security officers, members of the most racially diverse staff group. In addition, students had shared with adults in the school and in letters to the principal, stories of being harassed based upon race, religious belief, and sexual orientation. The 2010 results from Spring Valley's school climate survey seemed to corroborate these stories. In the area of safety, 73% of students reported feeling physically safe in our school, 24% were neutral in their responses, and only 3% reported feeling physically unsafe. For social and emotional safety, however, only 16% reported feeling safe, 58% were neutral, and 27% reported feeling unsafe.

In addition, graduates of Spring Valley High School indicated in the Graduate Survey that the school could have done more to prepare students for the diverse areas in which they now live and attend school. All of this information led to the formation of an

Equity Initiative at Spring Valley High School to examine the impact that areas of difference—race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, etc.—had on the educational experience of students and the working relationships of staff.

Definitions

In this program evaluation, I used several terms that require definition. For race, I employed the definition used in critical race studies and by the Pacific Education Group: "We refer to *race* as the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 39). This definition describes race as different from ethnicity. Singleton and Linton (2006) describe ethnicity as the culture one identifies as being formative in her or his experience, where culture is defined as "how we live on a daily basis in terms of our language, ancestry, religion, food, dress, musical tastes, traditions, values, political and social affiliations, recreation, and so on" (pp. 169–170). Throughout this program evaluation, I used the terms White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic, the terms typically used in critical race theory to describe the socially constructed racial categories to which individuals are assigned in the U.S. Collectively, I used the term "people of color" as Tatum does, to "refer to those groups in America that are and have been historically targeted by racism" (Tatum, 1997, p. 15). As many critical race theorists argue, this term is preferable to the term minority because the people referred to actually comprise the majority of the world's population (Okun, 2010; Tatum, 1997). I defined racism as David Wellman (as cited in Tatum, 1997) does as a "system of advantage based on race" (p. 7). At times I refer to systematic racism, which refers to the idea that racism consists of the "cultural

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messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals" (Tatum, 1997, p. 7).

One may also notice that I draw a distinction between diversity and equity. The Center for Assessment and Policy Development broadly defines the term diversity:

> Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender—the groups that most often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used—but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also includes different ideas, perspectives, and values. (Racial Equity Tools Glossary, n.d.a, "Diversity").

Racial equity, however, refers to "the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identify no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares" and "includes [the] elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them" (Racial Equity Tools Glossary, n.d.b, "Racial Equity"). Singleton and Linton (2006) defined educational equity as:

- Narrowing the gaps between the highest- and lowest- performing students and

- Eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories. (p. 46)

More specifically, these authors argued that equity "is an operational principle that enables educators to provide whatever level of support is needed to whichever students require it" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 47).

This definition of equity is not synonymous with equality. DeCuir and Dixson (as cited in Singleton & Linton, 2006) distinguished between equality and equity by stating that "remedies based on equality assume that citizens have the *same* opportunities and experiences" while equity "recognizes that the playing field is *unequal* and attempts to address the inequality" (p. 47). This means that racial diversity occurs any time that people of different racial classifications gather in one place. That diversity does not necessarily mean that racial equity exists in that space, and, in fact, it usually does not.

Using these definitions helped to explain why Spring Valley's initial attempt to attract a more racially diverse teaching staff by publishing a diversity statement was ineffective. Simply having more staff members of racially diverse identities did not necessarily create a racially equitable environment. Advantages and disadvantages may still be experienced based upon one's race even though there are more people of that particular racial identity. In fact, the former diversity coordinator argued that the inequitable practices caused by systemic racism within the district were prompting those staff members of color who were working at Spring Valley to leave. The reaction of some school leaders to her argument was to state that all staff members were judged equally and were supported as all other teachers regardless of their race. These leaders offered different explanations for each staff member's departure rather than seeing those departures as the result of systemic racism. This was the state of our discussion of race and racism at Spring Valley when the Beyond Diversity Workshops were first offered.

Rationale

The Diversity Initiative is now referred to as the Equity Initiative. I wanted to move the initiative beyond the Diversity Statement that was based on the false assumption that a more equitable education would be available to our students if we simply hired a more diverse staff. Our challenge is that we are a school located in a predominantly White, affluent community. People of color likely view our school and ask themselves, "Will I be safe at this school? Will I be supported by my colleagues and parents?" If we wish to recruit and retain a more diverse staff, I believe we must be able to answer those questions by pointing to our active engagement in work to ensure an equitable educational experience and a safe and respectful school environment for students and staff.

As a result of my experience at the Beyond Diversity Workshops, I had begun to consider my own racial identity. If equity work is about race, and White is a race, equity work is White racial work as much as it is the work of any other race. In fact, being the beneficiary of White privilege means that I and others who are White have an extremely important role to play in equity work. By examining the ways in which we benefit from White privilege, we can collaborate with people of color to more effectively dismantle those systems. Hiring a more racially diverse staff would provide multiple perspectives that would strengthen our equity work, but that work would always be stalled if White staff members were not engaged as well.

In addition to the name change, the Equity Team also developed three, more specific goals for the initiative:

1. Ensure that all students have equitable access to educational and extracurricular opportunities in our school.

2. Ensure that all students experience a safe and respectful learning environment.

3. Ensure that all students are developing the skills to be culturally competent upon leaving our school.

Under each of these goals are specific action steps that allow us to meet these goals. I have attached a detailed version of these goals and actions steps in Appendix A.

On paper, this initiative seems to be moving forward. Groups have formed to raise awareness, curriculum has changed, and professional development is occurring in several areas of the school. The perception of some, however, is that nothing is being done, or rather, that no substantial change has occurred. Still others hold an opposing view that too much is being done or that our efforts are misdirected toward an examination of the impact of race on our students' educational experiences while ignoring other forms of difference. Bringing a clear, organized focus to our equity work is vital if the initiative is to continue. This program evaluation is an important concrete step to shape that focus by providing information that will help guide the manner in which we discuss race and racism in our school and the format for professional development related to educational equity.

I have both a personal and professional interest in the Equity Initiative. I strongly believe that the purpose of public education is to provide the best possible educational experience to all students. When we see that any group of students is having an inequitable experience, we have an ethical responsibility to understand why and to work to correct that situation. This program is also important to me because of my own

experiences in high school and as a father. As I stated previously, my high school was racially diverse. Race affected nearly every aspect of my school. Fights after school, who sat next to me in AP English, and whose prospects looked bright or bleak were impacted by race. And yet, race and racism were never discussed.

Now that I have children of my own who share both my White and my wife's Filipino racial identities, my understanding of the impact of race has shifted considerably. My son has a lighter skin tone than my daughter. For my son, this has often meant that his classmates are unsure of his racial identity. For my daughter, her White classmates can easily see that she is not White. When we are together, it is not uncommon for her classmates to ask who I am and how I know her. As a White father, I want to do what I can to help them navigate the complex issue of race and develop healthy, positive racial understandings of themselves.

My personal work to understand my racial identity and the issues of equity in our school has led me to research and write this program evaluation. I have learned a lot since Rev. Smith arrived with students and parents from the near metropolitan area. The issue of inequitable funding for public schools is as much a racial issue as it is economic. It was no coincidence that those buses were filled with Black students, or that the students in our classrooms were predominantly White. Systematic racism was on display that day, but like my teachers in high school, I was not aware enough or courageous enough to acknowledge it. The systemic racism present in inequitable school funding was hurting those students on the buses, but it was hurting our students, too. Though our students are academically prepared for life after high school, we are doing them a disservice if they graduate unprepared to work and live with people of all races. Can we

say that we have helped them learn who they are if we never address the advantages of White privilege that have so profoundly shaped their experiences? If we are to help them learn these important lessons, we, as a staff, must engaged in understanding how race affects our own experiences and the educational environment of our school.

<div align="center">Goals</div>

This program evaluation is an attempt to understand how emotions impact White staff members' ability to engage in discussions of race and racism. I believe that the reason that some White staff members had a negative experience at Beyond Diversity was due to a failure to recognize and address the symbolic emotional meaning that participants brought with them to the examination of race. I believe that the negative symbolic meanings that White participants attach to the idea of race creates a significant impediment to their ability to fully engage with this program and other discussions of race and racism.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Primary Research Question

The primary research question is the focus that guided this study. To improve our work in the Equity Initiative, how can a better understanding of the symbolic emotional meanings White staff members attach to the concepts of race and racism improve the effectiveness of their participation in the Beyond Diversity Workshop and other discussions of race and racism?

Secondary Research Questions

Four subsequent questions flowed from the primary question and focused on emotional meanings.

1. What emotional meanings do White staff members attach to the concept of race?

2. How do those emotions impact their willingness to engage in discussions of race and racism?

3. How might recognizing negative emotions attached to the discussion of race and racism help White staff members more fully engage in the Beyond Diversity experience?

4. What parameters might be established to create a safer environment for White staff members to better manage their emotions during discussions of race and racism?

SECTION TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The framework for my research came from two primary sources. The first was critical race theory. Critical race theory defines race as a social construct based upon one's physical appearance that has a profound impact on the experiences of individuals. This framework provides a means of defining race and racism, and the writings of authors using this framework provide methods for examining the ways in which people engage in discussions of race and racism. The second framework was symbolic interactionism. This framework argues that individuals bring symbolic meanings to their interactions with objects or ideas. This approach provides a means of describing the internal emotional reaction that White individuals may experience and how those emotions may change during and after discussions of race and racism.

Race as a Social Construction

In the essay, "The Social Construction of Race," Haney Lopez (2000) pointed to the case of *Hudgins v. Wright,* in which three generations of women sued to earn their freedom in 1806, to explain how the definition of race as a social construct based upon physical appearance comes from legal precedent. In this case, the Wrights argued that they were Native American by race and thus free. They were unable to prove that "they had a free maternal ancestor, nor could their owner, Hudgins, show their descent from a female slave" (Haney Lopez, 2000, p. 163). In this case, the judge used physical appearance to determine the women's race:

Nature has stampt [sic] upon the African and his descendants two characteristic marks, besides the difference in complexion, which often remain visible long after

the characteristic distinction of colour either disappears or becomes doubtful; a

flat nose and wooly head of hair. (Haney Lopez, 2000, p. 163)

Ultimately, the women were declared free because their hair was long and straight, their

complexion light, and their noses small. Haney Lopez demonstrated that again and again

the courts have used a physical definition of race even when sometimes arguing that race

is not a scientifically valid method of categorizing people.

Though we may classify people's race according to physical appearance, critical

race theory argues the idea of race and the distinction of different racial categories is

socially constructed. Haney Lopez (2000) highlighted four elements of the social

construction of race:

First, humans rather than abstract social forces produce races. Second, as human

constructs, races constitute an internal part of a whole social fabric that includes

gender and class relations. Third, the meaning-systems surrounding race change

quickly rather than slowly. Finally, races are constructed relationally, against one

another, rather than in isolation. (p. 168)

Viewed in this way, race is a socially constructed idea in which one defines one's race in

relation to others. Definitions of specific races and the meanings attached to them are

fluid and can change over time. Though these meanings and definitions may change, the

one constant is that those who are identified as White remain at the top of a social

hierarchy of race.

My experience with my own children demonstrates the social construction of

race. The social definitions of race falter when one's physical appearance does not match

their genetic heritage, much as was the case with the Wrights. As I stated previously, I

am White; my wife is Filipina. My son's skin is darker than mine but much lighter than his mother's. When he was first born, my White relatives would comment that he looked Asian while my wife's relatives remarked at how White he looked. When my son's classmates first meet him, they are often not quite sure how to categorize his race. Even though on the U.S. census I mark that my son is both White and Asian, it is unlikely that others will assume he is White when they first meet him. As a multiracial child, he is both Asian and White and neither Asian nor White completely. My racial identity prevents him from being simply Asian while my wife's racial identity means that he cannot claim to be simply White.

<div align="center">Symbolic Interactionism</div>

These aspects of "racial fabrication" are reminiscent of the second framework that I used: Blumer's (1969) theory of symbolic interactionism. Blumer sought to understand the interactions between individuals. Blumer's (1969) theory of symbolic interactionism holds three premises.

- The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

- The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.

- The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

  (p. 2)

Blumer was interested in better understanding the meanings that people attach to objects. In his definition, "an object is anything that can be indicated, anything that is pointed to

or referred to—a cloud, a book, a legislature, a banker, a religious doctrine, a ghost, and so forth" (Blumer, 1969, p. 10). Some objects are abstract objects, "such as moral principles, philosophical doctrines, or ideas such as justice, exploitation, or compassion" (Blumer, 1969, pp. 10–11).

Consider, for example, how we learn to identify a table, its uses, its value, and the emotions we attach to it. As young children, we learn to use the word table to describe a low, flat surface supported by posts. By watching how others use a table and experimenting ourselves, we learn that tables are used for holding things—dishes, magazines, homework—so that we can interact with them. So, we sit at a table to eat a meal. A table can have additional meanings associated with it. The dinner table is a symbol of family. We are told that families who eat dinner together at the dinner table each night are less likely to have children who exhibit negative behaviors like drug use. However, what if your family consistently argued or sat in painful silence during dinners? Perhaps eating at that dinner table might generate negative feelings for you.

The meaning that we ascribe to that table is socially constructed. You could have just as easily been taught to identify that object as a bed or a chair. By learning from others and interacting with the table ourselves, we attach meaning, positive and negative, to the table and its uses. The meanings that people attach to an object arise

> in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to that thing . . . Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products. (Blumer, 1969, pp. 4–5)

In Blumer's framework, what is true of the ways that we attach meanings to physical objects, such as a table, is also true of the ways in which we attach meaning to ideas, such as race or racism. That meaning changes as we interact with others. This suggests that negative interactions with discussions of race and racism may mean individuals then attach negative symbolism to those discussions and become averse to having further discussions.

<div align="center">Social Constructions of Meaning and Discussions of Race</div>

These two frameworks share in common a belief that meaning is created partly from socially constructed definitions and from our interactions with each other related to those ideas. I believe that White staff at Spring Valley High School react to discussions of race and racism based upon the symbolic emotional meanings those terms have for them. Those meanings are socially constructed and modified by their experiences. When White staff members participate in Beyond Diversity, they bring these symbolic meanings with them to that discussion of race and racism. By utilizing the frameworks of critical race theory and symbolic interactionism, I believe that we can understand what patterns of meanings may exist for individuals when they engage in these discussions.

When the object of race is considered, symbolic interactionism offers insights into how we might better understand the meanings that people attach to race and its impact on their perception of the world in which they live. "Individuals, also groups, occupying or living in the same spatial location may have, accordingly, very different environments; as we say, people may be living side by side yet be living in different worlds" (Blumer, 1969, p. 11). This seems an apt description of the impact of race. People of different races are living in the same world but experiencing it very differently. Though both

Whites and people of color experience race, the meaning that they attach to that experience is impacted by the socially constructed meanings that they attach to the object of race and to their individual experiences. Blumer (1969) argued then that the only way "to understand the action of people" is "to identify their world of objects" (p. 11).

Ultimately symbolic interactionism offers a hopeful approach to addressing racism. Not only can objects be physical objects or ideas in our environment, but also we are objects ourselves when we are self-reflective about our beliefs, thoughts, or emotions. Blumer (1969) pointed out that

> in order to become an object to himself, a person has to see himself from the outside. One can do this only by placing himself in the position of others and viewing himself or acting toward himself from that position. (p. 13)

Blumer viewed perspective-taking as a key approach to understanding and also contended that the actions of a culture can be understood as the product of many individual actions. Blumer called this joint action and maintained that this comes from the interpretative interaction of hundreds, thousands, or even millions of individuals. As individuals interact around an object, the meanings that they attach to that object can change. When the meaning attached to an object has changed for enough individuals, the meaning of that object has changed for a culture. This suggests that by changing the meanings that individuals attach to race, eventually an entire culture's view of race can also change (Blumer, 1969, pp. 16–17).

How does change like this occur? Blumer (1969) explains that the meanings that we attach to objects through our interactions with them.

The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroups, and transforms the meanings in the

light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his actions . . .

meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of

action. (p. 5)

Blumer (1969) asserted that our actions toward objects are not automatic but rather

formed by the meanings we bring to these objects and our interactions with them.

Consider the example of the table. As a child, we sat at the table when we ate in my

home. In other cultures, people may kneel or stand when they eat, and tables are very

short or very tall to accommodate that practice. In some cultures, people do not use a

table at all. As I have interacted with other people from other cultures, my understanding

of the definition and meaning of the table as an object has changed.

If we consider the objects of race and racism, people bring with them meanings

when interacting with these objects; however, those meanings are not static. They can be

changed by the interactions with others. Those interactions create new meanings for the

actor, which she or he then brings to their next encounter with race. This is exactly the

kind of change that programs like Beyond Diversity are designed to create. One of the

goals of Beyond Diversity is to change the meaning that participants attach to race. The

facilitator's goal is to encourage participants to view race as a socially constructed idea

with wide-ranging impacts on society.

White Reactions to Discussions of Race

I believe that symbolic interactionism is also helpful for understanding why so

many White people struggle with this view of race and avoid conversations about race

entirely. Blumer (1969) believed that

the meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to that thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products. (p. 4)

White people bring to a discussion of race meanings that have been developed during past interactions with the topic. Their ideas of race are partly formed by what they were taught by parents, teachers, and friends and any encounters that they have had with race prior to participating in the workshop. During conversations about race, there is an internal and an external dialogue occurring. Internally, the meanings, emotions, and past experiences come into play as the individual struggles to make meaning of what they are experiencing. Externally, the interaction between participants offers new evidence, triggers emotions, and poses questions. These two dialogues, internal and external, occur at the same time. To understand why people reacted to Beyond Diversity as they did, I needed to understand not just the conversation that occurred during the sessions, but also the internal conversation occurring within the participants.

To understand White participants' reaction to the workshop, I believe that we must pay attention to the emotions that they described afterwards. For White participants who expressed discomfort with the Beyond Diversity Workshop, the discussion of race seemed fraught with feelings of anger, frustration, guilt, and even shame. The emotions attached to this discussion made it difficult for them to participate. Their reaction to the workshop might, in part, have been based upon a desire to avoid those negative emotions. Their internal reaction was negative, and they sought to avoid those feelings.

Reflecting on their experience as facilitators of workshops focusing on racial

equity, Grillo and Wildman (2000) noted the desire of White participants to demand a focus be not only on racism but on other isms as well. They contended that the "comparison minimizes the impact of racism, rendering it an insignificant phenomenon—one of a laundry list of isms or oppressions that society must suffer" (Grillo & Wildman, 2000, p. 650). Specifically, the Grillo and Wildman (2000) claimed that the "marginalization and obfuscation is evident in three recognizable patterns":

1. the taking back of center-stage from people of color, even in discussions of racism, so that white issues remain or become central in the dialogue;

2. the fostering of essentialism, so that women and people of color are implicitly viewed as belonging to mutually exclusive categories, rendering women of color invisible; and

3. the appropriation of pain or the rejection of its existence that results when whites who have compared other oppressions to race discrimination believe that they understand the experience of racism. (p. 650)

Grillo and Wildman observed that every time they have allowed the comparison between racism and other isms, White participants use the opportunity to silence or minimize the experience of people of color.

I observed this behavior soon after the Beyond Diversity Workshop concluded. I heard from several participants that they felt our focus on race was misplaced. They argued that our students faced similar or worse forms of discrimination and harassment based upon sexual orientation. They argued that there were too few Black students in our school to make race a worthy discussion, discounting the number of Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial students in our school. They insisted that there needed to be a place for

discussions of gender equity. This is a difficult argument to refute. As a school, our responsibility is to ensure that all students are safe and have the opportunity to an equitable educational experience. We cannot tell one group of students to patiently suffer while we work to help another. Yet, how do we avoid losing our focus on race as Grillo and Wildman warned can happen?

The negative emotions that White participants attach to discussions of race create serious obstacles to any attempt to address systemic racism. Olsson (1997), in the essay "Detour Spotting for White Anti-racists," cited 28 different "patterns of guilt, denial and defensiveness which appear regularly in our interactions with people of color and other white people" (p. 5). In this list, olsson detailed the many ways in which guilt, shame, denial, arrogance, and fear can lead White people to become detoured, distracted, or deny the existence of racism. For example, the "Certificate of Innocence" is cited as a potential detour when we seek "a 'certificate of innocence' telling us we are one of the good white people" (olsson, 1997, p. 18). Clearly, the negative emotional meaning that White people bring to the discussion of race interferes with their ability to engage in meaningful conversations about race.

In the *book "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": And Other Conversations About Race*, Tatum (1997) offered a possible insight into why Beyond Diversity may have produced especially intense negative emotions for White participants. Tatum cites Janet Helms' theory that development of a White racial consciousness can be seen in six stages. In the first stage, contact, "individuals . . . rarely describe themselves as White" (Helms as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 95). "They often perceive themselves as color-blind, completely free of prejudice, unaware of their own

assumptions about other racial groups" (Helms as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 95). In the second stage, disintegration, there is "a growing awareness of racism and White privilege as a result of personal encounters in which the social significance of race is made visible" (Helms as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 96). Tatum (1997) observed that "participating in an 'unlearning racism' workshop," such as Beyond Diversity, is one example of this personal experience (p. 96). Tatum (1997) further commented that this stage creates "cognitive dissonance" for Whites because "the societal inequities that they now notice directly contradict the ideas of an American meritocracy concept that has typically been an integral part of their belief system" (p. 98). "Responses to this discomfort may include denying the validity of the information that is being presented, or psychologically or physically withdrawing from it" (Tatum, 1997, p. 98). It can also lead to a third stage, reintegration. "At this stage, the previous feelings of guilt or denial may be transformed into fear and anger directed toward people of color" (Helms as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 101). The logic is, "if there is a problem with racism, then you people of color must have done something to cause it" (Tatum, 1997, p. 101). I heard comments from some White participants that seem to match this definition as they argued that one of the participants, a person of color, was responsible for his own unhappiness. One of Tatum's White students wrote the following:

> I don't feel any better than a Black person. But it really doesn't matter because I am a member of the dominant race . . . I can't help it . . . and I sometimes get angry and feel like I'm being attacked. (Tatum, 1997, p. 102)

This was a common comment from White participants who viewed Beyond Diversity as a negative experience. Tatum (1997) reflected on ineffective workshops:

Sometimes poorly organized antiracism workshops or other educational

experiences can create a scenario that places participants at risk for getting stuck

in their anger. Effective consciousness-raising about racism must also point the

way toward constructive action. When people don't have the tools for moving

forward, they tend to return to what is familiar, often becoming more vigorous in

their defense of the racial status quo than they were initially. (p. 105)

Is this what happened at Beyond Diversity? Were White participants moved to a place of

disintegration and then left there with no reintegration?

Okun (2010) wrote in *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching About Race and*

Racism to People Who Don't Want to Know, that "our feelings have everything to do

with the perpetuation of racism or the dismantling of it" (p. 119). Okun (2010) noted

Anne Wilson Shaef's observation that "feelings trump intellect. In other words,

whenever feelings are unresolved or unacknowledged, they determine the outcome of an

interaction, regardless of what is agreed upon intellectually" (Okun, 2010, p. 119). This

is what I observed after the Beyond Diversity Workshops. What I heard from resistant

participants was an intellectual argument that race deserved attention, but there was a

desire to avoid the conversation, blame others, or shift the focus to some other ism

because of the emotions that race evoked in them. Okun (2010) emphasized "providing

students some avenue to express their experience, their fears, their grappling is critical to

any chance they will have to continue on a path of critical and conscious thinking about

the world" (p. 121). If one wishes to inspire White educators to address racism, clearly

emotions deserve attention.

So, how can a better understanding of the symbolic emotional meanings White staff members attach to the concepts of race and racism improve the effectiveness of their participation in the Beyond Diversity Workshop and other discussions of race and racism? The framework of symbolic interactionism suggests that the emotions that White staff members attach to discussions of race and racism impact how they approach those discussions. It also suggests that those emotions can be changed through interaction with others. Critical race theory provides a framework for understanding what may prompt those emotions and how they may be displayed in discussions of race and racism. Ultimately, these emotions play a key role in the effectiveness of equity workshops for White participants.

SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

To address the primary research question of this program evaluation, I needed to understand the emotions that White staff members experience. Symbolic interactionism suggests that I must select my research methods carefully if I am to gather authentic responses. Blumer suggested that this must be done through interactions with those I am studying. As a White person, one method that I used then was reflective journaling as a means of exploring my own emotional reactions to discussions of race and racism. I also needed to establish a context for this program evaluation. I did this by examining school documents related to the Equity Initiative. Finally, to gather information from other White staff about their emotional reactions to discussions of race and racism, I used a survey with open-ended response questions followed by a focus group interview.

Blumer (1969) stressed that methodology must begin with an understanding of the individual assumptions with which one is working and warned that "all of us, as scholars, have our share of common stereotypes that we use to see a sphere of empirical social life that we do not know" (p. 36). My first assumption was that systematic racism is present in our school environment. This assumption came from the stories that I had heard as a member of the administrative staff and the Equity Team. I also had to keep in mind that I pushed to bring the Beyond Diversity program to our school and mandated that all administrators participate in the workshop.

A second assumption was that the Beyond Diversity Workshop is worth doing and that it helps participants reflect on their individual beliefs about race and its role in our school. Within that belief was another assumption that race has a significant impact

on one's life and that examining race is a productive endeavor. I believe that people, especially educators, should think and talk about race, and that it is better to be race conscious than color blind. I believe that being conscious of the impact that race has on one's experience and being intentional in our examination of the impact of race on our students' experiences will allow us to work toward an educational experience that is racially equitable. I also believe that race is a difficult topic for White educators to discuss. My assumption was that some, if not most, White participants experience feelings of guilt, fear, shame, and anger while participating in discussions of race and racism, such as those at the Beyond Diversity Workshop, and that those emotions affect their impressions of the workshop's effectiveness. I believe that providing opportunities for White staff members to reflect on those emotions will allow them to more actively engage in equity work.

To understand the symbolic thoughts and emotions that people attach to an object, in this case race, Blumer (1969) observed that direct observation and interviews of participants are most effective. A researcher must "first of all, place oneself in the position of the individual or collectivity" (Blumer, 1969, p. 51). A researcher must "get close to this life to know what is going on it" (Blumer, 1969, p. 38). Thus, as researchers, we cannot understand what is happening within a culture without entering that culture and trying to understand it. My role as a leader at Spring Valley, as a member of Equity Team, and as a White educator allowed me to better understand the culture I was examining.

Of course, I also needed to be mindful of the blind spots that undoubtedly exist because of my place in this culture. Blumer warned that we must constantly test our

hypothesis and findings against our observations of the world around us to determine whether they are valid or not. To do this, we must constantly be watching for disconfirming data, or what he calls the "scrupulous search for negative empirical data" (Blumer, 1969, p. 30). Blumer (1969) maintained that there are two modes of inquiry, the first of which is exploration:

> By definition [exploration is] a flexible procedure in which the scholar shifts from one to another line of inquiry, adopts new points of observation as his study progresses, moves in new directions previously unthought-of, and changes his recognition of what are relevant data as he acquires more information and better understanding. (p. 40)

The second form of inquiry is inspection, which is

> the opposite of giving a "nature" to the analytical element by operationalizing the element (for example, defining intelligence in terms of an intelligence quotient). It seeks, instead, to identify the nature of the analytical element by an intense scrutiny of its instances in the empirical world. (Blumer, 1969, p. 45)

An example of this concept might be the difference between IQ and multiple intelligences. Rather than defining intelligence as IQ, Howard Gardner engages in an inspection of intelligence in the world around him and develops the theory of multiple intelligences to explain what he observes. I was careful to ensure that my research remained responsive to the information that I gathered. When a line of questioning was prompted by a piece of data, I attempted to explore that area further. Ultimately, I worked hard to ensure that my conclusions were based upon the data that I gathered rather than any preconceived notion of what I would find.

Patton (2008) would posit that my role in this program and my personal feelings regarding the importance of the topic actually will be a benefit in my research. In the book *Utilization-Focused Evaluation,* Patton asserted that the personal factor has a significant impact on the way that I use the results of this research. Patton (2008) defined the personal factor as "the presence of an identifiable individual or group of people who personally care about the evaluation and findings it generates" (p. 66). When the personal factor is present, the findings of evaluations have an impact on the program studied. When it is absent, evaluation has little impact on the focus of the research. As Patton (2008) summarized from a conversation with researcher Jim Burry, the personal factor is "the most important explanatory variable in evaluation use" (p. 70).

Patton (2008) would also argue that this is an instrumental use of evaluation (p. 102). In other words, I intend to use this research to directly inform a decision or contribute to solving a problem (p. 102). Of course, by the nature of conducting this program evaluation for the purposes of completing my dissertation, it is also an example of process use: "cognitive, behavioral, program, and organizational changes resulting, either directly or indirectly, from engagement in the evaluation process and learning to think evaluatively [sic]" (Patton, 2008, p. 108), as Patton summarized the definitions provided by Cousins, Shulha, and Alkin.

It is important to clearly define the intended use of an evaluation because, as Patton (2008) stated, "evaluation is not benign" (p. 291). "Like any powerful tool that is misused, the wrong evaluation approach can do harm despite the intention to do good" (Patton, 2008, p. 291). The intention of my research is to answer questions that will have a meaningful impact on our school and test assumptions that we may have about how we

can effectively discuss race at Spring Valley. It is important that these questions

incorporate "local nuances of meaning and circumstance" and potentially generate

answers that might "make a real difference in the operations of the school" (Patton, 2008,

p. 293). Understanding how to better engage White staff members in discussions of race

and systemic racism would allow our school to better understand the experiences of our

students through the lens of racial equity.

My research is also focused on testing assumptions. Patton (2008) defined testing

assumptions as "surfacing the 'undiscussable'—what is sometimes called naming the

elephant in the organization" (p. 294). To illustrate this point, Patton (2008) shared the

example of research conducted by a antipoverty program run by an all-White staff that

served an all-Black clientele (p. 294). At the time of this study, Spring Valley was a

school where 85% of the staff and students identified as White. Any discussion of race

was often filled with assumptions about how best to discuss the topic and whether it was

even worth discussing at all. The reasons that were presented for not engaging in the

Beyond Diversity Workshop may represent some of these assumptions. My intention

was to test those assumptions. My belief was that those assumptions may actually be

ways in which White staff members attempt to avoid the difficult emotional reactions that

they have to discussions of race and racism.

Blumer (1969) asserted that the researcher needs descriptive accounts, but not

"questionnaires, polls, scales, use of survey research items, or the setting of predesignated

variables" (p. 51). Instead, Blumer (1969) recommended "descriptive accounts from the

actors of how they see objects, how they have acted toward the objects in a variety of

different situations, and how they refer to the objects in their conversations with members

of their own group" (p. 51). As a White staff member, a useful source of data was my own reflections on my emotions when discussing race and racism. I also documented a group interview to better understand how participants referred to the objects of race and racism with other White staff members. This interview gave me the most detailed information and allowed me to ask follow-up questions to clarify or explore those meanings. During this interview, I asked the following questions:

- What emotional meanings do you attach to the concept of race?

- How do those emotions impact your willingness to engage in discussions of race and racism?

- How might the recognition of negative emotions attached to the discussion of race and racism help you more fully engage in the Beyond Diversity experience?

- What parameters might be established to create a safer environment for you to better manage your emotions during discussions of race and racism?

Finally, to provide a context for the data that I was able to gather through my own reflection and the group interview, I conducted an open-ended survey of the staff to gather their perceptions of race and racism (see Appendix B).

Blumer made the point that it is vital to understand the meaning that individuals attach to objects because it determines how closely they will follow the norms and rules of a culture:

Beneath the norms and rules that specify the type of action to be engaged in at any given point in the organizational complex there are two concurrent processes in

which people are defining each other's perspectives and the individual, through

self-interaction, is redefining his own perspective. What takes place in these two

processes largely determines the status and the fate of the norms or rules; the rules

may still be observed but the observance may be weak or hollow, or, contrariwise,

reinforced or invested with greater vigor. (Blumer, 1969, p. 59)

In other words, what meanings individuals attach to race and the internal interaction that

they have with the topic determines their willingness to engage in our equity work. If

that internal interaction is largely negative, they will comply with the tenets of the

initiative in "weak or hollow" ways. But if that internal interaction is positive, they will

respond with investment and "vigor." If we are to address the impact of racism in our

school, we need the investment and vigor to navigate the difficult conversations about

race.

Participants

The participants in my study were White staff members who had participated in

the Beyond Diversity Workshop. I identified those staff members and asked if they

would be willing to participate in a group interview. My goal was to have the

opportunity to include those who found Beyond Diversity inspiring and those who found

it offensive so that I would have a wide range of reactions to examine. This group

interview also provided the opportunity to directly observe members' interactions with

the topics of race and racism. As a White staff member who participated in Beyond

Diversity, I also participated in this study through reflective journaling.

Finally, I invited all teaching and non-teaching staff members to respond to a survey of attitudes regarding race. This survey provided context for the information that I was able to gather through the group interview and my self-reflection.

Data Gathering Techniques

I collected data using group interviews, an online survey, reflective journaling, and an examination of source documents. I conducted a formal group interview with participants in the Beyond Diversity Workshops so as to gain a detailed understanding of their definitions of race and equity and the meanings that they attached to these terms. I also included reflective journaling of my own emotions when discussing race and racism. In addition, I examined school documents related to the Equity Initiative, such as the Diversity Statement, climate survey results, and School Report Card data. Finally, I constructed an online survey that gathered information regarding staff members' attitudes toward the topics of race and equity and asked any willing staff member to participate.

As noted previously, I asked members of the focus group a series of questions. My belief was that these questions would allow me to better understand the emotions that White staff members attach to discussions of race and racism, how those emotions affect their ability to engage in those discussions, and possible ways in which to improve the effectiveness of workshops on race, such as the Beyond Diversity Workshop, by addressing these emotional responses. If White staff members are unable to speak frankly about race and racism, it seems unlikely that our efforts to address equity and systematic racism in our school will be very effective.

For the online survey, I asked several open-ended questions. First, I asked participants to define race and racism. My goal with this question was to examine

whether or not staff members were using the language of critical race theory, the theoretical framework for Beyond Diversity, to define these terms. I then asked them to identify those emotions, positive and negative, that they may feel during discussions of race. To understand how frequently the detours described by jona olsson may be present in our school's discussions of race and racism, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with several detour statements. An open-ended question followed these statements to gather any additional reactions. Respondents were then asked to rank those traits that they believe most impact one's experience so that I could examine the relative importance that staff members place on the role of race. The next few questions asked respondents who may have participated in Beyond Diversity to reflect on that experience and offer any suggestions for improving that experience. The final set of questions asked for demographic information so that I could disaggregate the data by race, gender, and role in the school.

I made a decision to offer only binary options for the statements rather than response options using a Likert scale. My concern was that offering a Likert scale for these questions would cause responses to cluster around the middle of the scale, providing less definitive responses to the questions. By forcing respondents to select "agree" or "disagree," I believed that I would be forcing a decision of either mostly or completely agreeing with a statement or mostly or completely disagreeing. Most respondents were able to make this choice.

One concern I had was that my role as an assistant superintendent in the district may have a negative impact on the authenticity of the data that I was able to collect. Were staff members honest with me about their thoughts and feelings about race, racism

and Beyond Diversity? I was concerned that they may try to please me with their answers rather than provide honest responses. I was conscious of this concern as I analyzed the data that I gathered.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Techniques</div>

I examined the results of the survey for general patterns and trends. I also coded the open-ended responses so that I could look for patterns in responses and summarize categories of responses into themes. The group interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded for categories of responses. These categories were organized into themes and summarized.

The final project evaluation was offered as a report on staff definitions of race and equity and the meanings they attach to these terms. The report was given to the Equity Team and the Administrative Team. The final report contains a recommendation regarding ways in which we may want to alter the Beyond Diversity experience to improve its effectiveness.

SECTION FOUR: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Response Rate of Survey

The online survey was conducted over a one-week period. During that time, I received 151 responses. Only one respondent declined to sign the informed consent form positioned at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix B). That respondent also did not respond to any additional questions on the survey. There were 678 staff members at Spring Valley High School with access to the online survey, making the overall response rate for the survey 22%. This response rate was higher when only faculty respondents were considered: 106 of 417 faculty members for a response rate of 25.4%. The administrative response rate was much higher at 47% (8 of 17 administrators), but the non-teaching staff response rate was only 13.5% (33 of 244).

This overall response rate means that care should be taken in making too many generalizations from the results. For faculty and administrators, the response rate reaches the generally cited 25% response rate for what is considered acceptable, but the response rates for support staff falls below that level. If the higher acceptable response rate threshold of 30% for online surveys is used, only the response rate for administrators reaches that threshold. The survey results, then, should not be used to make generalizations, but rather to provide initial insight into the beliefs and feelings of some faculty and support staff members at Spring Valley.

Of the 150 respondents to the online survey, 129 respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian, seven identified themselves as Asian/Chinese/Korean/Japanese/Pacific Islander, six identified as Black/African-American/Caribbean American, one self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/Mexican/Chicano,

four as Multiracial, and one as Other (in the Additional Comments section, this respondent explained that "Other" was selected because he or she considered her or his race to be human). No respondents identified as Indigenous/Native American. Fifty-five of the respondents identified themselves as male and 91 identified as female. No one identified as transgender and four respondents skipped this question. Eight responses came from administrators in the school, 33 from support staff, and 106 from faculty members.

A total of seven faculty members participated in the group interview. All participants were White, and all hold positions of leadership in the school. At least one participant was a vocal supporter of Beyond Diversity, and one had been critical of the experience after participating in the workshop. Four of the participants were male and three female. The recording of the interview was transcribed and coded.

Survey Results

Respondents were first asked, "How do you define race?" and 143 responses to this question were then coded. Sixty respondents provided definitions that received multiple codes because they described different definitions for race in the response. The following coded responses are ranked in order of frequency.

- Fifty-two percent of respondents (74) cited skin color or physical attributes as a defining feature of race. Of these responses, 54% (40) also identified some other traits, such as culture, geography, ethnicity or ancestry, in their definitions of race. Those responses are included in the following totals.
- Twenty-three percent (33) used the concept of culture to describe race.
- Nineteen percent (27) described race as ethnicity.

- Fifteen percent (21) cited biology or genetics as defining race.

- Thirteen percent (18) described race as defined by ancestry.

- Thirteen percent (18) cited geography or nationality as part of the definition of race.

- Nine percent (13) of the respondents specifically identified race as a social construct.

When disaggregated by race, seven respondents to this question identified themselves as Asian. They listed ethnicity, heritage, culture, nationality, skin color, and physical attributes in their responses. Six respondents identified themselves as Black. Their definitions included terms related to culture, genetics, and skin color. The single Latino/Hispanic respondent listed skin color and ethnicity in her or his definition. The four Multiracial respondents identified genetics/biology, skin color, ethnicity and culture in their definitions. The respondent identifying her- or himself as Other described race in terms of ancestry. The 121 responses from White participants ranged across the codes previously described. The 13 responses that used the term "social construct" to describe race all came from respondents identifying themselves as White.

Participants then responded to the question "How do you define racism?" Of the 150 respondents, 144 provided an answer to this question. For this question, most responses fell neatly into one code with only two responses receiving more than one code. The following results are ranked in order of frequency.

- Forty percent (58) equated racism to bias, prejudice, stereotypes either by using the words bias, prejudice, or stereotype or by referring to preconceived beliefs about race.

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- Twenty-seven percent (39) equated racism with discrimination either by using the word discrimination in their responses, or describing racism in terms of giving different treatment or access to resources based upon race.

- Nineteen percent (28) described racism as involving power in which one racial group is placed in a position of superiority over another.

- Seven percent (10) saw racism as comparable to hate or intolerance.

- Four percent (6) respondents gave responses that could be coded as involving an overt negative action of some type (coded as action, mistreatment, or demeaning others).

When these responses are disaggregated by race, 122 White respondents provided definitions that drew from every code presented. The seven Asian respondents defined racism as connected to prejudice, power, and discrimination. The six Black respondents used terms related to prejudice and power. The Hispanic/Latino respondent defined racism in terms of discrimination. Multiracial respondents defined racism in terms of prejudice, mistreatment, and power. The Other respondent used a definition related to discrimination. Definitions of racism that cited the power dynamic were present in every racial group except for the individual responses from the Hispanic/Latino and Other respondents. Critical race theorists typically cite power as the defining component that distinguishes prejudice from racism. As Okun (2010) contended, "to qualify as racism, thoughts, behaviors, or acts must be systematically supported by institutional and cultural power" (p. xiv).

Question four on the survey asked respondents to describe the emotions that they felt when discussing race or racism, and the results are displayed in Figure 1.

What words best describe your feelings when discussing race or racism?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Afraid		13.5%	20
Angry		29.1%	43
Hopeful		23.6%	35
Happy		3.4%	5
Frustrated		**66.2%**	**98**
Courageous		14.9%	22
Guilty		18.2%	27
Resentful		10.1%	15
Thoughtful		48.6%	72
Intrigued		27.0%	40
		answered question	**148**
		skipped question	**2**
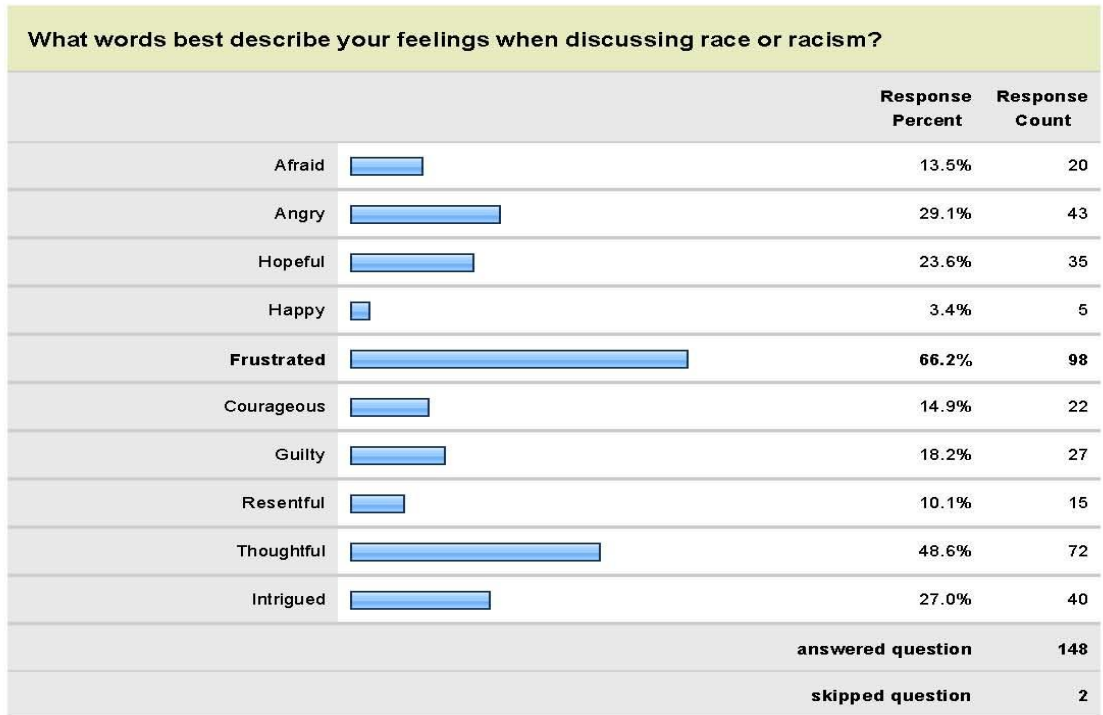
Figure 1. Feelings when discussing race.

Table 1 displays the results to question four when these are disaggregated by race.

This table shows the most frequent emotions selected in this question by race.

Table 1

Feelings Discussing Race Disaggregated by Race

Rank	White	Asian	Black	Latino	Multiracial	Other
1.	Frustrated	Frustrated	Angry	Angry Frustrated	Frustrated	Courageous
2.	Thoughtful	Thoughtful Intrigued	Frustrated		Hopeful Thoughtful Intrigued	
3.	Intrigued	Angry	Afraid Thoughtful			
4.	Angry	Hopeful Courageous	Hopeful Resentful			
5.	Hopeful	Afraid Resentful				
6.	Guilty					
7.	Courageous					
8.	Afraid					
9.	Resentful					
10.	Happy					

It is apparent in Table 1 that for most respondents, frustration is a common

emotion felt when discussing race and racism. This table also shows that Black and

Latino respondents and to a lesser extent Asian respondents are more likely to experience

anger when discussing race and racism than White respondents. It also appears that

discussions of race and racism engage respondents on an intellectual as well as emotional level.

Question five on the survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with statements taken directly from jona olsson's (1997) essay "Detour Spotting for White Anti-racists." Table 2 details the overall results for this question.

Table 2

Statements Regarding Race

Staff Survey on Race and Racism   SurveyMonkey

Please select agree or disagree for the following statements.	Agree	Disagree	Response Count
I am afraid that someone will think I am a racist during discussions of race or racism.	42.0% (63)	**58.0% (87)**	150
I think we can't talk about race without talking about the other forms of difference, such as gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.	**51.0% (76)**	49.0% (73)	149
I don't see people as a color. All people are essentially the same.	31.5% (47)	**68.5% (102)**	149
People can be successful in America regardless of their race if they are willing to work hard.	**55.1% (81)**	44.9% (66)	147
People of color are just as racist as white people.	**65.5% (95)**	34.5% (50)	145
Too often people are too sensitive and easily offended during discussions of race or racism.	**58.9% (86)**	41.1% (60)	146
We do not have a problem with racism at our school.	16.3% (24)	**83.7% (123)**	147
I want to stop acting like a racist, so please tell me when I do something you think is racist.	**66.0% (93)**	34.0% (48)	141
Before we can address race or racism, I must first do my personal work to raise my own race consciousness.	**58.8% (87)**	41.2% (61)	148
Racism is simply too big of an issue for anything that I do to make much difference.	4.0% (6)	**96.0% (144)**	150
		answered question	150

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When the data presented in Table 2 are disaggregated by race, several interesting results came to light. White respondents were much more likely to agree with the statement "I am afraid that someone will think I am a racist during discussions of race and racism" (46.5%) than other racial groups: 28.6% for Asian, 25% for Multiracial, and 0% for Black, Hispanic, and Other respondents. White respondents were more evenly split in their agreement or disagreement with the statement "I think we can't talk about race without talking about other forms of difference, such as gender, sexual orientation, class, etc." (51.9% agreed, 48.1% disagreed) than other racial groups. These other groups tended to be more lopsided in their responses, with Asian and Black respondents disagreeing (71% and 66.7% respectively) and Multiracial and Hispanic respondents agreeing (100% in both cases). Only Asian (57.1%) respondents were slightly more likely to agree with the statement "I don't see people as a color. All people are essentially the same." All other groups disagreed or were evenly split over this statement. Only Black respondents were more likely to disagree (83.3%) with the statement, "People can be successful in America regardless of their race if they are willing to work hard." Respondents of all racial groups except Black were more likely to agree with the statement, "People of color are just as racist as White people"; these groups were split evenly between agreeing and disagreeing. Asian and White respondents were more likely to agree (71.4% and 66.4% respectively) that people are "too sensitive" when discussing race when compared to Black respondents, who were evenly split, and Multiracial and Hispanic respondents who mostly disagreed. All groups were more likely to disagree with the statement, "We do not have a problem with racism at our school," with 100% of Multiracial respondents selecting this answer. Only

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Multiracial respondents were evenly split in their agreement with the statement, "I want to stop acting like a racist, so please tell me when I do something you think is racist." All other groups agreed with this statement, except the Hispanic group who disagreed. All racial groups were likely to agree with the statement that their own personal work must be done first "to raise my own race consciousness," except for Hispanic respondents. Finally, there was nearly universal disagreement across racial groups with the statement, "Racism is simply too big of an issue for anything I do to make much difference."

Respondents were then offered the chance to provide further comments on these statements. Sixty-one respondents provided additional information. When coded, 20 respondents offered a critique of the questions. The most frequent comment of this type expressed frustration that a Likert scale had not been used. As one respondent wrote, "I had a lot of trouble with the all-or-nothing answer—where's my Likert scale?" Another respondent wrote, "Agree or Disagree does not leave room for the depths of people's feelings. These issues are far too complex and challenging to simply agree or disagree without thoughtful explanation." Respondents offering this critique identified as White, Asian, or Other.

As mentioned in the methodology section, I made an intentional decision to offer binary options for these statements. My concern was that offering a Likert scale for these questions would cause responses to cluster around the middle of the scale, providing less definitive responses to the questions. By forcing respondents to select "agree" or "disagree," I believe that I was forcing a decision of either mostly or completely agreeing with a statement or mostly or completely disagreeing. Most respondents were able to make this choice. No more than nine of the 150 respondents skipped any statement.

Twenty-eight respondents provided an explanation of the answers selected in the statements regarding race section of the survey. One respondent wrote that

as a Caucasian, I often feel uncomfortable discussing race, especially with people of other races. It's not that I think I have racist attitudes or because I think the topic is uncomfortable. I just feel that it is easy for Caucasians to come off as racist or insensitive to the hardships that many minorities face.

Another respondent offered, "Sometimes I feel we have to walk on eggshells when we talk about the subject because some are more sensitive than others." Another observed, "I think people avoid discussions because they may feel judged and their work relationships could be affected if they speak openly. They don't personally feel responsible and they don't want to accept guilt." This type of response was offered by those who identified themselves as White, Multiracial, and Black.

Seven comments provided further thoughts on our work to address race and racism at the school. One respondent reflected on teachers' feelings:

I think people at school are nervous about getting into race conversations; they worry they will offend someone, will say the wrong thing. This is especially true when talking to a student of color; many believe if it is not addressed it will "go away." I think that many teachers do not feel prepared to have these difficult conversations and most of all do not feel they know where to start.

Another offered these thoughts:

I think people of all races are treated fairly at Spring Valley, although there are definitely challenges for non-Whites. I know from SEED [a professional

development program examining diversity] that most people think there are significant problems with racism here, but I disagree.

Yet another focused on frustration over not seeing some results:

At Spring Valley, I think there is a lot of talk about race and racism, but never any definition put to what the issues are surrounding that topic. It always seems like there is a lot of talk about "the work" being done, but I've yet to see any product. This leads to frustration for me.

Responses of this type were offered by respondents who identified themselves as White, Asian, Black, and Multiracial.

Four respondents advocated for some type of action based upon the question prompts. These four responses all advocated for open dialogue that examines the impact of race and racism. One respondent attempted to describe this need for action:

People of good conscience have an obligation to educate themselves and work through the many misconceptions that they have based on living in a racist society. Because White people dominate the system, they have a tendency to be blind to its privileges and costs to people of color.

All four of these respondents identified themselves as White.

The next question asked respondents to rank, "in order of what you believe their impact is on one's experiences," various identity factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class. Respondents were also given the choice of selecting "They are all equally important to me," "I'm not able to answer this question," and "None of the above". There were 146 responses to this question about ranking. Only four respondents skipped this question. Table 3 presents these ranking results.

Table 3

The Impact of Difference on One's Experience

Staff Survey on Race and Racism   SurveyMonkey

Rank the following factors in order of what you believe their impact is on one's experiences in Please rank at least one option. (1=Most Important, 5=Least Important)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Rating Average
Race	36.6% (34)	19.4% (18)	28.0% (26)	9.7% (9)	3.2% (3)	1.1% (1)	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.3
Ethnicity	5.6% (5)	14.4% (13)	15.6% (14)	26.7% (24)	24.4% (22)	12.2% (11)	1.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.9
Gender	9.3% (9)	29.9% (29)	15.5% (15)	16.5% (16)	19.6% (19)	8.2% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (1)	3.3
Sexual Orientation	1.1% (1)	2.1% (2)	20.0% (19)	20.0% (19)	25.3% (24)	27.4% (26)	2.1% (2)	1.1% (1)	1.1% (1)	4.6
Social Class	25.5% (25)	22.4% (22)	16.3% (16)	15.3% (15)	14.3% (14)	5.1% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (1)	2.9
Educational level	25.2% (26)	21.4% (22)	8.7% (9)	14.6% (15)	10.7% (11)	17.5% (18)	1.0% (1)	1.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.2
They are all equally important.	56.4% (22)	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)	5.1% (2)	2.6% (1)	17.9% (7)	0.0% (0)	2.6% (1)	2.8
I'm not able to answer this question.	48.0% (12)	0.0% (0)	4.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	4.0% (1)	24.0% (6)	12.0% (3)	4.2
None of the above	25.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	58.3% (7)	6.4
									answered questio	
									skipped questio	

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Table 4 shows the results when only the "most important" rankings (ranking 1) are considered and then disaggregated by race.

Table 4

The Impact of Difference on One's Experience Disaggregated by Race

Ranking	All Responses	White Responses	People of Color Responses
1	Race	Race	Race
2	Education Level	Educational Level	Equally Important
3	Social Class	Social Class	Ethnicity Not Able to Answer
4	Equally Important	Equally Important	Gender Social Class Education Level None of the Above
5	Not Able to Answer	Not Able to Answer	Sexual Orientation
6	Gender	Gender	
7	Ethnicity	Ethnicity	
8	None of the Above	None of the Above	
9	Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation	

As can be seen in Table 4, for all racial groups, race is viewed as having the most important impact on one's experience. Many respondents view all of these factors as equally important; however, White respondents view educational level and social class as

more impactful while people of color view ethnicity as more significant. It is interesting that for all groups, sexual orientation is viewed least frequently as being the most important factor in one's experience. This may be due to the fact that no respondent identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer or questioning (LGBTQ).

The next set of questions asked respondents about their experience with Beyond Diversity. Of the 128 who responded to the question, "Did you participate in the Beyond Diversity Workshop?" 42 responded that they had. The next question asked them to describe their experience. Of the 42 who responded they had attended the workshop, 40 evaluated their experience. Figure 2 graphically depicts the overall responses to the question about describing the experience of participating in Beyond Diversity.
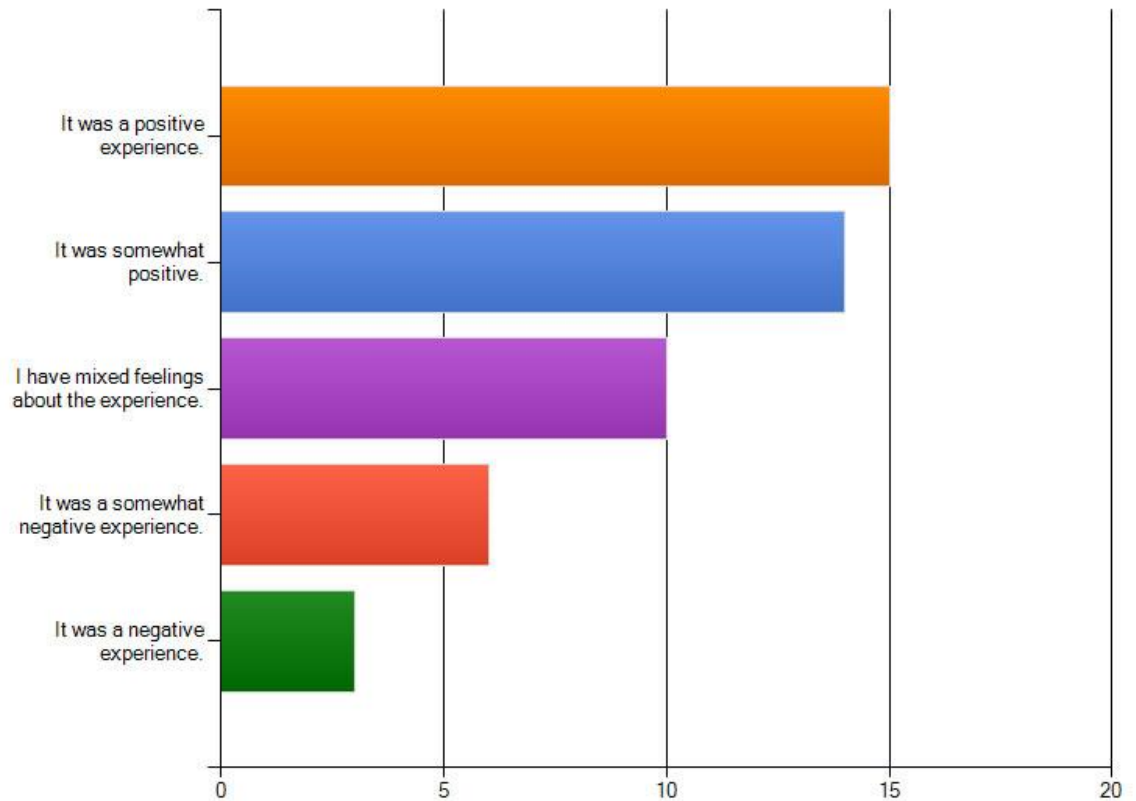
Figure 2. Experience participating in Beyond Diversity Workshop.

When these responses are disaggregated by race, respondents who identified themselves as Black or Other felt that the experience was positive. The three Asian respondents to this question felt the experience was positive or they had mixed feelings. The respondents who stated that they felt the experience was somewhat negative identified themselves as Multiracial or White. All of the respondents who felt the experience was negative identified as White.

Respondents were then provided the opportunity to offer suggestions for improving the Beyond Diversity experience if they "felt that the experience was less than positive." There were 27 responses to this invitation to give suggestions. Of those responses given by White respondents, only five respondents stated that they felt they had been judged for being White, or made to feel guilty for their race. Two respondents felt that the definition of race used in the workshop was too narrow. An additional five respondents stated that there should have been a professional development experience prior to the workshop or directly following it to allow participants to prepare for and process their experiences. Five respondents, who identified as White or Multiracial, stated that the workshop should have been focused on a broader array of differences, not just race.

The final open-ended question asked for any additional comments. Those comments, when coded, fell into several categories. Nine responses were wishes of good luck for my research or thanks for creating the survey. Five respondents asked to see the results when the survey was completed. Six respondents used this space to further explain their answers on the survey, and 11 offered comments about the structure of the survey. Again, many of these respondents expressed frustration with the forced choice questions, or the belief that different types of questions should have been asked.

Three respondents used the space to reflect on their own work to better understand race and racism. One wrote, "I think that my ongoing work in understanding race makes me a better teacher every day." Another wrote the following:

I don't believe we can ever fully appreciate or understand what our african-
american [sic] colleagues/friends experience when it comes to racism. I choose to

believe that we, as a human race, can continue to learn to be more cival [sic] and

tolerant with each other, accept each other's differences, celebrate our similarities,

and work together to make life a better and more fulfilling experience.

These three respondents all identified themselves as White.

Ten respondents offered a critique of the school's approach to discussions of race

and racism. Four respondents commented on how they believed that the purpose of these

conversations seemed to be to make White people feel guilty:

I don't know about Beyond Diversity, but at SEED, there was a lot of time spent

trying to make white people feel guilty, in my opinion. White privilege, etc. I'm

all for making everyone aware of struggles others might be facing and working

with people to treat everyone well, but I think the line is crossed into "guilt trips"

too often at Spring Valley.

Another respondent communicated dissatisfaction with SEED: "I do not like the SEED

program. I dropped out of it when they intentionally made people feel bad for who they

are and tried to evoke primal emotions without prior consent." One respondent also

focused on guilt in this way: "I resent the fact that I should be made to feel guilty because

I'm white. I think many people shy away from discussions involving racism due to this

intended/unintended consequence." Another expressed the idea that it is not safe to

discuss race in our school:

Incredibly interesting and complicated topic. Often, I find discussing race,

gender, sexual orientation, etc. to be so incredibly frustrating, as it often is in a

conversation of political beliefs, values, and perspectives. So much passion and

so often one statement leaves you judged and labeled very unfairly. Way too

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many sides and viable arguments related to race and the related issues to define/identify one right one. But too often, that is not the way people allow you to feel.

All of these respondents identified themselves as White.

Others offered a critique of our approach to discussions of race and racism. Some questioned the ability of these discussions to create change, arguing that the school is not racially diverse enough for that to occur. One of these respondents offered this critique:

I believe that one must be regularly immersed in a diverse population in order to understand diversity. Examining diversity in a minimally diverse environment—such as Spring Valley—results only in theory and assumptions. In my community I—a white/Caucasian—am a minority. I've learned more about diversity, race, and racism in the past three years of living in my community than in all the years of SEED and other workshops combined. As long as people self-select against diversity, they cannot understand it.

Another respondent questioned the importance of racism altogether:

I think too many people here try and make race seem like a problem. There is no problem when you look at someone as a person and not look at them as to what color their skin is. Some of the biggest offenders think that race is important, when it really isn't. Look at Security, they have the biggest African American group in the school, and I think that they just want to be treated like everyone else, not just because they are African American.

Another expressed frustration that we are not talking about other equity issues:

Our school environment has many layers of equity problems. The culture of our

school has changed substantially over recent years to value less the contributions

of individuals. We have significant class and gender inequity to examine, though

I doubt this work will be deemed important enough to undertake.

All of these respondents identified themselves as White.

Focus Group Results

I conducted one focus group interview with seven participants. The participants

were all members of the school's leadership teams. One was also a member of our

district's Equity Team. All but one participant had participated in the Beyond Diversity

Workshop, and one was actually a co-facilitator for the workshop. All participants were

White. Four participants were male and three were female. Four of the participants

considered themselves to be of an older generation than the other group participants. The

focus group was scheduled for 40 minutes but ran for 80 minutes because the participants

became engaged in discussion with each other.

Several major themes emerged from their responses. Members of the group

admitted to feeling mixed emotions when discussing race. One female participant shared

her mixed feelings: "It brings me back to my earlier days. And some good feelings.

Some bad feelings." Another said, "I find myself being careful . . . the sense of

carefulness, of not wanting to overstep, of not wanting to unintentionally say something

that would be taken however." There was a sense from the group that much of those

mixed emotions come from concern that others may react negatively, or that they might

be judged for their comments.

There was recognition that these emotions have an impact on one's experiences with discussions of race and racism and that having those emotions acknowledged helps. One male participant offered an observation on his diversity training experience:

> I've been through two different diversity training experiences where it totally depended on what I was feeling and what I was bringing to the table and how things were flowing in terms of that emotion and how much I was willing to be open and allow myself to talk about it.

A female participant stated that naming emotions "sometimes gives me permission to ask somebody a question that I might not have asked before because I've been told I might feel uncomfortable and so it's permission to make somebody uncomfortable."

This led to an interesting conversation about how emotions are expressed at Spring Valley as a predominantly White culture. One male participant cited this difficulty as one that occurs in a WASP environment:

> And for me, this just occurred to me; we almost put an equal sign between emotion and judgment. And that is where the WASP culture comes in because in a WASP environment, emotion doesn't exist and judgment is almost totally and completely silent.

Another male participant agreed saying, "when I become emotional about something that's emotional, I've literally been told I'm being unprofessional." This brought immediate agreement from a female participant who described a leadership team meeting in which members "said things like 'Don't take things personally.' 'Don't cry'. . . yet it's a place where people get very emotional." She continued to articulate her thoughts:

So, you know, and I don't necessarily think that that is what people were saying.

They were using those phrases to describe other issues. They were symptoms not

causes necessarily, but that whole emotional piece and vulnerability have a

connection to judgment. I think it is really real and throughout everything you do

whether its master schedule or conversations about race.

This comment brought agreement from all of the participants.

There was considerable discussion about how to create a safe environment to have

emotional conversations about race and racism. There was a sense from many

participants that this environment is created through relationships rather than setting

norms for discussion. One female participant expressed this reality:

Somebody, regardless of race, who I know well, that feels different to me than

somebody I don't know well or if I'm in a group I don't know well. To me, it's a

question of do I know that person as a person.

Agreeing, a male participant added, "It has a lot to do with who you're talking with and

how long you've had a relationship with them." That relationship seems to provide safety

by giving an individual a sense of how others will react to her or his comments. That

same male participant then added, "It's always how the other is going to react." A female

participant elaborated on this issue:

And so, talking about race, which is part of identity, which has all of this history

in American and throughout the world, it can be difficult. You wonder where you

fall in there. You wonder the people you're talking to, what their history is.

There was disagreement over whether or not safety could be created by

establishing group norms. One male participant argued that norms, such as those

established at Beyond Diversity, acknowledge discomfort and provide ways for participants to address their feelings. Most of the rest of the group seemed to disagree. They described a sense that there are a second set of norms that are not articulated that make the discussion feel unsafe. One male participant who was newer to the staff described his experience of norms:

> In any cultural situation, there are overt norms that are named, and there are a whole series of covert, unnamed norms . . . I've experienced that several times that I walk out of the room going, "Well, what did I just step in" and several people around this table and sat and listened to me debrief that.

Another female participant described norms as they specifically relate to discussions of race: "If you express a feeling or emotion that isn't part of the group norm for that meeting, you cannot be safe." This brought loud agreement from another member of the group. The female participant continued: "All of a sudden, you are the outlier and what you say isn't valid no matter the reason."

There were also many statements that illustrated that the emotions attached to discussions of race and racism become easier to manage with practice. One female participant acknowledged this:

> I think that ultimately I'm more comfortable now than I was five years ago. That doesn't mean that I'm not uncomfortable in any given situation, but I think I'm more comfortable with talking about it. So it doesn't scare me, or make me feel as guilty, or make me feel as angry on a regular basis although I've certainly felt guilty and angry, you know all those things. But I'm not as worried about those emotions any more.

She cited two reasons for this increasing comfort with her emotions: the professional discussions about race within the school and the discussions in her personal life because her children attend a more racially diverse school. A male participant agreed and shared his experience with growing in comfort:

> The older and more mature that I've become, the more I trust and believe in my feelings and my experiences. I feel more comfortable and more confident to talk about any difficult issue, be it race, be it any of the isms that are around.

> Finally, there was very interesting conversation about the impact that one's generational experience has on discussions of race and racism. As one more experienced female explained,

> I think that when we talk about race it is to some extent controlled by our time because we've been having this discussion or I have for certainly since college which was late 60s . . . and the way that conversation goes and the assumptions that are made in that conversation has changed over the decades. So, I think, those of us who've been around a longer time, part of the struggle might see changes in the social construct and what's considered.

This drew agreement from several other participants of the same age range. One male said, "I agree. I agree. I just agree. It's interesting to see when 30 years ago when I started in college counseling there was discrimination against minorities. Now, it's the hook to get in." Another female participant said,

> I know that my feelings for sure are informed by my generation. Living on the south side of Chicago as an 18-year-old during the race riot and going on to college during more unsettling during the late 60s early 70s. And you can't help

but be informed by the way you were raised and I probably was raised very

differently; I lived in a very different community than others.

This comment was met with nods of agreement from those who appeared to be of the

same age group. This generational difference may also be present in that same

participant's comments about her struggle with the Beyond Diversity Workshop: "At

Beyond Diversity, I felt ambushed because I was going in to this . . . I was defining

diversity very differently that it was defined." She noted that this dissonance meant that

she "spent the whole first day recovering from that shock of, this is not what I thought we

were going to talk about."

SECTION FIVE: JUDGMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Judgment

The primary research question of this program evaluation was focused on exploring how a better understanding of the symbolic emotional meanings White staff members attach to the concepts of race and racism might improve the effectiveness of their participation in the Beyond Diversity Workshop and other discussions of race and racism. It is my belief that by understanding White staff members' emotional responses, one can alter the emotional symbolism that participants attach to the object of race. Ultimately, the goal is to create an environment for White participants in discussions of race and racism that does not allow them to avoid the discussion but makes it safe enough for them to be honest when sharing their feelings, opinions, and beliefs. I believe that this is a crucial component of work that addresses racial inequity. It is a goal of workshops like Beyond Diversity to create moments of personal reflection on one's beliefs by having participants share those beliefs and hear others react to them. When White participants are wrestling with negative emotions, they become disengaged. This limits the effectiveness of equity workshops like Beyond Diversity because many members of one group may simply stop participating, or something may cause them to participate in the kind of detouring behaviors described by jona olsson.

This research supports my belief that White participants have mixed emotions when talking about race and racism. The primary emotion for all respondents to the survey seems to be frustration regardless of their racial identity. White respondents, however, were more likely to report feeling judged or made to feel guilty during discussions of race and racism. At least one respondent cited this as the reason for

dropping out of a diversity-related professional development opportunity, and five respondents identified these feelings as a the cause of their negative experience at Beyond Diversity.

In the survey results and focus group interview, some possible sources for these negative emotions become apparent. One source is the view that White staff members have that race is a complex topic that requires careful navigation so as to avoid offending anyone. This sense of complexity is reflected in the reactions critiquing the wording of the survey and forced agreement/disagreement choices. Members of the focus group talked about the importance of relationships that allow participants to predict how other participants are likely to react during discussions of race and racism.

As a White staff member myself, this makes perfect sense to me. I have often noticed the abrupt change that occurs in the pace of a conversation when race is mentioned in the presence of a person of color. What may have been a fast-paced exchange of ideas only a moment before suddenly becomes a much slower conversation as we each carefully consider our word choice. More than anything, a part of me wants to be seen as a "good person" by my colleagues, and my fear that I might say something to offend that person of color can feel almost paralyzing. Completing this research has made me reflect on how often the most vocal participants in a diversity workshop are people of color while many White participants sit silently listening. Perhaps the belief that I have heard from many White colleagues that we need people of color in the room to discuss race and racism is, at least in part, stating a need that we have to have someone fill the space with their comments so that we will nott have to navigate our fears of offending someone and being perceived as a racist.

Generational definitions of race and racism can play an important role in the difficulty that White staff members have with navigating their emotions. The more experienced members who participated in the group interview spoke of the frustration that they feel when the definitions seem to have changed. They spoke of feeling judged by others because their definition of race and racism did not match that of the Beyond Diversity Workshop. I suspect that this feeling of being judged may in part be expressions of their own fears that they will be perceived as a racist and, therefore, a bad person if they use the wrong terms.

This feeling of being judged may also come from the "covert norms" described by members of the group interview. Several participants described negative reactions to diversity workshops where they felt they were made to feel guilty. Some members of the focus group specifically noted that they felt they couldn't be honest in their opinions for fear of being considered "outliers" and then judged for their beliefs. This is a common theme that has appeared in many of my individual conversations with White staff members who have felt hurt by conversations of race and racism. They frequently express a belief that there is a double standard being practiced by equity leaders in our school. They feel that those leaders demand to have their opinions and experiences believed and accepted but then reject, as examples of White racism, the beliefs and experiences of White staff members who may disagree.

This presents an interesting challenge in diversity workshops like Beyond Diversity. To address issues of racial equity, it is necessary to challenge the dominant narrative of White culture that frequently seeks to silence or ignore the voices of people of color. And yet, if the voices of White participants who may express those dominant

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cultural views are silenced, it may be extremely difficult to confront those views within the workshop, or for individuals to consider alternative perspectives that may cause them to better understand the source and consequences of the views they hold. White participants must feel safe enough to share their views openly without allowing those views to dominate the workshop or deny the experiences of people of color. When this does not happen, I've experienced that a room of White participants will fall silent and become disengaged. After the workshop, I have heard them then use the excuse that they could not share openly in the workshop as a reason to discount the entire experience.

During my group interview, a moment occurred that suggests that the covert norm that silences White participants from speaking honestly may be related to how closely the facilitator listens to statements being made by White participants. Here is an excerpt from an exchange between a White participant and a second White participant who was also a facilitator for Beyond Diversity. Participant 1 is explaining why she felt unsafe during the Beyond Diversity Workshop.

> Participant 1 says to Participant 2: "All of a sudden, [I am] the outlier and what [I] say isn't valid no matter the reason. You and I come from very different racial backgrounds . . ."

> Participant 2 interrupts: "You do?" appearing to be surprised by Participant 1's statement.

> Participant 1 is seemingly annoyed but continues: "So mine is informed by my growing up and yours is informed by the work you've done. And, um, we see race differently."

Participant 2: "So as the facilitator of that meeting, what I might actually do . . .

It's an interesting perspective that you bring because what you've already

told me [is] what my reaction to your comment is going to be. [This

brings us] back to why it's difficult to have this conversation."

Participant 1: "But I wasn't speaking to you personally."

Participant 2: "But I'm the facilitator. So you've already decided what the

facilitator is going to do in that situation. That's actually . . ."

Participant 1: "But that is that group's norm."

Participant 2: "So here's another perspective on that. What I might actually

invite you to do is to say more about where that belief comes from."

From a critical race theory perspective, both participants are having similar racial

experiences. This may explain Participant 2's surprise to hear Participant 1 argue that,

though they are both White, they have had different racial experiences. But what

Participant 1 may actually be expressing is that her definition of race, developed through

her personal experiences growing up, is different from the definition of race that

Participant 2 has come to accept after extensive participation and facilitation of

workshops on race. Participant 1 is not using a definition of race derived from critical

race theory. Instead of acknowledging that, Participant 2 frames the comment as a

personal comment on his work and asks Participant 1 to question where her "belief comes

from." Participant 1 is left feeling unheard and judged for her statement. The problem,

as it is defined by Participant 2, is with her beliefs.

The survey demonstrates that Participant 1 is correct that we are not operating

from a shared definition of race or racism. Only 52% of respondents identified race as a

trait based upon physical characteristics and only 9% identified race as a social construct. Only 19% of respondents described the power element of racism that distinguishes it from prejudice. The survey illustrates that for most staff who may participate in the Beyond Diversity Workshop, the definition of race based upon critical race theory may not match the definition they currently use.

For all participants in discussions of race and racism, these two symbolic objects are first defined for us by the culture around us. In the focus group, I heard what I had heard from other participants of Beyond Diversity in the previous year, which is, this is not the definition of race that I have grown up with, and this is not how we are supposed to talk about race. When I reflect back on the messages I received about race and racism as a child, it was not just how White people were to talk about race but rather that we were not supposed to talk about it at all.

An interesting area for further research would be to better define these generational definitions of race and racism so as to better facilitate conversation about these topics. My sense is that those who may have experienced the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s learned to talk about race and racism in a way that is somehow different from how those discussions happen today. One example of this is the idea of color blindness. Several people commented on the survey that they felt we should treat people not as races but as people. I believe that this may mean they want to see people as human beings and ignore their racial identity (perhaps as the survey respondent who explained he selected "Other" because he viewed his race as human). In my own childhood, I know that I was taught to ignore race and concentrate on our shared

humanity. Now colorblindness is generally viewed as an ineffective way of discussing race because it discounts the impact of race on one's experience.

<center>Recommendations</center>

Creating a safe place for White participants to discuss race and racism that does not allow them to avoid the conversation but promotes compassion and understanding is essential to Spring Valley's continued work on the Equity Initiative. As members of the focus group described, when this happens successfully, White participants are less likely to experience negative emotions such as guilt or shame during these discussions and, when those emotions do occur, they are less likely to deter them from continuing the conversation.

Creating this safe space requires more than just group norms. It requires establishing relationships among the participants that allow them to feel more confident in their ability to predict how other members of the discussion will react and lessen their fear that they will be judged or treated as an "outlier."

The Beyond Diversity Workshop presents two challenges in this area. First, the groups have been typically large with 40 or more participants. Focus group members described that size is an impediment to creating those relationships. One step then would be to limit the size of the workshop to include fewer participants. The second challenge is that the workshop lasts only two days. To develop relationships requires more time than this. In a two-day workshop, one day may be spent just forming those relationships.

One way to address this challenge is to extend the experience beyond two days. I would recommend creating a set of preliminary meetings for those attending Beyond Diversity prior to the workshop with the sole purpose of allowing participants to get to

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know each other better. This type of relationship building may make all participants, and particularly White participants, feel better able predict the possible reactions of those in the group and develop a higher level of trust that they will not be judged. Following the workshop, a series of opportunities should be provided for participants to process what they have experienced and to strengthen the relationships that they have formed.

Prolonging this interaction with others around the topic of race and racism is important for promoting continued engagement by White staff members in discussions of race and racism. Comments shared during the group interview support Blumer's argument that interaction with the objects of race and racism can improve the emotional symbolism that White staff members bring to future discussions. Essentially, White participants learn that they can struggle with negative emotions like fear of being judged, guilt, or frustration and still be accepted by others as a good person.

As a staff, we do not currently share a definition of race or racism. This increases the difficulty of these discussions because staff members may enter into the conversations with very different ways of addressing the problems of racism because they define race differently. For example, if racism is discrimination, color blind policies that make it difficult to determine one's race may seem like a viable solution. This approach assumes that, were it not for discriminatory practices, all people would start at an equal place. Of course, this is not the case in many situations. If one defines racism as a system of advantages and disadvantages based upon race, one can see that not everyone has had access to those same advantages. Providing definitions for these terms and giving staff an opportunity to consider how prejudice and racism may be different seems like an important step in being able to address the issue of equity in our school. The survey

results show that most respondents felt that important components of this equity work are personal reflection and learning.

It seems important to help staff members understand how discussions of race and racism fit with discussions of other types of difference. On the survey, White respondents were nearly equally split between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement that we cannot talk about race without talking about other forms of difference. This may be a detour for our work that allows us to avoid dealing with the difficult emotions attached to discussions of race and racism. Yet, I also believe that the survey results give credence to those in the school who argue that not enough is being done to confront homophobia. When asked to rank traits that impact one's experience, sexual orientation was low on the list for every racial group of respondents, a belief that is contradicted by the frequent instances of homophobia described by our LGBTQ students. A plan for our equity work that allows us to address the impact of many types of difference while maintaining a focus on the impact of race and racism may be needed.

Ultimately, I view the results of this study as hopeful. The vast majority of those responding to the survey believe that we can work to address race and racism. To further that work, we must always remain mindful of the fact that discussions of race and racism are complex emotional experiences for all participants. The symbolism that we attach to the objects of race and racism make it difficult to enter into these discussions. By identifying this emotional symbolism and prompting individuals to reflect on its impact upon their expectations when entering into discussions of race and racism, we can more completely engage in this dialogue. It is my belief that the results of this study will help

to promote changes that will provide a safer environment for all participants in our

discussions of race and racism.

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APPENDIX A

District Equity Plan

District Diversity Statement: In service to the democratic ideals of justice and equity, Spring Valley Township High School District is committed to delivering a progressive educational and work environment for all students and staff in the areas of diversity and social justice. We believe it is the responsibility of academic institutions to offer students a diverse set of experiences and perspectives that will better prepare them to successfully navigate the rapidly globalizing world community of the 21st century. To reflect more holistic and realistic perspectives of the world at large, we are committed to actively recruiting, supporting and retaining people of diverse backgrounds across each level of our school district. Providing a diverse experience for our school community is further evidence of our dedication to our motto.

A diverse school community includes representation by individuals of varying race, color, religion, national origin gender, sexual orientation, age, ancestry, marital status, and disability

In our work to fulfill this mission, our equity goals for the 2011−12 school year are:

Goal #1 Ensuring an Equitable Educational Experience for all Students

It is our responsibility as educators to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to experience a high quality instruction and a challenging curriculum. When students need support to achieve their educational goals, the school should work to provide that support.

To meet this goal, we will:
- Determine if there is evidence that students are not having an equitable educational experience.
  a. Examine quantitative data: test scores, level distribution, course distribution, discipline data, IEP data **(CISS group, Equity Team, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services)**
  b. Examine qualitative data: written stories and comments from students, parents and staff **(Voices in Equity Project (Parents, Staff and Students), Equity Team)** (Outside Organizations: Mosaic Experience)
- Establish working definitions for important terms, such as diversity, equity, cultural competence, and race **(Assistant Superintendent for Student Services)** (Outside Organizations: Beyond Diversity)
- Revise policies, curriculum, or teaching strategies to address those areas in which students are not experiencing equitable educational outcomes. **(CISS group, Equity Team, Learning Cohorts, SEED)**

Goal #2 Ensure that all students and staff are experiencing a safe and respectful learning environment.

Emotional and physical safety enhances learning for students. Therefore, the school must work to ensure that all students are treated with respect and experience a safe environment in our school. Staff must model that safety by treating each other with respect and compassion.

To meet this goal, we will:
- Examine current levels of safety and respect in our school: CSCI data, YRBS data, Graduate Survey data **(Names Program, ECGC Steering Group, ECGC Student Group work on bullying and harassment, CTA)** <u>(Outside Organizations: About Face Theatre, ADL, Charmm'd Foundation, FAN)</u>
- Create and implement a follow up program to the Names Can Really Hurt Us Program that promotes safety and respect at each grade level. **(Adviser Program?)**

Goal #3 Develop Cultural Competence in all Students so That They are Prepared for a Global Community

We know that many students will experience a more diverse setting in their college and adults lives after high school. In addition, cultural competence is a skill that employers consider to be an essential 21st century skill.

To meet this goal we will:
- Recruit, Hire, and Retain a Culturally Competent and Racially Diverse Staff **(CISS subgroup with HR participation)**
- **Develop the skills of cultural competence in our current staff**
- Presenting Multiple Perspectives throughout the Curriculum **(Equity Team, SEED)**
    1. Gathering and developing lesson plans, unit plans, and course curriculum **(Curriculum Council?)**
- Providing Opportunities for Students to Themselves and to Know People Who are Different from Themselves **(Service-learning Coordinators, Adviser Chairs, Student Activities Coordinators) What are they taking away from these experiences? How do we know?**
    1. Expand school exchange programs to include more students **(Albany Park, Dulles School Partnership)**
    2. Expand joint school projects **(Harper Spring Valley Leardership Academy)**
    3. Service-learning Project **(Habitat for Humanity, Haiti Project, Angola Project, Classroom projects)**

APPENDIX B

Statement of Informed Consent and Survey Questions

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of this study is to better understand the attitudes and emotions that staff members bring to discussions of race and racism. It is my belief that these emotions and attitudes impact the desire of participants to engage in discussions of race at our high school and to participate in initiatives designed to examine race and its impact on our students' educational experience.

Your participation will consist of answering the twelve questions in this online survey. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Responses to the survey are anonymous.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty until the completion of the research project. Your identity will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data. Only the researcher will have access to the survey results and these will be secured.

The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies. Your identity will in no way be revealed. In addition, a pseudonym will be used to identify the high school participating in this research.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, you may contact the researcher, Timothy Hayes (847) 784 – 2222, or the researcher's program chair, Dr. Tema Okun (312) 261-3118.

*1. I consent to participate in a research study conducted by Timothy Hayes, a doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago, Illinois. The study is entitled "Understanding White Attitudes Toward Discussions of Race and Racism" and will take place from December 2011 through March 2012.

◯ I give my informed consent to participate in this survey. Please proceed to the first question.

◯ I do not give my informed consent to participate in this survey. Please close this survey. Thank you for your time!

2. How do you define race?

3. How do you define racism?

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4. What words best describe your feelings when discussing race or racism?

☐ Afraid

☐ Angry

☐ Hopeful

☐ Happy

☐ Frustrated

☐ Courageous

☐ Guilty

☐ Resentful

☐ Thoughtful

☐ Intrigued

5. Please select agree or disagree for the following statements.

	Agree	Disagree
I am afraid that someone will think I am a racist during discussions of race or racism.	○	○
I think we can't talk about race without talking about the other forms of difference, such as gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.	○	○
I don't see people as a color. All people are essentially the same.	○	○
People can be successful in America regardless of their race if they are willing to work hard.	○	○
People of color are just as racist as white people.	○	○
Too often people are too sensitive and easily offended during discussions of race or racism.	○	○
We do not have a problem with racism at our school.	○	○
I want to stop acting like a racist, so please tell me when I do something you think is racist.	○	○
Before we can address race or racism, I must first do my personal work to raise my own race consciousness.	○	○
Racism is simply too big of an issue for anything that I do to make much difference.	○	○

6. If you would like to provide any additional information for any of the answers that you gave in question #5, please do so here.

7. Rank the following factors in order of what you believe their impact is on one's experiences in life. Please rank at least one option. (1=Most Important, 5=Least Important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Race	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ethnicity	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gender	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sexual Orientation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social Class	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Educational level	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
They are all equally important.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm not able to answer this question.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
None of the above	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. Did you participate in the Beyond Diversity workshop?

○ Yes

○ No

9. If you participated in Beyond Diversity, how would you describe that experience?

○ It was a positive experience.

○ It was somewhat positive.

○ I have mixed feelings about the experience.

○ It was a somewhat negative experience.

○ It was a negative experience.

10. If you felt that the experience was less than positive, what would have made the experience more positive for you?

11. How would you describe your position in the school?

○ Support Staff

○ Faculty

○ Administration

12. How would you describe your race?

◯ White/Caucasian

◯ Asian/Chinese/Korean/Japanese/Pacific Islander

◯ Black/African-American/Caribbean American

◯ Hispanic/Latino/Mexican/Chicano

◯ Indigenous/Native American

◯ Multiracial

◯ Other

13. What is your gender?

◯ Female

◯ Male

◯ Transgender

14. What additional comments would you like to offer that might be helpful to the researcher?

Thank you for your time!

A THREE-PART DISERTATION:

CHANGE LEADERSHIP PLAN: ALLOWING STUDENTS TO SEE THEMSELVES
AND OTHERS IN THE CURRICULUM

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

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in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

This change leadership plan proposes using a youth participatory action research project to prompt a review of curricula at Spring Valley High School (pseudonym) to broaden the variety of racial identities presented. The author argued that a wide variety of identities were presented to White students, but students of color were shown a limited number of identities. This limits the ability of all students to see past racial stereotypes and see themselves in the curriculum.

PREFACE

Every year, I meet with students so as to better understand their experiences at Spring Valley High School. It is especially useful to hear from students who may not experience our school as members of the dominant culture. Spring Valley is a predominantly White school. For students of color, this means that they often look around their classrooms and see few classmates who look like them. For White students, this means that they graduate with a very limited understanding of racial identities, both their own and others.

When the members of the English department adopted the book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, it was with some pride that they were broadening their offerings of texts that portrayed Black characters. They were surprised when I pointed out that rather than broadening students' understanding of the Black experience, this text might be reinforcing the stereotypes that our students hold. I knew from my meetings with Black students that they felt the curriculum rarely presented characters and historical figures with experiences similar to their own.

What followed was a difficult moment with the department. At one point, the department leader angrily threatened to remove all of the texts with Black characters from the book list. This change leadership project proposal helped me to see that moment in a different light. What the department leader was expressing was the guilt and shame that White people often experience when discussing race. He was not making the threat because he did not believe in a diverse curriculum. He simply could not see a way to discuss race and the curriculum without feeling guilty or ashamed. With more conversation and an acknowledgement of those feelings, the department leader was able

to move to a different understanding. The department adopted the book, but the

discussions that followed prompted them to consider texts that present a wider variety of

Black experiences.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction had met with me to ask what I thought of a book that the English department wanted to add to their reading list. The book was *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. The book tells the story of Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman whose cells, taken from a tumor, were used to create an unending supply of human cells for research. Researchers throughout America use these cells, known as the HeLa cell line. The story is compelling not only for its scientific significance but because Henrietta's family was never told that her cells were being used for this purpose. They received no financial compensation even though her cells were used to pioneer medical research that was worth millions.

The assistant superintendent's question was, "Is this an appropriate book to add to our curriculum?" I answered that yes it was, but that my concern was how this woman's experience compared to other depictions of Black women in our curriculum. Were we offering a variety of experiences for students to view, or were we offering the same experience again and again? To be more specific, was every Black woman presented in the English curriculum poor and victimized, as Henrietta Lack was? Did the English curriculum present a variety of racial experiences for students to examine? Did all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum? Were students presented with a wide variety of racial experiences from which to learn that were different from their own?

Rationale

Tatum (1997) wrote about racial identity formation in her book, *Why Are All of the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race.*

Tatum asserted that during high school, students work to understand what role race plays in their identity. White students, who are surrounded by positive representations of their racial identity, may not even realize that this is part of their identity. To them, a White racial identity is a "normal" racial identity. For students of color, however, the racial representations that they view in a high school curricula and in the media may be overwhelmingly negative and not accurately reflect their experiences. Leadbeater and Way (as cited in Tatum, 1997) argued this point for Black girls living in urban areas when they pointed out that the "school drop-out, the teenage welfare mother, the drug addict, and the victim of domestic violence or of AIDS are among the most prevalent public images" presented of Black girls, but "the majority of poor urban adolescent girls do not fit the stereotypes that are made of them" (p. 57). Young Black boys are presented with too narrowly defined racial stereotypes of the "all too familiar media image of a young Black man with his hands cuffed behind his back arrested for a violent crime" or that of the talented Black athlete (Tatum, 1997, p. 58). Tatum (1997) contended that "resisting the stereotypes and affirming other definitions of themselves is a part of the task facing" young Black women and men (p. 57).

For our White students, Tatum's observations seem to be confirmed by the results Spring Valley (pseudonym) had gathered for two years from our graduate survey. Students reported that the school could have done more to prepare them for the diversity they experience after high school. One reason for this feeling of being ill-prepared is that our White students have little understanding of their own racial identity. This is also true for our White staff members. After a presentation on our racial equity work, one White staff member approached me and said, "You keep talking about racial identity. I'm

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struggling a bit here. I'm not really sure what it even means to be White." I tried to

reassure him by explaining that because being White is the dominant racial identity, it

can be hard to describe something that is portrayed as normal. It is like trying to describe

a polar bear in a snowstorm. It is difficult for our White students and staff to engage in

discussions about race when they are unable to describe their own personal racial

identity.

For our students of color, we know from quantitative and qualitative data that they

are having a very different experience from our White students. In 2014, we formed a

student equity group called the Voices in Equity Project. This group was open to any

student interested in meeting once each month to discuss issues related to their

experience at Spring Valley High School when viewed through the lens of difference.

The stories shared by these students confirmed that they frequently felt defined by others'

perceptions of their race. One Asian student, for example, shared how difficult it was to

be perceived as a smart student because she is Asian and in level 2 classes. Level 2

classes are for those students who need additional help developing the skills necessary for

mastery in a content area. At Spring Valley, students who are placed in level 2 classes

typically score at or below 75% on national tests. Certainly, these are smart students, but

for this girl, being Asian meant that her classmates believed she must be in level 4, the

highest ability grouping offered at the school.

An important role for schools is to aid students as they develop an understanding

of their individual identities. Identity formation occurs throughout a student's school

years and into adulthood as students consider their "religious beliefs, values and

preferences, political affiliations and beliefs, gender roles, and ethnic identities" (Tatum,

1997, p. 53). James Marcia (as cited in Tatum, 1997 described four identity "statuses" during the process of identity formation: diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved (p. 53). The diffuse state describes a person for whom "there has been little exploration of a particular domain" (Marcia as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 53). A person in the foreclosed status is in a "state in which commitment has been made to particular roles of belief systems, often those selected by parents, without actively considering alternatives" (Marcia as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 53). The status for many adolescents may best be defined as moratorium, "a state of active exploration of roles and beliefs in which no commitment has yet been made" (Marcia as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 53). Following this moratorium status is a status of achieved, during which the individual has a "strong personal commitment to a particular dimension of identity following a period of high exploration" (Marcia as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 53).

Marcia provides a good model for understanding the different statuses for identity development, but when the identity being explored is race, Tatum (1997) concluded that a different model is needed. White students are not prompted by the society around them to consider their racial identity because positive representations of White racial identity surround these students from birth. Positive White role models are presented on TV, in movies, in textbooks, in works of fiction and non-fiction, and across the cultural environment in which all students grow up. White students are free to pick from a plethora of positive racial role models.

Students of color may have a very different experience with their racial identity. They may be presented with only a small number of racial stereotypes in those same sources of information that present so many positive White racial identities. Frequently,

these stereotypes are either negative, such as the Black male as criminal, or positive, but limited in scope, such as the stereotype that all Asian students are academically talented. Students of color must wrestle with how to form a racial identity that is different from the stereotypes that are presented to them.

William Cross (as cited in Tatum, 1997) suggested that a different model is needed to understand the racial identity development of students of color and this model consists of five stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment (p. 55). In the pre-encounter stage, students of color absorb "many of the beliefs and values of the dominant White culture, including the idea that it is better to be White" (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 55). During this stage the "stereotypes, omissions, and distortions that reinforce notions of White superiority are breathed in by Black children as well as White" (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 55). "In the pre-encounter stage, the personal and social significance of one's racial group membership has not yet been realized, and racial identity is not yet under examination" (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 55).

This lack of realization of significance of membership and identity examination changes during the encounter stage. This stage usually begins with an "event or series of events that force the young person to acknowledge the personal impact of racism" (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 55). Individuals in this stage may be angry at the injustice that they now personally feel impacting their lives. Cross (as cited in Tatum, 1997) described this process as one that "unfolds in late adolescence and early adulthood" but an "examination of one's racial or ethnic identity may begin as early as junior high school" (p. 55).

The immersion/emersion stage is "characterized by a strong desire to surround oneself with symbols of one's racial identity, and actively seek out opportunities to learn about one's own history and culture with the support of same-race peers" (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 76). As Tatum (1997) clarified, "the person in at the immersion/emersion stage is unlearning the internalized stereotypes about his or her own group and is redefining a positive sense of self, based on an affirmation of one's racial group identity" (p. 76).

In the internalization stage, the individual possesses a "sense of security about one's racial identity" (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 76). Whereas the individual in the immersion/emersion stage may seek out only members of her or his own racial group, the individual in the internalization stage may be "willing to establish meaningful relationships across group boundaries with others, including Whites, who are respectful" of the individual's new sense of racial identity (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 76).

In the final stage, internalization-commitment, the individual has "found ways to translate a personal sense of racial identity into ongoing action expressing a sense of commitment to the concerns" of the racial group with which she or he identifies (Cross as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 76).

The students at Spring Valley High School may be at many different racial identity stages. For White students, they may remain in a pre-encounter stage, unaware of the impact that race and racism has upon their individual experiences. It may be that the reason so many students report that they feel unprepared for the diversity of post-high school life is because it is after high school that they first have an experience that moves them into Cross' encounter stage or what Marcia described as the moratorium status.

For students of color, they are likely beyond the pre-encounter stage and in the encounter stage during high school. Tatum provided several likely scenarios for these encounter experiences. As young people become romantically interested in their peers, race may suddenly play a role in their dating choices. Tatum (1997) explained that "Black girls, especially in predominantly White communities, may gradually become aware that something has changed. When their White friends start to date, they do not" (p. 57). Tatum blamed this on the negative stereotypes of Black girls held by the dominant culture.

The racial experience that Tatum described was true for our Black female students at Spring Valley. At the close of the 2014–2015 school year, I had the opportunity to meet with three female students from the African American Club. When I asked about their experience at Spring Valley, they each talked about the classes they had enjoyed, the teachers with whom they had connected, and their frustrations with the racial stereotypes that they each faced. Then each student described her feelings of loneliness as each weekend rolled around, and they watched their White female friends go out on dates and attend parties. One joking said, "I get a lot of studying done." Just a few weeks later, I met with the mother of three recent graduates. She described her experiences as a Black parent in our community. She described how she had experienced that same social loneliness I had heard described by our current students when she reflected on her own high school experience and how she had watched as her own daughter experienced the same thing.

Discussing post-high school plans, a common topic at Spring Valley, may also suddenly reveal to a student of color how teachers or other adults perceive their choices

based upon their race. This may be a dramatic moment, as was the case for Malcolm X when an English teacher responded to his desire to become a lawyer by stating, "That's no realistic goal for a nigger," or a more subtle moment of racism such as the example Tatum provided of the substitute teacher who suggested to the few Black males in a class that "they consider a community college" after encouraging their White classmates to consider four-year universities (Tatum, 1997, pp. 58–59).

Coping with these encounter experiences leads many students of color to adopt one of two approaches. Fordham and Ogbu (as cited in Tatum, 1997) identified a common response among African American high school students: the creation of an oppositional social identity (p. 60). The anger and resentment that comes from experiencing systematic racism leads to the rejection of "certain forms of behavior or activities" as symbolic of White privilege and the embracing of certain other behaviors or activities that are not perceived as "a part of white Americans' way of life" (Tatum, 1997, pp. 60–61). This is not necessarily a negative response to the experience of racism. Tatum (1997) contended that exploring and defining one's own racial identity and seeking support during this time from others of a similar racial background are healthy coping strategies (p. 62). The problem can be that in rejecting what are perceived as White behaviors and activities in favor of the perceived behavior and activities of a specific racial group, young people may still be "operating with a very limited definition of what it means" to be of that racial background (Tatum, 1997, p.62).

Chimamanda Adichie (2009) described this limited definition as the "single story" in her TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story." "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.

They make one story become the only story" (Adichie, 2009, 13:15). Adichie recounted

her own experience illustrating this point. As a child, the stories she read were stories

filled with White characters from Britain and America. As a consequence of that single

story, the stories she wrote as a child were filled with characters who were White, blue-

eyed, played in the snow, ate apples and talked about the weather, even though in Nigeria

where she grew up there was no snow; they ate mangoes; and there was no need to talk

about the weather.

Later in life, Adichie was impacted by the single stories that others had been told

about Africa in America. She described her college roommate's confusion over hearing

Adichie speak English, even though English is one of the official languages of Nigeria

(Adichie, 2009). A professor told her that her novel was not "authentically African"

(Adichie, 2009, 7:43) because "the characters were too much like him, an educated,

middle class man" (Adichie, 2009, 8:11). She described her own shame at traveling to

Mexico and realizing how much her own perception of the Mexican people was impacted

by the media's portrayal of Mexicans as illegal immigrants to the United States. As

Adichie (2009) pointed out, the single story "flattens my experience" (13:04) and allows

for "no possibility of a connection as human equals" (5:17).

Swalwell (2012) observed that White students are increasingly experiencing a

very narrow "story" through their experiences. "White students are likely to attend

schools that reinforce their perceptions of cultural dominance" (Swalwell, 2012, p. 1).

Swalwell noted that the "average white student attends a school where 77 percent of the

student body is of their race" (p. 1). It is also true that most White students attend more

economically advantaged schools. "Fewer than 7 percent of white children attend high-

poverty schools" (Swalwell, 2012, p. 1). According to Spring Valley High School's 2012 state Report Card, 84% of the student body identified themselves as White, and only 3.5% of the student body qualified for free and reduced lunch programs.

Many of the stereotypes that students hold come from the culture they encounter within the school, its curriculum, and in the community in which it is located. White students are provided with multiple examples of positive and negative role models. The curriculum is filled with heroes, both real and fictional, who are White. When a White student decides to explore an area of interest, he is readily able to find examples of White people who have contributed in that area.

The role models available to students of color are fewer and often confined to stereotypes. Adichie (2009) described a frustrating encounter with a student who said, after reading her novel in which the main character is an abusive man, that he was sorry that all Nigerian men were so abusive. Adichie countered that she had recently read *American* Psycho and was sorry to hear that all American men were serial killers (Adichie, 2009). She acknowledged that her comment was uttered in frustration, and that she knows that *American Psycho* does not represent all Americans because America's power has meant that she has read many stories of America and has seen the diversity of experiences within the culture (Adichie, 2009).

The stories that are told in our curriculum are directly related to power. Adichie (2009) defined that power: "Power is the ability not just to tell a story of another person but to make that the definitive story of that person" (10:13). America's power in the world makes the stories of White American's readily available not only to our students but to the students of the world. Adichie knew that all Americans are not serial killers

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because she has read so much American literature, but her professor believed her first novel was "not authentically African" because he had read so little about the Nigerian experience and did not know that that experience includes a middle class experience much like his own. Power can be used to tell stories that "dispossess and malign" but also to tell stories that "empower and humanize" (Adichie, 2009, 17:44).

Tatum (1997) insisted that we must use stories that empower and humanize to push back against those stereotypes that seek to negatively define what it means to be a person of color. Tatum (1997) recognized that for Black students, academic achievement has "become defined as exclusively White behavior" in post-segregation America (p. 64). Tatum (1997) pointed to the "long history of Black intellectual achievement" that many students know nothing about (p. 65). In an essay, "Up from the Parched Earth: Toward a Theory of African-American Achievement," Perry claimed that this is also true for most educators: "We have a whole generation of teachers, Black and white, who don't a have a clue about the history of Black education and the African-American narrative and intellectual tradition" (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2012, p. 100). To counter the negative racial stereotypes we hold as a culture about Black students' potential to achieve, students and educators must learn more about Black contributions to our intellectual history. Tatum remarked that this means moving past the single stories of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Frederick Douglass—"the same three men [students] hear about year after year, from kindergarten to high school graduation" (Tatum, 1997, p. 65).

Tatum shared the example of a student named Jon who stated, "When I was in junior high, I had White role models. And then when I got into high school, you know, I wasn't sure, but I just didn't think having White role models was a good thing" (Tatum,

1997, p. 66). When Jon goes to college and enrolls in an African American history course, his perspective dramatically changes. He sees that "being Black means a variety of things" and entreats himself and others to "do the very best you can so that you can continue the great traditions that have already been established" (Tatum, 1997, p. 66). Jon's story is one of moving from the danger of the single story to the power of a wide variety of stories that allowed him to find his connection to a positive racial identity.

Milner (2012), in the essay "Beyond a Test Score: Explaining Opportunity Gaps in Educational Practice," offered another important framework to view the educational experience at Spring Valley which is that our focus to improve the educational experience for students of color should not be on the achievement gap but rather on what he calls the opportunity gap. Milner (2012) maintained that our focus on achievement on a few selected test scores in fact supports a belief that White students' experiences are the norm and promotes deficit thinking regarding the abilities of students of color (p. 696). Because students of color consistently score lower on standardized tests, educators have come to see students of color as lacking or deficient in some way when they are compared to their White classmates who are scoring at what becomes the norm against which all students are compared. This leads educators to focus on students rather than on the systems that may be creating these results (Milner, 2012, p. 696).

Milner believed that instead, we should examine the educational experience of students through an opportunity gap framework that considers how color blindness, conflicts of culture, the myth of meritocracy, low expectations and deficit thinking, and practices that fail to consider how context impact students' learning (Milner, 2012, p. 698). A color blind approach is problematic because educators fail to "recognize how

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their own race and racialized experience can shape what they teach" (Milner, 2012, p. 700). Similarly, a lack of cultural understanding may mean that educators "operate primarily from their own cultural ways of knowing" that conflict with the cultural experiences or expectations of students (Milner, 2010, p. 701). Adichie's professor held a cultural perception of African countries that conflicted with her actual experience in Nigeria. Because he was her professor and White, he felt comfortable rejecting her experience as untrue because it did not fit his expectation. Her professor's beliefs were also tied to the myth of meritocracy that promotes what Apple (as cited in Milner, 2012) described as a binary way of thinking: "'We' are law-abiding, hardworking, decent, and virtuous" while "'they' are lazy, immoral, and permissive" (p. 705). Adichie's representation of Nigerians cannot be true in the eyes of her professor because they were too much like his own experience and, as Black people living in Africa, they cannot be similar to him. Perhaps this was also present in our desire to find texts for our curriculum that fit our White belief of what constitutes an authentic Black experience.

Elements of the opportunity gap can permeate a school's approach to educating students of color. Low expectations and deficit thinking may lead to a belief that students of color are not able to tackle challenging material. At Spring Valley, this may be present in the disproportionate number of Black students in level 2 courses and in the special education program. I would argue that this may also be present in our school as a racially stereotypical belief that Asian students are all high achieving and a propensity to overlook those moments when Asian students require more support.

Finally, the opportunity gap is present when educators fail to consider the "deep-rooted and ingrained realities embedded in a particular place, such as in a particular

community" (Milner, 2012, p. 707). In many schools, this might lead to a failure to recognize certain factors that are negatively impacting student learning, such as the disproportionate number of teachers in urban and high-poverty schools with less than five years of teaching experience (Milner, 2012, p. 708). At Spring Valley, the selection of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* as a text points to a potential failure to understand the contextual experience of our Black students, most of whom have not experienced poverty and come from homes in which their parents are highly educated.

So, what are the stories that we tell through our curriculum? How do those stories narrow or broaden our students' understanding of themselves and others? This year, 2015 I have heard from social workers and our adviser chairs (deans charged with discipline) stories of our Black male students struggling with their identity in a school where they represent such a small percentage of the student population. The stories that I have heard from them suggest that these students feel cornered into a racial identity. As Black men, they feel their classmates and teachers expect them to be tough, violent troublemakers. They are struggling with this stereotype, at times angry with being pigeonholed into such a narrow role and at other times expressing hopelessness about trying to be anything other than what White people expect them to be. The result is that they are frequently in the dean's office facing discipline consequences.

For our White students, does our curriculum provide them with a "flattened" view of not only the experiences of people of color but also their own experiences? As Okun (2010) argued, one of the key pillars supporting White Supremacy Culture is binary thinking (pp. 23–29). Okun (2010) explained that "the binary functions at the personal level to keep us entrapped in the struggle to understand ourselves in these either/or terms"

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(p. 24). We are either good or bad, just or unjust. This is the "flattened" experience to which Adichie referred. There is no room for complexity in this approach. Okun asserted that this attachment to binary thinking is at the root of why debates over historical figures such as Columbus are often so heated:

> [W]hen any attempt is made to shed Columbus in a more complex light; the mainstream response is a vociferous protest in the binary belief that if Columbus cannot be portrayed as good, then he must be bad, and to admit such a thing is intolerable to the patriotic impulse. (Okun, 2010, p. 43)

The telling of the single story—Columbus is either a good or bad historical figure—denies our students the opportunity to understand the complex significance of his role in history.

White students, too, suffer from the absence of diverse stories in the curriculum. For example, there are almost no examples of White Civil Rights leaders presented in the curriculum at Spring Valley. This has a direct impact on White students' views of issues of diversity. Since they cannot name anyone who looks like them who was involved in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, that important period in our history becomes only relevant in their minds to people of color. They then miss the ways in which events like the Voting Rights Act secured freedom for White people, as well, and the ways in which White people contributed to this important step towards greater racial justice. We are also denying White students of role models for a White anti-racist identity. This makes it more difficult for them to engage in work to counter racism in our school and community.

The work of educating students to understand their own racial identities and the identities of others is crucial for participation in our democracy. Swalwell (2012) expressed that "a robust diverse democracy depends not on self-interested, uncritical kids, but on young people who are willing to step outside of their comfort zones" (p. 1). By understanding the impact that race has on their own experience and the experiences of others, students are better able to critically analyze the issues that face our nation and pursue those solutions that promote equity and justice.

Goals

The goal of this proposed change initiative is to develop a youth participatory action research project that examines the stories that are told in the curriculum at Spring Valley High School. This project will ask students to answer the question: "How well do you see your experience and the experiences of others presented in the readings and course materials at Spring Valley High School?"

The research project will take place as part of a summer school course. The curriculum of the course will include readings on critical race theory and cultural proficiency. Students will also learn about various research techniques and prepare a research proposal to pursue during the first semester of the 2016–2017 school year. The research will be conducted in small groups consisting of three to five students and a participating teacher or staff member at Spring Valley.

When the research is concluded, students will prepare a presentation of their findings. Students will present their findings at a staff meeting on both campuses. They will present their research methodology, the data collected, and their conclusions. It is

my expectation that teachers will then use this information to conduct a review of course curricula with an eye toward those stories that students may find are missing.

Demographics

Spring Valley High School District serves students in several suburbs near a metropolitan area and includes several separate public elementary districts and several private schools that feed into the high school district. In the 2012 school year, 4,237 students attended Spring Valley at either the freshmen-only campus or the sophomore through senior campus. The school is known for high levels of academic achievement and for the size and successes of its extracurricular program. The mean composite score on the ACT for the Class of 2011 was 27.5, placing Spring Valley students among the highest 10% in the nation. During SY 2011, Spring Valley's athletic teams won several state championships. According to the 2013 state Report Card, operational expenditure per pupil in SY 2012 was $20, 807. In 2013, the student racial demographics were 84.2% White, 0.8% Black, 4 % Hispanic, 8.8% Asian, 0.1% American Indian, and 2.1% Multiracial. Only 3% of the student population was listed as "low income." Though well above the state average on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) in every racial group, White students have scored consistently higher (e.g., 89% met or exceeded standards in SY 2012) than Hispanic (67%) and Asian (86%) students from 2009 through 2013. Too few Black students attended Spring Valley to be identified as a subgroup on the 2012 PSAE. However, in 2011, the only year over the 2009–2013 time frame when the number of Black students met the threshold for reporting, only 36% met or exceeded the standards on the 2013 PSAE.

SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 C'S

In their text, *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools,* Wagner et al. (2006) described a method for creating a holistic picture of the "the interrelationship among the various components" of change (p. 97). Wagner et al. (2006) call these components the "4 C's—competency, conditions, culture and context" (p. 98). They argued that by considering the factors that lie within each of these components now, and how those factors would look differently if a change were to successfully occur, one can better understand how "today's effect may in turn be tomorrow's cause" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 97). The authors urge readers to construct two charts—one that describes a system as it is now (the As Is chart) and one that describes what the system would look like if a change were to occur successfully (the To Be chart). Wagner et al. (2006) defined the four components within each chart:

- Competencies are "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning" (p. 99).

- Conditions are "the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources" (p. 101).

- Culture is defined "as the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school" (p. 102).

- Finally, interacting with all of these conditions is Context, the "'skill demands' all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and

citizens and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of the families and community that the school or district serves" (p. 104).

Competencies

Appendix A presents the As Is Chart for the learning goal for this change leadership initiative. In the area of competencies, Spring Valley is blessed to have a highly talented and well-educated teaching staff. Many are content experts in their areas with credits in textbooks or they hold leadership positions in national organizations for their field. In addition, they often express a genuine desire to better understand the experiences of Students of color at our school. That said, the teachers may not possess the broad knowledge of content sources that present a variety of racial representations. In other words, they may know of many sources that present a particular racial viewpoint but may not know of many resources that present multiple perspectives within that racial experience. They are also mainly a White faculty and their understanding of other racial experiences may be limited. According to the 2012 state Report Card, the teaching staff at Spring Valley was 93.1% White, 0.9 % Black, 4.5% Asian, and 1.4% Hispanic.

Conditions

Based on Wagner et al.'s (2006) definition of conditions, this lack of racial diversity in the teaching staff of Spring Valley is also one structural reality that may make this change more challenging. Spring Valley is a very busy place, and teachers may resist the idea of "one more initiative" that must be completed within the school. That said, there are several structural aspects to the school that may support this kind of change. The curriculum within each department is designed, implemented, and evaluated by course committees for every course taught at Spring Valley. These course committees present a group that has the mandate and authority to suggest and implement new content sources. The school also has both a staff (the

Equity Team) and student equity team (the Voices in Equity student group). These groups can monitor and provide feedback on the needs of students and useful information to help understand the impact of any curricular changes.

Culture

Culturally, there is a strong belief in the individual potential of every student. Even though there are over 4,000 students at the high school, a great deal of attention is paid to making decisions for students on a case by case basis. There are relatively few rules regarding staff or student behavior. There is also a belief that because the school's students are predominantly White, any equity work is intended for a small group of students of color. Because the teaching staff is largely White, there is a sense that cultural competency work is mostly intended to get White students to be nicer to students of color and that students of color do not really need any help understanding their racial identities. Of course, all students need help understanding their racial identities and cultural competency is about much more than being nice to others.

Context

Finally, the context that surrounds Spring Valley High School presents some challenges. There has been much more attention paid to the achievement of all students through No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. Cultural competence is also a common skill presented on lists of 21st Century skills. But Spring Valley is a township with predominantly White and middle- and upper-class residents. It is a community in which White Privilege has benefited the success of many parents within the community. It may be very difficult for a community of privilege to examine that privilege without worrying that somehow it will disappear or that they are being asked to feel guilty for their accomplishments. They may fear a loss of power if that power is questioned. Past equity and diversity work has also been met with suspicion by some parents who worry that equity work may advance a "homosexual agenda" within the school. They cite their right to religious freedom and worry that their children may be intimidated or bullied if they did not believe that homosexuality is acceptable.

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SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This change leadership plan will employ a Youth Participatory Action Research

approach. Action research is defined as

> a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the
>
> "research." Often, action research is a collaborative activity among colleagues
>
> searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or
>
> looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Rather
>
> than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows practitioners to address
>
> those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some
>
> influence and make change. (Ferrance, 2000, Introduction)

Action research projects take one of several different forms and are known by different

names: participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action

learning, and contextual action research (O'Brien, 2001). All action research projects

share three major themes.

1. Primary is its focus on turning the people involved into researchers, too -
   people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, when they
   do it themselves.

2. The research takes place in real-world situations and aims to solve real
   problems.

3. The initiating researcher, unlike in other disciplines, makes no attempt to
   remain objective, but openly acknowledges their bias to the other participants.
   (O'Brien, 2001)

Projects may be undertaken individually or in groups and may impact a single classroom, a curriculum, a school, or even a district (Ferrance, 2000, pp. 3–5). According to Ferrance (2000), individual action research is typically conducted by a teacher who has identified a problem that she or he believes exists in his or her classroom and one that can be addressed on an individual basis (p. 3). The drawback to this form of research is that the impact of the research may remain localized within that teacher's classroom (p. 3). Collaborative action research involves groups of teachers investigating a specific issue (p. 4). An entire school may engage in an action research project that is of common interest (p. 4). The results of this research may then impact an entire school, but problems may arise as the team works to develop a process and creates commitments to each other (p. 4). District-wide action research can lead to real school reform and change that is lasting, but it can be challenging to keep all constituents informed and the process moving along (p. 5).

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is a collective form of research that involves both educators and students coming together to engage in action research. As a group endeavor, it can be collaborative, school-wide or district-wide in scope. Fine (as cited in Irizzary, 2009) stated that participatory action research "is typically undertaken as critical scholarship, by multi-generational collectives, to interrogate conditions of social injustice through social theory with a dedicated commitment to social action" (p. 196).

Action research has been a recognized research technique for the last half century. Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist and educator, first coined the term "action research" in the 1940s (Ferrance, 2000, p. 7). Stephen Corey was "among the first to use action

research in the field of education" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 7). He argued that using action

research was a more effective avenue for educational change: "We are convinced that the

disposition to study . . . the consequences of our own teaching is more likely to change

and improve our practices than is reading about what someone else has discovered of his

teaching" (Corey, 1953, as cited in Ferrance, 2000, p. 7). Corey saw "the value of action

research is in the change that occurs in everyday practice rather than the generalization to

a broader audience" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 8).

There are various models describing the phases of action research. Some involve

four and some five steps of inquiry, action, and reflection. Susman (1983) (as cited in

O'Brien, 2001) identified five stages of action research. The first stage, Diagnosing,

involves defining the problem. Once the problem is understood, the next stage, Action

Planning, consists of considering possible actions. Action is taken in the third stage, and

then the consequences of those actions are studied in the fourth. Finally, general findings

are identified in the Specifying Learning stage (O'Brien, 2001).

Ferrance (2000) identified five action research stages that focus more on inquiry

than on action. The first stage is identification of the problem area (Ferrance, 2000, p. 9).

At this stage, the researcher selects a problem that "is something over which the teacher

has influence" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 10). In the next stage, "multiple sources of data are

used to better understand the scope" of the problem (Ferrance, 2000, p. 11). Any method

of data collection can be useful at this stage. Interpreting the data should then involve

identifying "major themes" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 12). Selecting methods of data analysis

and identifying major themes can be aided by working with a practiced researcher.

Because action research seeks change, the next stage involves acting upon the evidence

that was gathered. Ferrance (2000) warned that the researcher should proceed with caution and isolate a single variable to determine the impact of that change (p. 12). Once the change has been made, it must be evaluated to determine if it has created improvement (p. 12). This reflective evaluation may lead to further questions, additional data gathering or additional changes. The process is cyclical, bringing one around to the first stage as new information is gained.

As a form of action research, YPAR shares four major themes: empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge, and social change (Ferrance, 2000, p. 9). What differentiates YPAR from other forms of action research is the involvement of students as researchers. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008) defined three principles that underpin a participatory action research approach. First, there is the collective investigation of a problem common to any group action research (p. 107). However, participatory action research differs in that it involves participants who are often excluded from the research process (p. 108). As Irizzary (2009) stated, "YPAR challenges the traditional role of youth as passive recipients of education and consumers of knowledge by repositioning them as active learners and knowledge producers" (p. 197). Dold and Chapman (2012) found that mental health advocates found this "empowerment of youth as a group, making their voice heard in the design of treatments and services" as a primary reason to undertake YPAR (p. 515). One respondent in Dold and Chapman's (2012) study remarked that YPAR "empowers youth to participate in framing the questions that should be asked" (p. 515). This makes participatory action research a potentially empowering approach when addressing issues of race and hegemony.

The second trait of participatory action research is that it "relies on indigenous knowledge to understand and examine the problems that are of greatest concern to the indigenous researchers" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 108). In traditional research, indigenous populations "are generally positioned as the *objects* of research" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 108). "Participatory action research involves these populations as *subjects* [sic] and partners in the research process" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 108). To answer the question, "Do you see your own racial identity and the racial identities of others in the curriculum?" students must become researchers rather than subjects of our research.

The indigenous population for this study is students at Spring Valley High School. Typically, there is little student input in the development of curriculum. Students are objects for the curriculum rather than partners in its creation. The goal of this research project is to create a venue for student input into the question of how well students see their own racial identities and the identities of others reflected in the curriculum.

My assumption is that many students of color do not see their own racial experience represented in the curriculum and that all students see only limited racial experiences or no experiences at all presented for some people of color. I have identified what I believe to be a problem of great concern to students, but that is an assumption with which students may or may not agree. In fact, I can be relatively certain that some students will see their own racial identity represented in the curriculum. They may disagree with my assumption. I need to be very careful that I am not forcing the student group with whom I work to adopt my focus if they disagree. As Duncan-Andrade and

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Morrell (2008) pointed out, "it is important to consider [that] the larger goal of participatory action research is to include multiple populations that are often excluded from the formal research process" (p. 108). If I force the group to adopt my focus for this research, I will be perpetuating the very exclusion that participatory action research is designed to counteract.

Finally, McIntyre (as cited in Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008) stated that the third principle of youth participatory action research, as with other forms of action research, is "the desire to take individual or collective action to deal with a problem" (p. 108). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) elaborated on this third principle:

> If an award-winning sociologist, for example, articulates the causes of urban poverty, no one expects that sociologist to actually wipe out urban poverty. That is someone else's job. With participatory action research, on the other hand, the collective action is a part of the process. This is not just research intended to understand problems; it is a research process designed to intervene in problems, to make them go away. (109)

Participatory action research is inherently a change leadership approach to research. The goal of this type of research is to understand a problem so that the knowledge gained in the research can be used to address and correct that problem. In this case, the goal of this project is to understand how well students' own racial identities are represented in our curriculum from their point of view and how they understand the racial identities of others from the examples that they study as part of their course work. The results of their research will provide information for teachers and hopefully, will prompt a review of

course curricula to become more inclusive of those racial identities either narrowly represented or not represented at all.

It is worth noting the common critique of participatory action research presented by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell. "Purists claim that action research is biased, that the 'lay' researchers are untrained, and that the methods of participatory research are unsound" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 109). McFarland and Stansell (1993) (as cited in Ferrrance, 2000) pointed out that this critique was especially prevalent in the 1950s when "action research was attacked as unscientific, little more than common sense, and the work of amateurs" (p. 8). McFarland and Stansell (1993) (as cited in Ferrance, 2000) viewed this critique as an expression of the "conservative forces that seek to eliminate all qualitative research" and believed this to be the reason that "participatory action research is not prevalent in our leading journals . . . rarely taught in our leading postsecondary institutions, and . . . rarely cited in conversations about educational policy that are supposedly informed by the latest research" (p. 109).

I find this attack on participatory action research problematic. As a teacher at Spring Valley High School for 11 years and an administrator for seven, I have seen the power of student voice when persuading staff to understand a problem and adopt a different approach. On the other hand, "expert" opinions from well-respected, postsecondary researchers are often ignored or discounted. My experience has been that research coming from outside of the school is easy to discount with claims that it lacks an understanding of the culture of our community and school. Teachers at Spring Valley frequently express the view that our high school is a unique place, unlike other high schools. My experience has been that all high schools are unique in some ways and also

very alike in others. However, when staff is presented with research from our school involving our students, they are much more likely to accept the research findings as valid and worthy of action.

What Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) pointed to was a major reason why research done at the university level may have little impact at the secondary level; it lacks the sense of validity that comes from working directly with the students, staff, and parents of any given school. Participatory action research does not suffer from this lack of credibility within a school. Ferrance (2000) shared two case studies of teachers who engaged in action research projects. Both cited similar feelings to those expressed at Spring Valley. Rebecca Wisniewski, a Title I Resource Teacher from Lowell, Massachusetts wrote:

> We have so often felt pulled in one direction or another by the swing of the education pendulum. By doing our own action research we could gain a better perspective of our own teaching and the students' learning. The changes that we would make in our teaching would come out of our own work. (Ferrance, 2000, p. 17)

Julie Nora, an ESL teacher from Providence, Rhode Island touched upon a similar sentiment when she wrote the following:

> Researchers, it seemed, imagined a reality quite different from my own. Rubrics, flow charts, and scaffolding offered me little in the way of keeping my students engaged or of personally gauging how many of my lessons led to serious learning. (Nora as cited in Ferrance, 2000, p. 22).

As Ferrance (2000) asserted, "research done with the teacher's students, in a setting with which the teacher is familiar, helps to confer relevance and validity to a disciplined study" (p. 13). It is my belief that this approach, then, leads to a more promising opportunity to address issues within a school.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

Two to four teachers and 10 to 20 students will participate in the participatory action research project. The participating teachers will be selected from the Equity Team at Spring Valley High School. These teachers have all experienced the Beyond Diversity Workshop, which offered a critical race theory approach to understanding the impact of race on educational achievement, and many have experienced Peggy McIntosh's Seeking Educational Equity through Diversity workshop, which prompted teachers to examine the impact of race, gender, sexual identity/orientation, and class upon the educational experiences of students. In addition to having at least a basic understanding of critical race theory and phase theory, these teachers have demonstrated a willingness to devote extra time to work on racial equity at Spring Valley.

The students will be selected from classes and student organizations. The primary criteria for selection will be a willingness to participate in discussions of racial identity and curriculum, and to spend additional time beyond the classroom examining this topic through research. The goal is to select a group of students who in as many ways as possible represent a cross section of the student body by race, ethnicity, gender, and academic level placement. Because the goal of this project is to examine how well students see their own racial experience and the varied racial experiences of others in the

curriculum, a diverse group of students will most likely have varied experiences with the curriculum at Spring Valley High School.

Data Collection Techniques

The teachers will spend the fourth quarter of the 2016–2017 school year learning about the tenets of participatory action research, selecting and reading critical race theory texts, and examining various data collection techniques. The students will return for several meetings during the summer following the 2016–2017 school year for seminar days during which they will read and discuss the same critical race theory writings, develop research questions related to curriculum and racial identity formation, and develop data collection techniques to use during the 2017–2018 school year. The teachers and students will then reconvene during the summer following the 2017–2018 school year to examine the data collected and prepare presentations to the faculty at the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year.

The youth participatory action research approach dictates that the participants in this project will select the research methodology. It is likely that students and the teachers working with them will select qualitative research methods that will allow them to capture the personal experiences of students at Spring Valley. These methods may include interviews, focus groups, participant observations, and surveys. To address the goals of this project, I would recommend to students that they consider some of the following data gathering techniques.

Most of the YPAR projects that I reviewed involved students examining statistical data that are already available in the community or from government agencies, for

example, test scores, mortgage rates, and census data. Data that may be of most interest to students at Spring Valley are available from the high school's student management system or online through electronic education reporting websites such as the state School Report Card.

For the goal of this project, it will also be useful for students to review the book lists provided by each academic department at Spring Valley. This review will include a short synopsis of each text's subject matter and a list of characters or examples including people of color. For example, a project that looks at a social studies textbook would examine the number of people of color included in the text and the historical roles that they are described as fulfilling. One common critique of history texts is that they present examples of people of color as exceptional rather than as one of many examples of a particular role in society. George Washington Carver, then, is shown as an exceptional scientist rather than as one of many African American scientists who have contributed to U.S. history. Students might examine a social studies text to determine how often African American contributions to science are highlighted.

It will also be useful for students to gather information from their classmates about their experiences with the curriculum. This would include not only interviews with students of color but also with White students, and these interviews might be conducted individually or as focus groups. These interviews would seek to gather student perspectives on how often they see people similar to themselves presented in the curriculum and the types of roles that they are often presented as filling. Responses from White students could be used as a dominant culture baseline, highlighting the wide variety of roles being presented for this racial identity. White students might also be

asked to describe the types of racial roles that they see presented in the curriculum to highlight how those roles challenge or confirm racial stereotypes. Interviews with students of color might include asking them to describe the roles they see presented for White people and those presented for their own racial identity. For some students of color, this effort may highlight the fact that no examples are presented for their racial identity. Filipino students, for example, may point out that there are a few examples presented for an Asian racial identity, but these examples are mostly of people of Chinese or Japanese descent.

Students may also wish to gather feedback from students and staff through surveys. While individual or group interviews allow students to gather more detailed information from specific students, surveys would allow student researchers to gather information from many more of their classmates at once. These surveys might ask students to respond to questions similar to those presented in interviews but with more defined response options. For example, rather than asking students an open-ended question regarding the examples of racial identities that they experience in the curriculum, they would be asked a series of questions asking them how often they have seen people of color presented in various roles. For example, a question might ask how often students have seen examples of Latinos as scientists, artists, community activists, authors, and business leaders.

A survey of faculty members might also be conducted that asks them how often they bring in examples of different racial identities into their teaching that are additional to those presented in the texts used for class. Many teachers supplement their curriculum with examples that they have gathered from newspapers, magazines, websites, and other

source materials. This survey would help students understand in what ways teachers are augmenting their curriculum to create a wider array of racial identities in their classrooms.

Finally, student researchers may also wish to conduct classroom observations. This will require finding teachers who are willing to allow this type of observation. I expect that this will be very challenging. At Spring Valley, there is a great deal of teacher autonomy. This works for and against the goal of this project. Autonomy allows teachers to easily add additional information related to different racial identities into their curriculum. However, conducting classroom observations also means that teachers might react negatively when they feel that someone may be judging their work. The purpose of these observations would be to provide teachers with feedback on their interactions with students during discussions of race. The student observer would create a narrative of the lesson that the teacher and student would then review together. Ideally, the student observer should be a student of color who is able to provide insight from her or his perspective.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Techniques</div>

One of the primary steps in this research approach is to teach students the research techniques used by academics to understand an issue. This will involve teaching students different methods for gathering data and the techniques that can be used to analyze that data most appropriately.

Quantitative data gathered from sources such as the school's student management system and the state School Report Card are easily disaggregated or already exist in a disaggregated format. Students will examine these data and analyze the data for trends.

For example, the student researchers will see that students who identify as Black/African American and Latino/Mexican/Chicano typically score an average of 10 points lower on state standardized tests.

The review of departmental book lists would be organized to produce a list of the roles most often described for different racial groups. A comparison then could be made across academic departments to determine if a role is not presented in one content area but does appear in another. Students will also look for roles in which racial identities do not appear at all. Those roles would be areas requiring immediate attention.

The information gathered from student interviews would be coded and a list of racial identities for each group interviewed created. It would be helpful to have these interviews recorded and then professionally transcribed so as to aide students in the coding process. Students would make an initial pass through the transcripts and code responses. A second pass through these coded responses would allow students to further refine their coding and generate a list of themes that they can draw from these data.

Survey data would also be analyzed for trends. Students would use software such as SPSS to analyze results for significance and validity. Those results that appear to be significant could be examined for trends. If some survey returns are too low to be valid, the results could be paired with student interview responses as a point of comparison and/or contrast.

The information gathered from the faculty survey would be compiled and presented as a list of examples for review by other teachers and as an indication of what teachers see as missing in the curriculum. Spring Valley is a very large high school, and it can be difficult for teachers to know what their colleagues are doing to improve

instruction. A list of additional materials used by teachers will be helpful as a resource for all teachers. A list of additional material can also be analyzed to show what racial identities may not be supported by material from departmental book lists. Combined with an analysis of the book lists, this analysis of supplemental resources can provide an additional impetus for teachers to pursue additional curricular materials or to make different selections for future book lists.

Classroom observations must be clearly formative if teachers are to participate. It must be clear that teachers who participate will not be evaluated based upon the results of the observation. Without this guarantee, it seems unlikely that teachers will participate. The goal of these observations is to improve classroom interactions between students and teachers when discussing issues of race. Overall, student researchers could compile a list of themes that arise from these observations. These themes could then be presented at staff meetings as general recommendations to all teachers.

SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

My experience is that educators listen carefully when students talk about their

experiences at Spring Valley. At the core of our work as educators, is a desire to provide

students with the best possible educational experience. When students share with us their

experience, they offer us feedback on how well we are meeting that goal. There can also

be a tendency to discount those experiences, however, if they seem to contradict our

perceptions. The challenge is how best to prepare students to create research that is

compelling to educators and how best to prepare teachers to listen to the results of that

research and incorporate it into their pedagogy. When reviewing literature to inform this

change leadership plan, then, I looked for examples of successful youth participatory

action research approaches that focused on preparing students and teachers for this

process of examining students' educational experiences.

Ferrance cited several benefits to conducting action research. Action research

allows schools to focus on issues and problems that are relevant to a specific school.

Ferrance (2000) pointed out that parents and other administrators beyond an individual

school may even find it comforting "to know that a teacher is not just blindly following

what the latest study seems to suggest, but is transforming the knowledge into something

meaningful" (p. 13). Engaging in action research is a form of professional development

for teachers who learn about themselves, their students, and their colleagues because this

provides a means for continuous improvement (p. 14). Action research prompts

reflection on teachers' practices in a structured manner (p. 15). In schools where teachers

spend most of their time in separate classrooms, action research can confer collegial

interactions (p. 14). Participating in the research provides time for teachers to talk with

their colleagues about teaching strategies (p. 14). Along with this increased collegiality

is improved communication and a greater focus on school goals rather than the individual

goals of the teacher (p. 15).

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) examined the effectiveness of youth

participatory action research by presenting a case study of the South City High School

Futures Project. This youth participatory action research project was conducted from

1999 to 2004 in Los Angeles in partnership with UCLA. Thirty or so student participants

(all incoming high school seniors and all drawn from local Los Angeles-area high

schools) attended all-day sessions for five weeks over six consecutive summers (Duncan-

Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 113). During these sessions, the students worked together

in groups of four or five in research teams lead by teachers from local schools (p. 112).

For their participation, students received four quarter credits of university coursework (p.

113). The research teams were created so that each team included a representative level

of residential and racial/ethnic diversity, and all would have been classified as coming

from poor or working-class families (p. 122).

The goals of the Futures Project were twofold. First, they taught students to use

the language and tools of what they called "academic literacy"—the language of

researchers in academia (p. 113). Second, the seminar participants would conduct

research that was "important to the struggle for educational justice with the teacher

education program, [within] the local districts and the greater metropolitan area, and even

statewide" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 113).

Over the course of six summers, the Futures Project addressed the topics

"Language, Youth Culture, and Transformational Resistance in Urban Schools"; "Youth

Access and the Democratic National Convention"; the creation of an *Educational Bill of Rights;* "Equity and Access in California's Public Schools"; "Oral Histories of the Educational Experiences in Post-*Brown* Los Angeles from 1954 to 2003"; and "Urban Youth, Political Participation, and Educational Reform" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, pp. 114–117). The participating students conducted research and presented their findings via journals, essays, PowerPoint presentations, and films to "university faculty, local and state politicians, teachers, community members, and parents, and at regional and national conferences" (p. 118).

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell highlighted the many benefits to students who participated in the Futures Project. Participatory action research contributes to students' identity formation. In the Futures Project, students learned to value their own experiences and their ability to investigate and understand the experiences of others. The students' first project "investigated the positive and negative impacts of hip-hop music and culture on urban teens" and on their education (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 114). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) reported on the students' first project:

> They were able to quantify the very strong attachment that most of their peers had
>
> to hip-hop culture and to identify the ambivalence that many teens felt toward a
>
> culture that they thought represented their feelings to a certain extent but also
>
> glorified ways of being in the world that were dangerous. (p. 126)

Students connected their own educational experiences to those of past generations during the project's "Oral Histories of the Educational Experiences in Post-*Brown* Los Angeles from 1954 to 2003" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 116). Students came to understand their identity as citizens in a democratic society while working with the

Democratic National Convention, creating an *Educational Bill of Rights*, and critiquing educational inequities in the state of California (pp. 114–116).

Participation in the Futures Project also promoted academic "development across multiple core content areas" and "increased student motivations and student engagement in intellectual work" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 127). In preparation for the project, students developed literacy skills as they studied and practiced the research methods of social scientists. In addition, students demonstrated increased levels of motivation. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) noted that "it was not uncommon for students to remain after for several hours to complete data analysis or to rehearse their final presentations" (p. 127). The students also demonstrated high levels of engagement in their writing and presentation skills. Students were "more willing to take writing to extra drafts before submitting to external audiences, and they used the extra time and energy to create documents, documentaries, and presentations that were of a very high caliber" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 127).

Through youth participatory action research, students understand the power that they have to affect civic change. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) (as cited in Irizarry, 2009) called this developing "a critical civic praxis"—"a process that develops critical consciousness and builds the capacity for young people to respond and change oppressive conditions in their environment" (p. 198). Dold and Chapman identified ownership and participation as the major themes when examining YPAR and mental health organizations. Dold and Chapman (2012) defined ownership as "buy-in and recognition by the target youth, that services are designed for their population" (p. 515).

Participation "included the idea of engagement in the process of determining the input to and the output of services" (Dold & Chapman, 2012, p. 515).

Irizarry (2009) stated that "in addition to fostering collaborations among diverse individuals, much of the content explored within YPAR reflects the commitment to promoting cross cultural understanding" (p. 197). YPAR frequently brings together "multigenerational collaboratives across explicitly named lines of difference—including age, race, gender, social class, and educational level" (Irizarry, 2009, p. 197).

Schools also benefit from this approach by tapping into community resources that are not currently included in the school's workings. Moll (1992) (as cited in Irizarry, 2009) termed these community resources "funds of knowledge" (p. 198). These funds can "positively inform student learning and personal development" (Moll, 1992 as cited in Irizarry, 2009, p. 198).

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell surfaced several challenges to running youth participatory action research projects such as the Futures project. The first is creating a space for the research. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) reflected on the participatory research process and creating space for it:

> In past projects, we had pushed the boundaries of curriculum and sought to empower students through the texts that they read and the way they talked about those texts. The critical research process, however, challenged everything we thought we knew about the relationship between teachers and students and between students and their social worlds. As we began to learn about the possibilities of participatory action research, we also began to rethink the ways that teachers and students could work together in a pedagogic space. We wanted

to brainstorm ways that this could work in the classroom, but to do that we felt we

needed to create a space to carry out the critical research projects. (pp. 110–111)

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell's solution was to conduct the research during five-week

summer seminars located away from high schools on the campus of the University of

California, Los Angeles.

A similar challenge is likely to exist at Spring Valley High School. Though

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell did not state this, conducting the research at a neutral site

and particularly one associated with a university addressed several potential challenges.

The first was that it removed the work from the political culture of any one school.

Second, holding the conference at a university likely gave the seminar an aura of

academic legitimacy in the eyes of the participating students and in the eyes of the

audience members who heard their presentations. By conducting the research during the

summer, the project also avoided a conflict that will likely impact the similar research

project at Spring Valley. The school year is a very busy time for students and teachers.

Students' days and evenings are filled with homework and extracurricular obligations.

Teachers are focused on lesson planning, instruction, and assessment. There is little time

for students or teachers to participate in the focus required to complete the research of

this nature.

Dold and Chapman found similar concerns regarding logistics and participatory

action research among mental health workers. Specifically, "the logistics of

transportation, scheduling, and out-of-pocket money" were identified as significant

concerns (Dold & Chapman, 2012, p. 515). As Dold and Chapman (2012) pointed out,

"drawbacks are not barriers, of course, but they may impeded the process and derail

motivation" (p. 515). Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) would describe these

drawbacks as technical problems that require technical solutions. It is unlikely that

transportation or cost will be a deterrent to participation in my proposed research process,

but scheduling may be. By conducting the work during the summer, teachers' and

students' schedules will likely be more flexible. The challenge will occur with conflicts

regarding outside camps and vacation trips.

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) explained that focused time is necessary to

prepare students with the knowledge needed to conduct the research and stated that "our

initial goals in the seminar included orienting the students to the world of social science

research, explicating a critical perspective on social science research, and positioning the

students as critical social science researchers" (p. 118). To begin, the students spent the

first two weeks "reading seminal texts in urban sociology and the sociology of education"

(Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 118). This required instruction in literacy skills—

"basic reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and the synthesis of ideas"

(Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 119). This initial instruction was needed if the

students were to behave as critical social science researchers who were allowed to design

research projects using methods employed by social scientists (participant observation,

interviews, surveys, database analysis, visual sociology, oral history) to examine

community issues (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 121). Dold and Chapman found

similar needs when examining participatory action research and its use with community

mental health research. According to Dold and Chapman (2012), students need "to be

trained in analytic techniques so they may advocate for themselves" (p. 516). Several

participants in Dold and Chapman's (2012) study stressed the importance of making sure

that students and adults understand the terminology of their field to "ensure accurate communication" (p. 515).

This type of preparation will also be needed at Spring Valley. Though students have a very high reading comprehension rate, they will be unfamiliar with critical race theory and qualitative research methods. The initial work with students must be to help them understand both the theory that will be used during this research project and the methods by which they can gather data to address the questions that they raise.

Finally, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell argued for increased preparation from teachers so that they are equipped to engage in participatory action research with the students. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) explained that "given that most educators have little training in traditional research methods, their lack of expertise can limit their ability to work effectively with youth on local action research projects" (p. 129). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) cited a second participatory action research project conducted by Morrell at "a very large East Coast urban school district" (p. 130). There Morrell was able to engage teachers by highlighting youth participatory action research as a method for teaching critical thinking and research skills, and teachers then supported students as they conducted research in areas of interest, such as dropout rates, tardy policies, and school discipline (p. 130). This must be one of the first steps undertaken at Spring Valley. We must begin by first educating participating teachers about the tenets of participatory action research. We must look to examples of this research approach to understand how best to implement this method at Spring Valley.

Anyon (1997) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) (as cited in Irizarry 2009) proposed that one reason for this lack of training maybe due to schools' role as "vehicles for social

reproduction" (p. 198). Irizarry (2009) maintained that YPAR is an orientation "toward

education and pedagogical practices that aim[s] to make students more critical consumers

of schooling" (p. 198). This critical approach to their educational experience generates

teacher "hostility" towards these approaches.

SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This is a proposal for a youth participatory action research project that has yet to be implemented. As part of this research, students will gather and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data that will help inform the next steps in expanding the racial identities offered in the curriculum at Spring Valley. Although the data from this future research do not exist as yet, information from other research may help inform the implementation of this change plan.

As discussed in my program evaluation, negative emotions can be a major obstacle for White people when examining systemic racism. Olsson (1997) cited 28 different "patterns of guilt, denial and defensiveness which appear regularly in our interactions with people of color and other white people" (p. 5). Okun (2010) argued that "our feelings have everything to do with the perpetuation of racism or the dismantling of it" (p. 119). Okun made note of Anne Wilson Shaef's observation that "feelings trump intellect. In other words, whenever feelings are unresolved or unacknowledged, they determine the outcome of an interaction, regardless of what is agreed upon intellectually" (Shaef as cited in Okun, 2010, p. 119).

Tatum (1997) saw the reaction to these feelings as a step in White racial identity formation and cited Janet Helms' theory of White racial consciousness development. In the first stage, contact, "individuals . . . rarely describe themselves as White" (Tatum, 1997, p. 95). "They often perceive themselves as color-blind, completely free of prejudice, unaware of their own assumptions about other racial groups" (p. 95). In the second stage, disintegration, there is "a growing awareness of racism and White privilege as a result of personal encounters in which the social significance of race is made visible"

(p. 96). Tatum explained that this stage creates "cognitive dissonance" for Whites because "the societal inequities that they now notice directly contradict the ideas of an American meritocracy concept that has typically been an integral part of their belief system" (Tatum, 1997, p. 98). "Responses to this discomfort may include denying the validity of the information that is being presented, or psychologically or physically withdrawing from it" (Tatum, 1997, p. 98).

The emotional reaction of teachers to the information presented by students as a result of this project may have a major impact on the implementation of any change. Hearing from students that they are unhappy with or even hurt by the curriculum that they are teaching may feel like an attack for some teachers. Teachers work hard to help their students. Hearing that they may be hurting them, even with the best of intentions, may elicit feelings of guilt and shame. Those feelings can lead to defensiveness and a desire to discount the findings of the students' research as a means of alleviating that emotional distress. The research that I conducted for my program evaluation shows that was a reaction from teachers after participating in the Beyond Diversity Workshop. They may have a similar reaction to a presentation of students' research.

To address this potential roadblock, there needs to be a space for teachers to process those feelings. Okun (2010) emphasized that it is necessary for White people to have "some avenue to express their experience, their fears, their grappling is critical to any chance they will have to continue on a path of critical and conscious thinking about the world" (p. 121). If teachers are to use the information presented by students to impact their teaching, there must be time given for them to discuss and reflect on the emotions that this information elicits.

Heifetz et al. (2009) viewed engaging in this kind of personal emotional work as a leadership challenge and acknowledged that "communities resist dealing with adaptive challenges because doing so requires changes that partly involve an experience of loss" (p. 22). Racial privilege provides benefits to White students, teachers, and parents in countless ways. In the context of this change leadership proposal, racial privilege provides White teachers with the belief that they need not worry about presenting multiple racial identities or that they are fully prepared to provide students with the racial identities that they need. Hearing from students that they may not be doing this well threatens this racial belief.

Heifetz et al. (2009) contended that effective leaders work to help people manage this loss. This is done by not only pointing to what must change but also what must remain. Effective leaders understand that creating solutions to complex problems "is mostly not about change at all" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 23). It means determining not only "what must be given up to survive and thrive," but also identifying "what elements are essential and must be preserved in the future" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 23).

At Spring Valley, there is a deeply held belief that we must work to address the individual needs of students. As a school with many resources, we provide multiple programs and supports for students. This is an element of our culture that is essential and must be preserved. However, the evidence that students will present will likely demonstrate that this is one area where we may not be achieving that goal. An effective leadership strategy is to affirm this cultural belief while also providing support for teachers so that they can move from the guilt or shame that they might feel so that they are open to the reflection necessary to create positive change.

SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

So how might things be different at Spring Valley High School if this change is successful? Appendix A illustrates a vision of how culture, competencies, context, and conditions might be different if an initiative were successful to ensure that students developed cultural competency skills by seeing themselves and others reflected in the curriculum. This change would require that teachers and students develop several new competencies. First, teachers would understand their own racial identities and how race impacted the identities of their students. Teachers would possess a broad knowledge of content materials that allows them to present multiple representations of a variety of racial experiences in the curriculum. Students would learn to understand their own racial backgrounds and develop skill in understanding a wide variety of racial perspectives.

The work done through the course committees would ensure that all courses presented a wide variety of racial perspectives. The Equity Team would monitor the impact of these curricular changes on student achievement as well as the development of cultural competence using instruments designed to measure student growth. The Voices in Equity student group would provide additional feedback to teachers and administrators on the impact of these changes on their daily experience.

These changes would also result in a shift in the culture at Spring Valley High School. White staff and students at the high school would understand the impact that race has had on their own experiences. The improvement in all students' cultural competence skills would lead to widespread understanding that the new curriculum improves all students' growth.

Finally, the context in which Spring Valley exists would change as parents, teachers, and community members learn how White privilege harms all people, not just people of color. They would learn to examine that privilege and manage the fear of loss that they may feel. They would understand cultural competence as a set of skills necessary for preparing students for life in the 21st century. Greater acceptance and appreciation for multiple racial perspectives would exist within the community.

SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

To achieve the changes outlined in this proposal, Spring Valley will need to engage in what Heifetz et al. (2009) described as adaptive change. These authors described adaptive challenges as those that "can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 19). These challenges are more difficult to address than technical challenges that "may be very complex and critically important" but "have known solutions that can be implemented by current know how" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 19). Solutions to technical challenges often take the form of policies or procedures. Adaptive challenges require cultural change. Heifetz cautioned leaders to be mindful that too often we attempt to solve adaptive challenges with technical solutions that fail to create lasting change.

Heifetz et al. (2009) outlined a three step, iterative process for creating adaptive change. In the first step, one must analyze the data present for patterns (p. 32). This is the primary purpose of the youth participatory action research project. Students will gather data, analyze that data, and present their findings to staff. To prepare that presentation, students will engage in the second step that involves interpreting data and creating multiple hypotheses to describe what is actually happening (p. 33). After sharing their data with teachers, together students and staff will engage in the final step of designing interventions and then assessing their impact on the broadening of racial identities in our curriculum (p. 35).

Heifetz et al. (2009) also confirmed that most problems are not clearly technical or adaptive, but rather a mixture of both. Systemic racism clearly presents both technical and adaptive challenges. We often focus on the technical changes that have been made to

address racism. We point to the abolition of slavery, civil rights legislation, or important court decisions as evidence that we are addressing the social ills of systemic racism. These are important technical changes, but they have not necessarily changed the underlying beliefs that supported slavery or Jim Crow legislation. Those racist beliefs appear in new places. Legal slavery is replaced by sharecropping practices that create economic slavery. Desegregation of schools has not led to schools that are racially integrated in our nation. To address systemic racism, we must also engage in adaptive change that challenges the racist beliefs present in our culture and prompts people to change those beliefs.

The changes at Spring Valley will require a mixture of both technical and adaptive changes. The goal of this change leadership proposal is to provide teachers with qualitative and quantitative information from students that prompts adaptive change and leads to support for the technical changes needed to push back against stereotypes and provide students with a wider array of racial identities in our curriculum.

Technical change will come through the adjustment in curricula to ensure that students are presented with a wide variety of racial identities. This will broaden the space for students of color and White students to move beyond Adichie's (2009) single story as they develop their identities and seek a deeper understanding of their classmates. Specifically, this will look like a selection of texts and materials in classrooms that will provide more examples of people of color in a wide variety of roles and professions. The goal is to allow students of color to see experiences similar to their own in the curriculum and to see a wider variety of identities that they might use as models for their own. For White students, these examples will push against the stereotypes that they hold for their

classmates and people of color. It will also push against those stereotypes that they may hold for their own identity.

The youth participatory action research projects will help teachers identify those areas where curricula might need change by providing an analysis of book lists and examining curricula for racial identities that are either presented in narrow ways or are missing altogether. A survey of teachers' additional materials will also provide all teachers with a deeper list of source material to use to broaden their curriculum.

Of course, teachers must see that changes in their curricula are necessary—the adaptive component of this change that the youth participatory action research projects also seek to address. My experience is that when teachers hear directly from students about their needs, they take those needs seriously. The interviews and student surveys will provide examples of our students' experiences with the curriculum. By sharing this information at staff meetings, students have the opportunity to let their teachers know not only how they might change their curricula, but also why that change is important to our students.

Student voice is also persuasive with parents. It can be powerful to hear from one's own children or their friends about their experiences and the ways in which they might improve. Students will have the opportunity to present their research to the board of education and at parent meetings hosted by the school. At these meetings, student researchers will share their findings and their recommendations for change.

If students are able to find willing teacher partners, classroom observations will also provide additional support for teachers as they examine existing curricula and implement new curricula. These formative discussions can provide teachers with a

different perspective on their classroom instruction. All teachers can benefit from these observations if overall themes are presented to teachers at staff meetings.

This is not to say that all teachers and parents will be convinced. Certainly, some teachers will discount the evidence presented by students and seek to explain it away. Systemic racism is persistent, and it can feel challenging to the privilege enjoyed by the dominant culture to examine its impact. Youth participatory action research should also provide support in this area by creating a group of teacher allies for students who can attest to their work as researchers.

Change is difficult. But I have already begun to see the adaptive changes that are needed to move Spring Valley towards its racial equity goals. More and more, I hear teachers considering race in their teaching. Only a few years ago, race and systemic racism felt like forbidden topics at our school. Now, it is openly discussed by many teachers and administrators. I believe that our school is ready to continue further along the path to become a racially just school. This youth participatory action research project allows our students to help us understand how best to prepare them for their future.

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As Is Chart

As Is Chart

Context

Cultural competence viewed as 21st Century skill
More national attention to student achievement
Community of privilege avoids that which may challenge that privilege
Concerns that diverse curriculum may include references to

Culture

Focus on needs of individual students
Belief that students should and can succeed
Belief that "we are already doing this"
Belief not worth doing because so few Students of color
Staff doesn't view White as a racial identity

Conditions

Support from course committees to create curricular change
Presence of Equity Team
Voices in Equity student group to provide insight and feedback
Learning cohorts can focus on this
Hectic pace of year makes teachers resist "one more thing"
Staff mostly White and lacks diverse experiences and perspectives

Students Develop Cultural Competency Skills by Seeing Themselves and Other Reflected in the Curriculum

Teachers highly skilled
Greater awareness of needs of Students of color
Teachers content experts
Teachers may not be familiar with a broad range of content materials
Teachers may lack cultural understanding of perspectives they seek to teach

Competencies

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To Be Chart

Context

Culture

Conditions

Community
understands and
supports the need for
cultural competence
Community is able
to discuss and examine
culture of privilege
without fear of loss
Community
supports belief that all
perspectives deserve
understanding

Wide spread
understanding of White as
a race and culture
Broad acceptance of
idea that a diverse
curriculum improves
learning for all students

Curriculum revision
occurs in all course
committees so that all
curricula present diverse
perspectives
Equity Team
monitors impact on
student learning across the
school
Voices in Equity
student group provides
feedback to teachers and
school on progress

Students Develop
Cultural Competency
Skills by Seeing
Themselves and
Other Reflected in the
Curriculum

Teachers understand own
racial background and racial
background of their students
Teachers aware of broad
range of content that presents
racially diverse perspectives
Students understand their
own racial background and are
skilled at understanding different
racial perspectives

Competencies

A THREE-PART DISERTATION:

POLICY ADVOCACY: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GREATER
CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Timothy S. Hayes

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

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ABSTRACT

The author advocates for a policy delineating a professional development sequence to promote culturally responsive teaching for faculty at Spring Valley High School (pseudonym), a predominantly White, suburban, Illinois school. Teachers at Spring Valley have a moral, political, economic, and ethical obligation to offer instruction that allows students to develop a deeper understanding of their own racial identities and the racial identities of others. Faculty must also help students understand the impact of systemic racism on their own and others' experiences. This policy provides for a structured professional development sequence that includes Pacific Educational Group's Beyond Diversity Workshop, Peggy Macintosh's Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity program, and other offerings that help teachers understand how their experiences and their teaching are impacted by systemic racism. The policy statement offers an estimation of the costs to support this policy.

PREFACE

My preparation as a teacher included only a brief overview of the impact of race on my work as an educator. During my student teaching, I taught at a school where I had only one White student in my four classes. At Spring Valley High School, I have taught in as well as led at a predominantly White school. At both schools, I was ill-prepared to understand how my racial experience was impacting my instructional decisions, nor did I understand the impact of systemic racism on the experiences of my students.

As an administrator, I am now in a position to have a positive impact on the professional preparation of teachers at Spring Valley. As I have worked to lead the racial equity work at the high school, I have seen how professional development in this area improves the educational experience for all students. In my program evaluation, I worked to adjust our approach to Pacific Educational Group's Beyond Diversity Workshop. The changes implemented as a result of that research improved the engagement of staff in that professional development opportunity. However, one workshop is not enough. Race and systemic racism are complex issues with impacts that can sometimes be difficult to understand. A structured professional development policy that leads teachers through several years of learning and reflection will improve teachers' understanding of this topic and should improve practice at Spring Valley.

Since writing this policy advocacy paper, there has been a groundswell of support for even more development opportunities. On Martin Luther King Day in 2016, I and a group of teachers and staff members prepared an all-school seminar day on race and systemic racism. Although some saw this as controversial, the overall reaction has been to acknowledge that much more work must be done at Spring Valley High School if we

are to become a school that promotes an educational experience for students that is racially just.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

How Did I Become Aware of This Policy Issue?

I am often asked why a predominantly White, suburban school would be interested in examining the impact of race on the educational experience of our students. Usually this question is followed by a comment that Spring Valley (pseudonym) is not a very "diverse" school where "diverse" is code for racial diversity. I answer this question by pointing out that every student, staff member, and parent at our school and in our community has a race. This usually prompts a pause from the questioner or an uncomfortable shifting as the person considers what to say next. Sometimes the questioner will be more specific and explain that what he or she meant was that there are not many students of color at Spring Valley. I agree, but then point out that all of our students' lives are impacted by race and racism. For White students, it just may be that most of them are unaware of that impact. The look that I typically receive in return is one of confusion.

That confusion is understandable. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2014) offers two definitions for the word diversity: (a) "the quality or state of having many different forms, types, ideas, etc." and (b) "the state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures in a group or organization" ("Diversity," 2014, para. 1). When we use the word diverse to describe a school, what we typically mean is racially diversity. More specifically, when a teacher describes her or his school as "diverse," she or he is specifically referring to the number of students of color in that school. The dominant cultural view is that being White means that one does not have a race and that White people are not impacted by racism. So, a school with a larger

population of Black, Asian, or Latino students is labeled diverse while a school like Spring Valley is not.

The problem is that all students and teachers, regardless of their individual races, are impacted by race and racism. This is as true for White students as it is for Black students. What is different is *how* they are impacted. For White students, systemic racism supports a system of privilege. For students of color, systemic racism denies many of those same privileges. For both groups, systemic racism defines what they may or may not do, think, believe, and experience. For teachers, systemic racism seeks to define their perception of ability, achievement, and academic promise.

The look of confusion that I typically see on people's' faces when I declare that Spring Valley High School is a diverse place is related to the belief that only students and staff of color have a race. One of the first tenets of systemic racism is that it seeks to make invisible the racial privilege of those who are White by defining White as the normative state. The White experience is the normal experience. Every other experience is different and, as systemic racism would have us believe, inferior. White people, like me, receive privileges based upon our race that we are never asked to notice or question. In fact, dominant culture actively works to keep White people from noticing. Because we are never asked to consider the impact of our race, we come to believe that we do not have a race and that only people of color do.

When I respond to the question of why we care about racial equity at Spring Valley, I am asking people to consider something that they have been taught to ignore. I am telling them that White people have a racial identity. If the person asking the question is White, this may be one of the few times, or perhaps even the first time, that

anyone has asked the person to consider that he or she has a race. Of course, this can make White people very uncomfortable. If we have a race, we must be experiencing some impact due to our race and because White is the race of the dominant culture, that impact is mostly in the form of privilege. Examinations of privilege can make people feel guilty, ashamed, and angry. This is dangerous territory for most White people in America to explore.

When this conversation is with a person of color, their reaction is different. They do not seem to struggle with the idea that being White means that I have a race. Rather, their confusion seems to stem more from a question about why I or a school that is predominantly White would want to explore the impact of race and racism. There seems to be an assumption that a school like Spring Valley would never want to question the racial privilege that so many of its students and staff receive.

I believe that the answer to why would we want to question is that systemic racism confines and restricts the experience of White people even as it grants privilege. This has been my realization over the last few years as I have participated in professional development, read and studied critical race theory, and discussed race with those in my life who are people of color. Systemic racism restricts my ability as a White person to have authentic relationships with people of color. The stereotypes that comprise the underlying philosophy of systemic racism cause me to fear and disrespect those who might become close friends and who might help create a greater sense of community in my life.

Two powerful professional development opportunities propelled my journey toward a greater understanding of my racial identity and the impact of systemic racism on

me and others. The first was Seeking Educational Excellence through Diversity (SEED).

This workshop is based upon Peggy McIntosh's Phase Theory. The workshop meets six

times during the school year for several hours each time to examine participants'

experiences with race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and class.

I attended this workshop soon after coming to Spring Valley as a young teacher in

1994. I remember clearly the opening day speech from the superintendent who asked

every teacher who had participated in the SEED workshop to stand. Though the

superintendent never said that everyone should attend this workshop, and no one kept a

checklist of those who had and had not participated, I clearly received the message that

day that participating in this workshop was a cultural expectation of the high school. I

enrolled during my second year, did so again when SEED II was offered as a follow-up

workshop, and again when a workshop specifically focused on leadership was offered a

few years later.

After attending the SEED series of workshops, I felt that I had the skills to be a

culturally proficient educator. I had explored my own identity through the lens of

difference and had considered how difference played a role in the experiences of my

students.

I was surprised, then, when I had such a profound experience at my next

professional development experience focusing on diversity: Pacific Educational Group's

Beyond Diversity Workshop. This workshop uses critical race theory to examine the

impact that systemic racism has on the racial achievement gap in schools.

Two things made my experience at Beyond Diversity profound. The first was that

this was the first time that I had attended a workshop that solely focused on race. The

effect for me was that I left with a new understanding of how my race impacted my experiences, my perceptions, and the experiences of my students. By focusing specifically and exclusively on race, I had nowhere to hide. As olsson (1997) pointed out in the essay "Detour Spotting for White Anti-racists," a common way for White participants to avoid the discomfort of talking about race is to shift their focus to some other part of their identity that does not experience the privileges of dominant culture. Olsson called this "The End Run, Escapism" and stated: "We are more willing and more comfortable decrying our oppression than scrutinizing our privilege" (olsson, 1997, p. 11). For me, that was a focus on my socioeconomic background and the distant oppression faced by my ethnic ancestors, the Irish. Unable to shift my focus to some other area of difference, I was forced to examine the impact of race on my experience.

Thankfully, the second element that made this workshop different was that it presented a tool for use when discussing race or any other kind of difference—the Courageous Conversations Protocol. This protocol is designed to not only maintain a focus on race but also to provide some safety to participants in that examination. As I have written in my program evaluation paper, this workshop requires some tweaking if it is to be used effectively with White participants, but overall, it effectively creates a space for White participants to experience the discomfort of examining race and racism while maintaining a level of safety.

As a teacher, I began to examine what role race might have on my own experiences and the experiences of my students. I wondered about how my perspective on the topics I taught in the classroom might be impacted by my race. I considered the 1980s effort to keep "Huck and Jim on the Raft" and keep *Huckleberry Finn* in our

curriculum at Spring Valley. My colleagues had always presented that moment as one of literary freedom over censorship. Now, I thought about how attending the school must have felt for the children of the Black parents who pushed for the book's removal and the messages that White students received about their racial identities in that moment. I wondered about the racial ramifications of Reverend Smith's visit to our high school with several hundred parents and students to protest educational inequities in Illinois.

After attending the workshop, several leaders, including me, advocated for a statement from the superintendent that professional development on equity issues and education was important at our school. I was pleased when the superintendent went one step further and required all curricular and student services leaders in our school to attend the Beyond Diversity Workshop.

As discussed in my program evaluation study, the reaction to the Beyond Diversity Workshop was mixed. The tension within our school following the workshop inspired the focus for both my program evaluation and my change leadership plan. My program evaluation focused on White staff members' experiences with Beyond Diversity and proposed ways for improving the success of this workshop. My change leadership plan sought to implement a youth participatory action research project to better incorporate student voice in our work to create a more culturally responsive curriculum. This policy advocacy paper argues for the creation of a required professional development sequence that examines the impact of race and racism on the educational experience of students and teachers.

As I learned from examining the initial Beyond Diversity Workshop in my program evaluation, discussions of race at a predominantly White, suburban school like

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Spring Valley are not only necessary but also likely to make staff members very uncomfortable. This examination is necessary, however, because racism can have an insidious impact on the educational experiences of students, setting low expectations, subtly reinforcing stereotypes, and preventing opportunities for students to better understand their racial identities.

<center>What Are the Issues That Make This a Critical Problem?</center>

There is clearly enough evidence that an examination of race is necessary at our school. Students who participated in the Voices in Equity Group, students who gather each month to discuss their experiences in the school, talked about the challenges of being different at Spring Valley. One poignant story came from an Asian student who shared that she felt she had to hide the fact that she was in level 2 classes, the lowest ability grouping at Spring Valley. She talked about how difficult it was for her to feel that everyone assumes that she is smart because she is Asian, but to feel like she is dumb because she is in level 2 classes. Clearly, she was wrestling with a couple of stereotypes—all Asians are academically successful, and level 2 courses are for students who are not smart—and trying to develop a sense of her own identity.

Working with this group also reminded me of how racism can also blind me to the needs of White students in this discussion. As the group formed, I remember seeing a White redheaded boy walk into the room and thought, "What could he possibly have to add to this discussion?" He had the look of one of the many popular White student-athletes at Spring Valley. Later, this student shared his struggle to please his parents and yet pursue his passion. His parents felt he should spend his time on athletics, but what he really enjoyed was theatre. As he talked, I realized that he was struggling to define

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himself as others were attempting to label him. In fact, I had labeled him as soon as he walked into the room.

As I shared in my program evaluation section, the impact of race can be seen in our testing data, school climate information, and data related to student health. White students consistently score higher on standardized tests, such as the Prairie State Achievement Examination. Though students view Spring Valley as a physically safe place to attend school, they are much more ambivalent about their social and emotional safety. Finally, results from the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2012, 2014) have consistently shown that students of color are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as binge drinking even though the number of White students engaging in these behaviors is greater as a total number.

One piece of data that clearly shows the impact of race on White students appears in the annual Graduate Survey. Respondents consistently indicate that the school could have done more to prepare them for the diverse areas in which they now live and attend school. This is not surprising. Typically, the explanation offered by other administrators and parents for this result is that a predominantly White, upper-class community such as Spring Valley does not provide students with enough contact with people of color to prepare them adequately for the diverse community of college. I believe more is needed than just exposure to difference. Through the many service opportunities offered at the school, our students have many opportunities to meet and interact with students and adults from other schools and communities that are much more racially diverse than Spring Valley. This does not seem to be enough for students to feel prepared in this area.

Perhaps that is because students need more than just exposure to passing interactions with people of color.

When White students like those who graduate from Spring Valley arrive at college, this lack of racial competency can result in terrible acts of racism. On March 7, 2015, a group of college- and high school-aged students on their way to a party at the University of Oklahoma's Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity were video-taped singing a racist song and the video included the following lyrics: "There will never be a ni**** SAE. You can hang him from a tree, but he can never sign with me. There will never be a ni**** SAE" (Ellis, 2015, para. 13). Reaction from the university and national organization was swift and negative. The chapter was almost immediately shut down. At first, the national organization denied that the song was part of the fraternity's official song book. They later admitted that the song had been taught by other SAE leaders at a national leadership summit held by the organization each year. Approximately 20% of SAE's members identify as students of color (Ellis, 2015). This is one of many incidents on college campuses in which a lack of racial competency has led to blatantly racist acts.

White students need more than just a passing connection with people of other races. They need to become fluent in the language of racial discourse. White people are raised to fear conversations about race. Michael and Bartoli (2014) remarked in the article "What White Children Need to Know about Race," that White students need to "learn that there's a vast difference between talking about race and being a racist" (p. 59). Being White and talking about race does not make one a racist. On the contrary, avoiding discussions of race or treating race as a taboo topic gives the subject "negative

connotations" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 59). Students of color are constantly reminded by society that race is an important aspect of their identities. White students need to understand that race is influential part of their identities as well (p. 59).

One reason to pay such close attention to the research on race as an influence on identity is that the students at Spring Valley are at an important moment in their racial identity formation. Tatum (1997) pointed out that "integrating one's past, present, and future into a cohesive, unified sense of self is a complex task that begins in adolescence and continues for a lifetime" (p. 20). As human beings, our identities are complex. Any individual might define her or his identity in multiple ways—by race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, family structure, geographical region, and so on. "But it is the targeted identities that hold our attention and the dominant identities that go unexamined" (Tatum, 1997 p. 22). Tatum explained that the reason for this is that dominant identities are those in which the "inner experience and outer circumstance are in harmony with one another, and the image reflected by others is similar to the image within" (Tatum, 1997, p. 21). When examining race, this means that those who identify as White may not notice their race when surrounded by others who are White. For those who are people of color, being surrounded by those who are White can mean that they are always aware of their race and its impact on their experiences. This is the racial context within Spring Valley, where 85% of the students and staff identify as White. For our White students and staff, this means that they may go through their high school experiences without really ever noticing their race. For our students and staff of color, they may be reminded of their racial difference every day.

My experience with White students and staff is that sometimes the discussion about White racial identity needs to begin by helping them identify that White is, in fact, a race. As Tatum noted, one key aspect of systemic racism is that it seeks to blind White people to their own racial identities. To make matters more complicated, systemic racism allows only narrowly defined identities for White people and race. Michael and Bartoli summarized Tatum's suggestion that these roles are "ignorant, color-blind, and racist" (Tatum as cited in Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 60). When White people like me do think about our race, a typical reaction is to feel guilt and shame. Tatum (1997) described these feelings as "part of the hidden cost of racism" (p. 94). My program evaluation study examined the ways in which these feelings of guilt and shame have shut down discussions of race at Spring Valley. Instead, Tatum advocated that we must help White students and staff form a new, more positive racial identity as anti-racists. Tatum cites Janet Helms' statement in *Black and White Racial Identity Development: Theory, Research, and Practice:*

> The task for Whites is to develop a positive White identity based in reality, not on assumed superiority. In order to do that, each person must become aware of his or her Whiteness, accept it as personally and socially significant, and learn to feel good about it, not in the sense of a Klan member's "White pride," but in the context of a commitment to a just society. (Helms as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 94)

If we are going to help our students navigate this important time in their racial identity development, the staff at Spring Valley must heed Helms' advice and become more aware of our individual racial identities and how those racial identities may affect our experiences and our work with students and their racial identities so that we can more

effectively help them prepare for life beyond our high school. More specifically, White students who graduate from Spring Valley must be able to enter into interracial dialogue with a clear sense of a positive White racial identity and fluency in the language of racial discourse.

Our goal must be to become culturally proficient educators. According to Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (2009), culturally proficient educators can have a profound impact on the learning of students by striving to "overcome obstacles to learning through programs that . . . project the cultural expectation that all students can learn" (p. 85). Lindsey et al. (2009) identified three characteristics of "educators who are committed to educating all students to high levels" (p. 85):

- Culturally proficient educators have an emerging awareness of their strengths, their limitations, and what they need and want to learn.

- Culturally proficient educators are not afraid to change their worldview or paradigms about their students' cultures.

- Culturally proficient educators are eager to begin the change process, both individually and institutionally. (p. 85)

Culturally proficient educators have an understanding of their own culture and the cultures of their students. More specifically, racially proficient educators have an understanding of their own race, its impact on their experiences and their teaching, and continuously develop an understanding of their student's racially identities.

What Policy Am I Recommending?

I am recommending a policy that all teaching staff will participate in a half-day professional development experience designed to raise their awareness of the impact of

race on their experiences and their teaching, and the impact that race has on the lives and educational experiences of their students. That experience will be followed by a year-long structured discussion of the importance of racial proficiency and the expectation that teachers will participate in one or more professional development opportunities related to cultural proficiency outside of the induction program.

The intention of this policy is to supplement the professional development offerings currently provided at Spring Valley, specifically the Beyond Diversity Workshop and the SEED Program. Currently, several obstacles exist to ensuring that all staff have professional development offerings related to racial competency. The SEED Program requires teachers to devote one evening each month to attend a four-hour session. Many of our staff find it difficult to participate in this program due to evening family obligations. Though the Beyond Diversity Workshop is offered during the school day, it requires missing two full days of normal duties. In addition, as I noted in my program evaluation, the workshop also has a mixed reputation among the staff.

Both of these programs are voluntary, which means that many staff have not completed either. Given that race is one form of difference that is often difficult for people to examine, some may avoid participating so that they can avoid emotional discomfort. This policy proposal would ensure that every teaching staff member has at least a baseline professional development experience.

By raising the cultural proficiency of our teachers as it pertains to race, we will have a positive impact on the educational experiences for all of our students by better preparing teachers to address the unique needs of every student and facilitating an increased level of racial competence among students by providing opportunities for them

to grow in their understanding of their individual racial identities and the racial identities of others.

SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF NEED

Educational Analysis

Our scores on the Prairie State Achievement Examination, which is given to all junior students in the state of Illinois, reveal a disparity between the scores of our White students and those of students of color. In 2011, the last year in which there were enough Black students taking the test for their statistics to be reported by the state, 91% of White students met or exceeded standards for reading, 91% for math, and 91% for science. Scores for Asian students were comparable: 82% for reading, 95% for math, and 90% for science. For Hispanic students, the scores were 85% in reading, 92% in math, and 81% in science. Black students scored only 36% in reading, 27% in math, and 27% in science.

For the ACT, the same trends exist. Over the years 2010–2015 the average ACT scores for students when disaggregated for race show that Asian, White, and Multiracial students have the highest average composite scores. Their scores are about seven points higher than the average composite score for all students in the state. Hispanic students typically score two points lower than White, Asian, and Multiracial students, while Black students score between three to eight points lower, depending on the year. Though the number of Black students for each of these years ranges from eight to 20, the pattern is consistent. Black students at Spring Valley are scoring either at or slightly above the state average, while their White, Asian and Multiracial classmates' scores are some of the highest in the state. Figure 1 shows average ACT scores from 2010 to 2015.
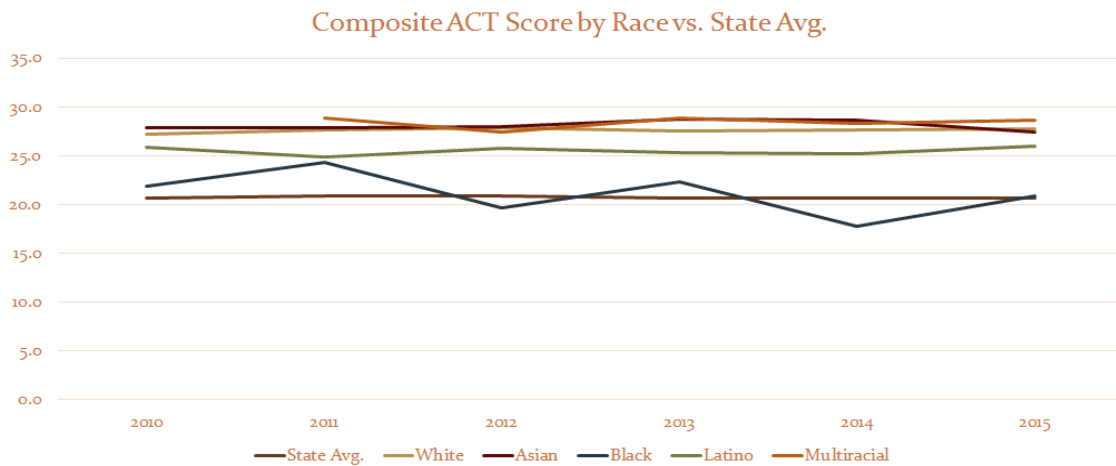
Composite ACT Score by Race vs. State Avg.

Figure 1. Composite ACT scores by race versus state average.

In addition, students of color are disproportionately represented in the special education program. Though Black students made up only .6% of our student population in the 2014–2015 SY, they account for 2% of the students enrolled in special education services. While 9% of White students receive special education services (323 of 3,535 students), almost 39% of Black students have an Individualized Education Plan (10 of 26). This discrepancy actually triggered an investigation by the regional office of education. Because Spring Valley is a high-school only district, most of the students, including Black students, were evaluated and given special education services during elementary or middle school.

As previously discussed, students also tell us on our post-graduate survey that they often do not feel prepared for the diversity that they experience when in college. My experience is that this is especially true for White students at Spring Valley. All of our

students must graduate with an understanding of their racial identities, specific content knowledge, and proficiency with the skills needed for racial discourse.

Michael and Bartoli (2014) identified three areas of content knowledge that all students must possess if they are to be proficient in racial discourse. The first is a clear understanding of race as a social, rather than a biological, construct (p. 60). Understanding that race is a social construct allows students to understand its connection to social forces, especially systemic racism. The authors asserted that "students must develop a sense of how systemic racism works on an individual, community, and institutional level" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 60). One way in which systemic racism is manifest in our culture is through racial stereotyping. Students must learn to identify these stereotypes and be exposed to counter narratives that allow them to "fully move beyond stereotypes and understand the richness existing within each community" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). Finally, students need to understand that the histories of racial groups in our country are "deeply interconnected and interdependent" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). This is especially important when teaching the history of anti-racist efforts in America. White people are frequently left out of this retelling of our history even though anti-racist movements have always involved people from multiple racial identities. White students need role models of White antiracism so that they can "envision possible ways to be white and antiracist" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61).

All students must also possess the skills necessary to proficiently participate in racial discourse. Michael and Bartoli (2014) identified these six skills areas. Students must have the ability to critically analyze media. Systemic racism impacts all aspects of our culture and this includes the news and entertainment media that we consume. An

examination of media through the lens of race often reveals the frequency in which racial stereotypes are presented with seemingly little thought. Helping students recognize and question racial stereotyping in the media is a vital skill.

Student and staff need to understand how to intervene when they witness racism (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). Specifically, they need skills to "recognize, name, intervene in, and/or reach out for assistance in racist incidents" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). This can be a difficult thing for students or staff to do. At times, it might not be safe to intervene, but standing by and doing nothing sends a message to others that such behavior is acceptable. Teachers should intervene when a student makes a racist statement, not just to help educate that student, but because the entire class is watching and learning about how best to confront racism.

Students also need the skills necessary to "manage racial stress" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). Students need to be able to identify and manage their emotional responses during discussions of race. As adults, we can help by normalizing discussions of race and racism. Essentially, the more that we talk about race and experience that we can have the conversation without being hurt, the more we are willing to talk about race in the next conversation. Of course, to do this, we must manage our emotions as well.

My program evaluation of the Beyond Diversity Workshop explored the obstacles that can appear for White participants in discussions of race. Feelings of shame and guilt can bring a discussion to a halt and can manifest as defensiveness or anger, making future discussions of race even harder. To help students learn to identify and manage their own emotions during discussions of race, we must be able to identify and manage our own. By doing so, we not only model ways to do this for our students, but we are better able to

maintain a safe environment in which students can be honest about their thoughts and feelings related to race and understand the perspectives of others.

White students must also be able to honor and respect the needs of students of color to gather in affinity spaces (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). It is especially important for schools to create spaces for racial affinity as a means of "countering the effect of stereotype threat and creating a sense of safety and camaraderie within predominantly white spaces" (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 61). Students need to honor the need of students of different racial identities to gather with each other and view these gatherings as positive. This can be especially challenging for White students. There can be suspicion and fear based upon racial stereotypes that students of color are somehow doing something that they should not when they gather in groups. White student need to be reminded that White racial affinity spaces exist throughout their day, especially in a community such as Spring Valley, though they may not recognize these as such.

As much as students of color may need spaces of their own as places of safety and connection, students also need the opportunity to develop authentic relationships with classmates of different races (Michael & Bartoli, 2014, p. 62). This is another way that we as adults can help model this behavior. Engaging in authentic relationships in this sense means having relationships in which race can be openly discussed and deeper understandings of one's own racial experience and the experiences of others is developed. My own experience is it can be moving and liberating to develop this type of relationship. Every year, I attend the Summit for Courageous Conversations sponsored by the Pacific Educational Group. I am amazed by the difference that occurs within a group of people when race is openly named and discussed in a way that honors individual

experiences. There is a weight that seems to evaporate over the course of several days. It is the warmest, friendliest environment that I have ever experienced.

A necessary component for that authenticity is vulnerability. In Brown's (2010) work on vulnerability, the author argued that vulnerability is key to having authentic connections with other people, the thing "that gives purpose and meaning to our lives" (3:09). A major obstacle to the connection with others that comes from vulnerability is shame. Brown (2012) insisted that "we cannot talk about race without talking about privilege, and when people talk about privilege, they get paralyzed by shame" (Brown, 10:12). Brown asserted that empathy is an antidote for shame. If we are to model for students how to have authentic relationships between people of different racial identities, we as adults must learn to develop empathy for others' racial experiences. For White people such as me, it also means developing the emotional skills to move beyond shame so that we do not avoid discussions of race.

Finally, students need to understand how both racist and anti-racist beliefs comprise their identities. Michael and Bartoli (2014) called this acknowledging "the 'both/and' possibility of simultaneously being racist and anti-racist" (p. 62). This requires rejecting a binary approach to thinking about truth. I refer to this as accepting that two perspectives may at once be contradictory and yet entirely true from those experiencing that perspective. Michael and Bartoli affirmed that holding these seemingly contradictory perspectives of oneself is necessary for meaningful racial discourse. One can receive benefits from a racist society or even unconsciously act in ways that are racist and yet be actively engaged in trying to disrupt systemic racism and changing one's own unconscious racist beliefs.

Okun (2010) maintained that rejecting binary thinking is a necessary step in confronting systemic racism and argued that binary thinking "keeps us entrapped in the struggle to define ourselves in these either/or terms" (p. 24). Buddhist teacher Cheri Huber (as cited in Okun, 2010) stated: "Wanting to be good, we cannot afford to be bad, which in turn means we cannot make mistakes. We must be perfect" (p. 24). In racial terms, this leads us to believe that to be anti-racist, we must be completely devoid of racist thoughts.

This is an unrealistic approach to antiracism. Systemic racism permeates our culture. It is the water in which we swim. Racist stereotypes and beliefs seep into our consciousness often without notice. To be an antiracist does not mean to be devoid of racist thought. Rather it means to be actively seeking to understand and counteract racist thoughts that one might have and to work toward an end to systemic racism.

A refusal to move beyond binary thinking can have a devastating impact on open racial discourse. Okun saw the negative impact of binary thinking in her own students' thinking about race. "Gripped in the confines of this kind of dualistic thinking, no wonder my students struggle to defend against realities of oppression in which they have colluded and from which they have benefitted" (Okun, 2010, p. 24). Though Okun asserted that binary thinking has its roots in a human desire to make a complex, sometimes frightening world seem safer and more easily understood, "it requires a narrow understanding of moral choice and a dogged insistence on its own validity" (Okun, 2010, p. 25).

The impact on White participants in conversations about race is that we can end up attempting to defend the indefensible. DiAngelo (2012) compared this to an argument

between a student in an astronomy class and a widely-recognized authority on astronomy about Pluto's status as a planet. DiAngelo imagined the student confronting the professor and, even after having heard the evidence presented that Pluto should not be labeled a planet, declaring that Pluto is a planet because

> that is what he learned in school, and he has seen many books with pictures of the planets, and there are always 9. He had a map of the sky in his bedroom as a child, and it showed 9 planets. Further, he says, his parents taught him that there were 9 planets, and many of his friends also agree that there are 9. (DiAngelo, 2012, p. 9)

DiAngelo (2012) further imagined that most of us "would not see this student as credible or seek to align [ourselves] with him" (p. 9). However, if the topic is race, DiAngelo argued that "many of us feel completely confident—indeed, even a bit righteous—about sharing our opinions" using the same type of anecdotal evidence and family teachings as support (DiAngelo, 2012, p. 9). DiAngelo also argued that until we understand "how complex race relations are," we may never realize that our opinions of race are "as naive and ignorant as those of this hypothetical astronomy student" (DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 9–10).

Of course, binary thinking impacts people of color, as well. Ladson-Billings (2009) thought that African American students who attempt to do well academically may face a psychic struggle. Doing well in school can be seen as "acting white" by African American students (p. 12). When Ladson-Billings began attending an integrated junior high school, she encountered "white classmates [who] made a point of showing off their academic skills" and their White parents who "actively lent a hand in important class

assignments and projects" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 13). It is not that the author's predominantly African American grade school had not valued learning and educational success. What was new was the competitiveness for educational achievement present in the predominantly White junior high school. Ladson-Billings (2009) stated that the choice was to "attempt to keep up with this unfair competition and 'act white'" or "continue to work my hardest and hope that I could still achieve" (p. 13).

Ladson-Billings noted that this dichotomy creates a terrible choice for African American students. They feel that they can either maintain their racial identity or achieve academic success but not both. Ladson-Billings (2009) explained that some African American students are unwilling to give up their identity and instead "learn how not to learn" (p. 12). The goal of culturally relevant teaching is the development of a "'relevant black personality' that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African and African American culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). In other words, effective teaching for all students counters binary, either-or thinking and provides students with the opportunity to be both-and. So, Black students, for example, can feel connected to their racial identity and see academic success as part of that identity.

Theresa Perry agreed that "the most important thing that schools, families, and communities can do is figure out how to develop among African-American children and youth *identities of achievement*" (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2012, p. 99). Perry argued that Black students require "extra social, emotional, cognitive, and political competencies . . . precisely because they are African-American, if they are to commit themselves over time to perform at high levels in school" (Perry et al., 2012, p. 4). Perry

took Ladson-Billings' argument one step further by stating: "On far too many occasions [she has] heard Black and white educators and scholars make the claim that Black students see doing well in school as white, assuming that the origin of this belief is Black peer culture" (Perry et al., 2012, p. 36). In the essay "Up from the Parched Earth: Toward a Theory of African-American Achievement," Perry asserted that the source of this belief is not Black peer culture but rather a persistent belief among educators about Black intellectual inferiority. This belief becomes manifested not only in the policies and practices of a school but also in the attitudes conveyed to students. Perry offered examples of this belief from the lives of Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Gwendolyn Parker, Maya Angelou, and Ben Carson to demonstrate its persistence over time. Perry also presented examples of the counter narrative offered within the Black community that equates learning as an essential component of freedom.

Perry insisted that what Black students most need are school communities that actively resist the belief of Black intellectual inferiority. However, to do this, schools must create

> an external review process for schools whereby the school is assessed both for how it reproduces explicitly or in subtle ways the ideology of African American intellectual inferiority and for how it might, within the context of the school's culture, proactively work to create identities of achievement among African-American students. (Perry et al., 2012, p. 102)

Perry pointed to schools in which African American student achievement is higher—Department of Defense schools, Catholic schools, historically Black colleges—as proof of this argument.

A key component of creating this school environment is work to improve the racial competency of educators. Perry argued that this is a challenge because "we have a whole generation of teachers, Black and white, who don't a have a clue about the history of Black education and the African-American narrative and intellectual tradition" (Perry et al., 2012, p. 100). Black students in particular face "a persistent, well-articulated, and unabated ideology about their mental incompetence" that is unique to their racial identity (Perry et al., 2012, p. 104). Without an understanding of this history and intellectual tradition, educators lack the counter-narrative necessary to challenge the racial belief that their Black students are unable to achieve at the same levels as their White students.

I believe that this type of understanding of Black history and intellectual tradition will lend itself to a broader examination of not only our beliefs about Black intellectual inferiority, but of our beliefs about all racial groups. For example, the assumption that all Black students cannot truly succeed is juxtaposed by our racial belief that Asian students always succeed. If it is true that Black students are capable of more than we expect of them, it is also true that Asian students may need more support than we are willing to offer. An examination of the racial biases that we possess as educators is likely to improve education for all students.

<center>Economic Analysis</center>

Spring Valley is a community of high economic success. One of the wealthiest suburbs in America lies within the district and multi-million dollar homes dot the eastern edge of the community. To be economically successful, many parents have had to adopt the ideals of competition. Competition places economic success ahead of other needs, such as genuine connections with others. Levine (2006) pointed out in *The Price of*

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Privilege, "when parents—mothers in particular—value financial success more than affiliation, community, or self-acceptance, they are likely to have children who share these values" (p. 49). Levin (2006) determined that "materialism and competition go hand in hand" (p. 52). If the goal of advertising is to convince us that only through consumption can we find happiness, the "magical, curative powers" of these goods can only work if "they are not possessed by too many others" (Levin, 2006, p. 52). "An outgrowth of materialism is the notion that there are 'winners' and 'losers,' the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'" (Levin, 2006, p. 52).

Systemic racism walks hand in hand with this competitive notion that only some can be "winners." Systemic racism is intended to ensure that some have privileges while others do not. I would argue that it is not an accident that Spring Valley is also a predominantly White community. The district has experienced long struggles with practices such as redlining—the practice of realtors defining sections of communities as for Whites only. In 1965, a group of young mothers worried that their children were growing up in communities that had no diversity so they invited Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak in the community and he did. Roughly, 8,000 people heard his speech. Four neo-Nazis even showed up protesting integration. Dr. King urged the audience to put all their energy into ending segregation in housing because he believed that every White person does great injury to his or her child if that child is allowed to grow up in a world that is two-thirds colored and yet lives in conditions where that child does not come into person-to-person contact with people of color.

Forty years after Dr. King's speech, Spring Valley remains an overwhelmingly White community. Redlining is now illegal, but considerable evidence suggests that the

practice of steering potential homebuyers to or from particular communities continues. This is partly due to the very high cost of purchasing a home in the area, which tends to limit access to only the very affluent. However, systemic racism, disguised as concerns about safety, still impacts the practice of realtors in the area. I experienced this myself when I looked to purchase a home in the area. My wife and I saw a listing for a home in a nearby community that was racially divided between White and Black residents. The home that we asked about happened to be in a predominantly Black neighborhood. Our realtor's response was to look directly at me and say, "I wouldn't feel safe letting my wife be there at night alone when I was out of town." Perhaps without realizing it, our realtor was drawing upon the fear that is the accumulated result of those redlining policies. Living in a neighborhood that is predominantly Black has become synonymous with lower levels of public service, depressed home values, poor education, and higher crime rates (California Newsreel, 2015). My White realtor was telling me that because there were Black people in the neighborhood, my wife would be in danger. Sadly, I felt that fear, and we looked at other properties.

The competition and materialism of an affluent community like Spring Valley can work against efforts to build relationships and ensure that people of all races have access to the same privileges. Anecdotally, my observations of White communities that have struggled with anti-racist work often encounter the greatest resistance when perceived privileges are lost by White families. In a neighboring district, the decision to de-track a freshman humanities course was met with tremendous resistance from parents who argued that high-achieving students would be hurt by this change. The school district countered that those high-achieving students were overwhelmingly White, even though

the district's racial demographics were more equally divided between White and Black students.

Ladson-Billings (2009) noted the research conducted by Lomotely and Staley (as cited in Ladson-Billings, (2009) that suggested that desegregation in its current form is "deemed successful when white parents are satisfied, despite low academic performance and high suspension and dropout rates for African Americans" (p. 6). This view was also echoed by Derrick Bell (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) who pointed out the economic benefits to schools that receive money to support desegregation (p. 6). Bell (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) argued that this money is used for "more personnel and better salaries" for teachers (p. 6). When White students are sent to predominantly African American schools, the schools are often reframed as magnet schools with programs and extracurricular offerings that are attractive to White students and families but with lower-tiered programs that are typically populated by Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2009, pp. 6–7). Even when racial desegregation is the stated goal, these efforts can, in fact, reinforce racial segregation within schools and communities.

<p align="center">Social Analysis</p>

As described previously, a common White approach to discussions of race and racism is to avoid the topic at all costs. One common way of doing this is to take a colorblind approach to racial discourse. This approach emphasizes the lack of any significant biological difference between people of different races. A common refrain is, "I don't see race. I just see people." The problem with this approach is that it ignores the social construction of race and the very real impact that systemic racism has on the experiences of people of color.

Brendesha Tynes, a professor of educational psychology and African-American studies at the University of Illinois, held that a color-blind ideology actually exacerbates racism rather than prevents it. Tynes studied the reactions of 217 "ethnically diverse college students" to online photographs of "racially themed" (Ciciora, 2010, para. 4) college parties, much like those that received significant media attention in 2007 in which White students wore black face. Tynes began by asking students a series of questions intended to determine the extent to which they agreed with a color-blind approach to discussions of race. Tynes found that those respondents who espoused a color-blind approach to racism were much more likely to be ambivalent or even approve of the images while those who did not were more "vocal in expressing their displeasure" and were even willing to "'de-friend' someone over posting those images" (Ciciora, 2010, para. 9). Tynes argued that a color-blind approach to race leads individuals to believe that racism does not exist and that "you are more likely to think that people who talk about race and racism are the ones who perpetuate it" (Tynes as cited in Ciciora, 2010, para. 11). Tynes observed that some White students responded in different ways online and in person, showing "mild approval of the party photos" online, but then privately stating "they thought the image was racist or that it angered them" (Tynes as cited in Ciciora, 2010, para. 15). Tynes theorized that this may be due to the way that dominant culture socializes White people to avoid discussions of race.

As someone who is physically color blind, the idea of a colorblind approach to race has always struck me as troublesome. My eyes lack the cones that would allow me to see certain shades of red and green. When those light frequencies strike the back of my eye, the signal rushes to my brain with gaps like teeth missing from a comb. My

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brain will not tolerate an incomplete picture, however, and scrambles to fill in the gaps by

guessing at the frequencies that are missing. Since it is guessing, it is often wrong, and

what at first may appear to me to be green, may later look brown in another light and

eventually red. Interestingly, once someone tells me what color an object is, I see it that

way from that moment on. Choosing a color blind approach to race is very much like

being physically colorblind. In our attempt to become blind to what we see, our minds

fill in the gaps. We make up what we refuse to see, but it is an illusion that is not based

upon reality.

Rather than color blind, a better approach is to become color brave as Mellody

Hobson advocated. In her TED talk, Hobson described how she and a friend, a candidate

for the U.S. Senate, were mistaken for kitchen help at a fundraising event because they

are both Black even though both dressed in their best suits looking like "shiny new

pennies" (Hobson, 2014, 00:40). She was not shocked by this event. She discussed how

her mother, who was "ruthlessly realistic," taught her to consider how others treat her and

warned Hobson that "tThey will not always treat you well" (Hobson, 2014, 1:40).

Hobson commented that in our effort to avoid the uncomfortable feelings associated with

discussions of race, we pretend that race does not exist, even when there is considerable

evidence that it does impact people's experiences. According to Hobson, "the first step

of solving any problem is not to hide from it" and she asks her audience to bravely

engage in conversations about race (Hobson, 2014, 2:48).

McPartland (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) "concluded that only when

individual classrooms are desegregated is there an improvement in the achievement

levels of African American students" (p. 7). Ladson-Billings argued that "the classroom

itself, where students come face to face with others who are different from themselves, is the place of real integration" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 7). In the classroom, all students benefit from the expertise of the teachers to the class. It is vital, then, that the expertise of these teachers includes cultural proficiency so that they are able to capitalize on this daily opportunity for learning.

Students who have experienced a classroom culture that values the individual worth of all students and encourages each to contribute to the learning of the group creates a culture that is anti-racist. When students experience this type of culture, they are given a social model that may be very different from the one they experience in their lives beyond the classroom. I believe that that makes it easier for them to work for change in their own lives and in their communities beyond the classroom. They understand how to form friendships and work together across the barriers of racism. In this way, the classroom becomes a place of social change.

<center>Political Analysis</center>

Ensuring that students have the skills and knowledge to be racially literate and culturally competent is a necessary component of our nation's future. The 2016 political campaign illustrated the importance of a racially and culturally literate electorate. Throughout the campaign, Donald Trump consistently made statements that demonstrate either his calculated use of racial stereotypes or his ignorance of their existence in his thinking. At the speech announcing his presidential candidacy, Trump drew upon the racial fears of White Americans when pointing to a supposed conspiracy by the Mexican government to send criminals to American. He framed his comments in classic binary racial thinking, Trump declared: "They're not sending you. They're sending people that

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have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing

drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people"

(Lee, 2015, para. 1). After receiving considerable criticism for his comments, Trump

responded by stating,

> I can never apologize for the truth. I don't mind apologizing for things. But I
>
> can't apologize for the truth. I said tremendous crime is coming across.
>
> Everybody knows that's true. And it's happening all the time. So, why, when I
>
> mention it, all of a sudden I'm a racist. I'm not a racist. I don't have a racist bone
>
> in my body. (Lee, 2015, para. 2)

However, when the *Washington Post* fact checked Trump's statements, what they found

were a host of evidence directly contradicting the "truth" presented by Trump. "In fact,

first generation immigrants are predisposed to lower crime rates than native-born

Americans" (Lee, 2015, p. 6). As immigration has increased since 1990, crime rates

have actually decreased. Although 38.6% of those in federal prison in 2013 were illegal

immigrants, when the percentage of illegal immigrants in prison is compared to their

proportion of the U.S. population by race, they are much less likely to commit crimes

than native-born Americans (Lee, 2015).

After making these comments and defending them several times, Trump's polling

numbers actually went up. Since then, he has gone on to make sexist comments about

women, called for surveillance of mosques, proposed a travel ban on all Muslim travel to

the United States, and refused to disavow any association with David Duke and the Ku

Klux Klan. When CNN reported from a Trump campaign rally on his proposed travel

ban, no one could be found who disagreed, and the reporter provided comments from one

supporter who called Trump's plan "prudent" and another flatly stating "I don't want [Muslims] here. Who knows what they are going to bring to this country" (Diamond, 2015, 00:10). At least in part, Trump's status as the frontrunner in the Republican race seems to be driven by his ability to tap into the racial fear of White Americans.

If we are to have a nation that can value the many cultures that comprise it and offer access to the privileges enjoyed by the dominant culture, we must do a better job of educating students to access multiple cultural perspectives. In his essay, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," Paris (2012) emphasized that as educators, we must embrace a culturally sustaining pedagogy to support a pluralistic and democratic society. According to Paris, the terms culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy are not explicit enough in stating the need to "guarantee in stance or meaning that one goal of an educational program is to maintain heritage in ways and to value cultural and linguistic sharing across difference, to sustain and support bi- and multilingualism and bi- and multiculturalism" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Instead, Paris argued that we should adopt a culturally sustaining pedagogy—"a pedagogy that is responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

As educators, we must help our students of color sustain the cultural traits of their homes and communities while helping them attain fluency with traits of White dominant culture. For our White students, we must open their eyes to the inherent value of other cultures. Paris saw culturally sustainable pedagogy as seeking to "perpetuate and

foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). The political benefit to our society is that it maintains both the qualities of the "with-in group cultural practices" (speaking Spanish or Navajo or Chinese, for example) and "common, across-group cultural practices" (speaking American English, for example) (Paris, 2012, p. 95). In this way, non-dominant groups sustain their cultural heritage while gaining the skills necessary to access the privileges of the dominant culture.

<center>Moral and Ethical Analysis</center>

As educators, we have a moral obligation to ensure that all of our students receive the same high quality educational opportunities. When our racial biases enter into our decisions, students lose this opportunity, and we begin to create unequal educational experiences for students. These biases show up in the thousands of interactions that we have with students and in the messages that we send to them about what we think is possible for them.

Student rise to meet our expectations. If we expect students to perform well, they often rise to meet that expectation. If we unconsciously hold the belief that some groups are intellectually inferior, as Perry asserted is commonly the case for Black students, we will not ask those students to challenge themselves and grow as do other students (Perry et al., 2012, p. 104). One wonders how many scientists, artists, writers, physicians, or leaders in other fields the world has never known because the consistent message that they received in school was that they could not achieve and that they were not smart enough. We have the exceptional stories of those who achieved in spite of these

messages, but there is no way to know how many others never pursued that passion or talent that would have led to something remarkable.

Educators in predominantly White suburban schools have an especially great moral obligation. Many of our students will go on to hold positions of authority as adults. How they use that authority—whether to further racial justice or injustice—will matter to people well beyond themselves. This moral obligation is recognized in our school' s vision and commitment to foster inquiring minds to inquiry, compassionate hearts, and lives of service for the benefit of all humanity. If our students remain unconscious of the impact that racism has on their own experiences and the experiences of others, they are more likely to make decisions that may have an impact on a much wider group of people based upon the racial stereotypes that they hold.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

All teachers and support staff members at Spring Valley High School will participate in a series of professional development opportunities designed to increase their understanding of the impact of race and racism on their personal experiences and on their work with students, staff, and parents at Spring Valley.

Goals and Objectives

The first goal of this policy is to increase participants' understanding of the impact of race and racism on their own lives. Implementation of this policy is meant to provide opportunities for teachers and staff members to engage in directed, self-reflective professional development opportunities designed to increase their understanding of the impact of race on their personal experiences and on their work with the students, parents and staff at Spring Valley High School. This will require a very personalized opportunity for reflection. As individuals, we have each had very different interactions with race and racism and our racial identities have formed in different ways. The initial professional development opportunity should be designed to help participants first understand their own racial experiences. As explored in my program evaluation study, this can be especially difficult for White participants because that exploration may involve considerable feelings of guilt, shame, or anger. It is important that this initial professional development opportunity engage participants in a manner that is compassionate yet pushes participants to honestly reflect on the impact that race has had on their lives.

The second goal of this policy is to move participants from an examination of the impact of race and racism on their own lives to an examination of its impact on the lives

of their students, parents, and colleagues. It is the thousands of individual decisions that teachers make each day that this policy seeks to address as well as larger questions related to curriculum and instruction.

Raising awareness of the impact that racism may have on the interactions between teachers and students is the goal of this second stage of the professional development. As Beverly Tatum, Theresa Perry and others have pointed out, teachers send thousands of messages each day to students about their ability, their potential, and their worth as human beings. Essentially, this stage of professional development asks participants to consider how they show students that they truly believe in their individual potential as learners.

The final goal of this policy and the next step in this professional development is to ask teachers to engage in an analysis of their curriculum and instruction for ways in which racism may have an impact. Curriculum should allow students to see themselves and others represented in a wide variety of professions and experiences.

One thing that students of color at Spring Valley consistently complain about is that the curriculum portrays just one perspective of their racial identity while White people are portrayed in a wide variety of roles. More specifically, Black students point out that nearly every Black character that they see in literature is either enslaved or lives in poverty. They typically live in the South and frequently experience the consequences of poverty, such as crime, malnourishment, drugs, and other challenges. For our Black students, this is an experience with which very few can connect. They are often living in expensive homes with parents who possess advanced degrees. They may be the fourth or fifth generation to go to college. They describe the frustrating experience of having their

White teachers and classmates turn to them when reading these works and ask them to confirm the veracity of what they have read. Suddenly, these Black students are aware both of the stereotype that is consistently applied to them and their complete disconnection from this type of human experience. For the White students in the class, they lack the multiple perspectives necessary to challenge the stereotypes that they hold about People of color.

Needs, Values, and Preferences Represented by this Policy

This policy seeks to meet the needs of all students at Spring Valley High School. Because students change every year at a high school, and students hold no power to control curriculum or instructional practices, a focus on the professional development of teachers is the most impactful way to positively change the culture at Spring Valley and promote racial competency.

Validation of Goals as Appropriate and Good

The goals and objectives of this policy advocacy are consistent with the values espoused by Spring Valley in the district's equity goals. Those goals are:

1. Ensure that all students have equitable access to educational and extracurricular opportunities in our school.

2. Ensure that all students experience a safe and respectful learning environment.

3. Ensure that all students are developing the skills to be culturally competent upon leaving our school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all teachers are well-prepared to meet these goals for students. The policy challenges teachers to first reflect on the ways that race and systemic racism have impacted their own lives and then to examine how this may be affecting their students' experiences at Spring Valley.

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The goals and objectives of this policy are also consistent with values espoused by the Spring Valley district's teacher evaluation framework, which is intended to provide not only a framework for teacher evaluation but also common language and a vision for several areas, including school-wide professional development. Four domain areas for teacher professional development and practice are identified in this school document:

- Understanding Teaching: Knowing the Content and Pedagogy of the Discipline;

- Understanding Students: Knowing Adolescent Development and Students as Individuals;

- Understanding Professional Responsibilities: Knowing the Personal, Ethical, and Legal Obligations of the Teaching Profession; and

- Understanding School and Community Culture: Knowing the Unique Culture of the School and the Community and How It Affects Teaching.

Within each domain, several strands are specified. For example, within Understanding Students, the first strand is to treat each student equitably and recognize individual differences in gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity, religion, and abilities, and take these realities into account when working with students. As can be seen, this policy advocacy proposal is in alignment with the district's evaluation and professional development framework.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

Ladson-Billings observed that there is "very little reliable literature on preparing teachers for diversity. And almost nothing exists on teacher preparation specifically for African American students" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 8). What does exist in educational research is a consistent portrayal of Black students as deficient in some way that prevents them from performing academically as well as White students. Ladson-Billings pointed to the terms "disadvantaged" and "culturally deprived" used extensively in the 1960s and 1970s and made the assessment that the use of these terms has led to the view of "African American students as deprived, deficient, and deviant" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 9). To correct these deficiencies, educational reform adopted a "compensatory education" approach designed to "compensate for the deprivation and disadvantage assumed to be inherent in African American homes and communities," and in the 1980s the terms used shifted from "disadvantaged" to "at risk" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 9). Though the term used shifted, the perception remained consistent. Cuban (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) suggested that "the two most popular explanations for low academic achievement of at-risk children locate the problem in the children themselves or in their families" (p. 10).

We question, even with all of the attention that the achievement gap has received in the U.S. for several decades, why does it still persist? One reason may be that we refuse to name specifically the issue we are trying to address. Ladson-Billings (2009) concluded that efforts designed to improve the academic performance of "disadvantaged" or "at-risk" students rarely become explicitly connected to techniques that are effective when working with specific groups of students (p. 8). So, though these terms reinforce

the idea that Black students, their communities, and their families are deficient in some way, they do not explicitly connect back to techniques shown to improve the performance of Black students. This is the struggle that we face in American education.

Our goal is audacious—to educate all students in our country so that they are prepared to pursue the same educational and economic opportunities available beyond high school. Yet, we are afraid to specifically name the issues that blocks students from these opportunities. Rather than addressing systemic racism and the inequitable distribution of resources that creates poverty, we aim our efforts at ill-defined groups of students who are "at risk."

Ladson-Billings saw this misdirection of efforts in the lack of education literature focused on addressing the educational needs of Black students and contended that one cause is "a stubborn refusal in American education to recognize African Americans as a distinct cultural group" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.10). Though we view African Americans as having a distinct race, we persist in viewing Black children as "exactly like white children but just [needing] a little extra help" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.10). Rather than understanding the racial identity of our students, we treat them as if they should all be working to become more like White children. This is an inherently racist view that perpetuates the belief that White racial views and experiences are and should be the norm for all other racial groups.

Systematic racism is present in many of our efforts to improve the learning of students of color. The work of Hollins (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) examined "programs and strategies that have demonstrated a level of effectiveness with African American students" (p. 11). Hollins (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) grouped these

strategies into three categories: (a) "those designed to remediate or accelerate without attending to the students' social or cultural needs"; (b) "those designed to resocialize African American students to mainstream behaviors, values, and attitudes at the same time that they teach basic skills"; and (c) "those designed to facilitate student learning by capitalizing on the students' own social and cultural backgrounds" (p. 11).

The first group of strategies entirely ignores the impact of race and racism on learning. Hollins cited the Chicago Mastery Learning Reading Program as an example of a program that focuses entirely on "pacing, monitoring of instruction, and precise sequencing of objectives" while ignoring "the social and cultural needs of students" (Hollins as cited in Ladson-Billing, 2009, p. 11).

The second group of strategies is explicitly racist in its intention to "resocialize youngsters viewed as outside the mainstream and inculcate in them mainstream perceptions and behaviors" (Hollins as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.11). In a White dominant culture, mainstream can be read as White. These programs seek to remove or isolate children from "the culture of 'deprivation'" in their homes so that the "school can transform them into people worthy of inclusion in the society" (Hollins as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.11). As another program example, Hollins also pointed to New Haven, Connecticut's "A Social Skills Curriculum for Inner-City Children."

The third group actively embraces race and culture and seeks to "capitalize on students' individual, group, and cultural differences" (Hollins as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 11). Cummins (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) held that "students are less likely to fail in school settings where they feel positive about both their own culture and the majority culture and 'are not alienated from their own cultural values'" (p. 12).

Additionally, Hollins (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009) acknowledged Chicago's Westside Preparatory School as an example of a school that "uses African American culture to improve the students' academic performance" (p. 12).

Rather than seeing students of color as deficient because they are not White, schools must embrace the inherent value of all racial identities and work to understand how those identities may impact educational best practices. At the time of this proposed policy initiative, little has been done to prepare teachers to understand how racial identity may impact instruction and learning. For student learning, this means developing a deeply held belief that all students are capable of high levels of academic achievement regardless of race. In the area of instruction, this means considering how our teaching methods may be based upon racist assumptions that strategies that work well for White students work well for all students.

Of course, as discussed in the previous section that addressed the issues that make racism a critical problem, White students also need us to develop a deeper understanding of the intersection between race and instruction. They need the racial skills that allow them to understand their own racial experiences so that they can understand the racial experiences of others. As they work to address complex social problems, they must be able to see and examine the ways in which systemic racism may play a role so that the solutions they advocate for are effective. Ultimately, a deeper racial consciousness allows White students to develop more authentic relationships with people of color in their lives.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Needed Educational and Staff Development Activities

Three types of educational activities are needed if this policy is to be effectively implemented. The first is a broad understanding of the need for this policy. That will require education on the current educational experiences of students in our school when disaggregated by race. Information presented in this first experience should include standardized testing data for the Prairie State Achievement Examination, PLAN Test, and ACT; level placement data for English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Modern and Classical Languages; special education placement data; and discipline data. Data from the Graduate Survey, especially responses to the question "To what degree did you feel prepared for diversity in your post high school experience?" need to be included as well as data from the National Student Clearinghouse that show current participation in college and university degree programs. Finally, the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and any other climate data illustrating students' sense of safety should also be included.

The goal of this educational activity is to demonstrate the need for considering and addressing the impact of race on our students' experiences. As stated previously, our students are achieving different levels of success on standardized tests that are racially predictable. Students of color are overrepresented in level 2 classes and in special education. Students report being unprepared for the racial diversity that they experience in college. Students of color report that our curriculum presents racial identities that reinforce racial stereotypes.

The second activity should be reflective in nature. Its purpose is to prompt staff and teachers to consider the impact that race has had in their own lives and in the lives of their students. Pacific Educational Group's Beyond Diversity Workshop is one example of this type of activity, but there are several others that may also prove effective, such as seminars offered by Lee Mun Wah's Stir Fry Seminars. The workshop experience must provide a climate that provides parameters designed to protect emotional safety while also holding participants accountable for honest reflection on their own experiences and respectful consideration of the experiences of others.

As described in my program evaluation of the Beyond Diversity Workshop at Spring Valley High School, I think it is important that these workshop experiences include pre-workshop meetings to prepare participants for the experience and post-workshop opportunities for continued reflection and discussion. Many participants are unfamiliar with the tenets of critical race theory that are present in the Beyond Diversity and Stir Fry Seminar experiences. Some may not have ever considered themselves to have a racial experience at all. It is helpful to give participants some basic background in the elements of critical race theory before they participate so that they are able to more fully engage in the workshop. Confusion over new terms can sabotage these types of experiences. After the workshop, participants also need time to reflect on what they have learned. My observation is that participants often experience a shifting set of emotions as they move away from the experience. As time passes from the experience, participants at Spring Valley have reported that how they felt about the experience changed as they noticed new things in their daily experiences or further considered the implications of the information presented in the workshop.

The final set of experiences is focused on helping teachers examine the impact that race may have on the curriculum that they teach and their practice within the classroom. This is the stage where teachers are asked to put into action what they have learned. At Spring Valley, the Seeking Educational Excellence through Diversity (SEED) model developed by Peggy McIntosh is an effective method of addressing this goal. The first year of SEED is devoted to examining the impact of difference on one's experience personally and professionally. The workshop examines race, gender, social class, sexual preference and identity, and ethnicity in monthly sessions. In the second year of SEED, participants are asked to work to create curricular and instructional changes in their work with students. Again, participants meet monthly to support each other as they plan and implement these changes.

Time Schedule

The professional development strand for this policy requires a three-year commitment. In the first year, participants attend the Beyond Diversity Workshop or a similar workshop, including the pre- and post-workshop experiences. In the second year, staff participate in the SEED I experience. In the third year, staff participate in the SEED II experience and begin work on curricular and instructional changes.

The presentation of data to staff regarding the need for a focus on race in our work with students can be done at our annual staff meetings. There are typically three staff meetings held over the course of two days at the two campuses. These data should be presented at the September staff meetings beginning in fall 2014 and continued each year after that. Each year's presentation would include updated data from the previous year.

In fall 2016, roughly half of the staff has participated in the Beyond Diversity Workshop at this time. Spring Valley offers the two-day workshop every year and typically 40–50 staff members participate. Because there are approximately 410 teachers and 300 support staff at Spring Valley, there are approximately 350 staff members who still need to attend. If the workshop is offered twice each year, it will take four years before all staff members have attended.

Given the mixed reactions that I described in my program evaluation that the Beyond Diversity Workshop has received from some staff members, a list of alternative workshops will also be provided. The requirement for any workshop to be included on this list is that it must focus on the impact of race on the experiences of adults and students in education. This list would likely include Stir Fry Seminars workshops, but may also include workshops offered by other organizations.

Program Budgets

The creation and presentation of student data disaggregated by race requires time to gather, evaluate, and present the data each year. This work would be done by the assistant superintendent for student services with support from the technology department and the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

Each Beyond Diversity Workshop costs approximately $10,000 dollars. This policy would require an additional $70,000 to provide the seven workshops necessary to offer this experience to the remaining staff members at Spring Valley High School. In addition, there would be additional cost to support those staff members choosing to participate in a different workshop offered outside of the school. To limit this cost, staff

members wishing to participate in one of these offerings would be required to attend workshops within driving distance of the metropolitan area near to Spring Valley.

The SEED professional development experiences require two facilitators for each "class" of SEED I or SEED II. Facilitators receive a $5,000–$7,000 yearly stipend to facilitate these groups. Currently, there are two trained facilitators. To run both SEED I and SEED II programs each year, we will need at least four facilitators. This means providing financial support for two additional facilitators to be "certified" as SEED facilitators by attending the yearly, week-long training in San Francisco. This training costs approximately $10,000 per participant. The total yearly cost then for five years— assuming one year during which only SEED I operates, three years in which both are offered, and one year in which only SEED II is needed—is $100,000 to $132,000.

The total cost of this policy ranges from approximately $170,000 to $200,000 spread out over five years. That is approximately $40,000 each year. Spring Valley's resources should be able to accommodate this cost. However, if it cannot, additional funding through grants could be pursued, or a longer implementation time frame considered.

<center>Progress Monitoring Activities</center>

Participation can easily be monitored through attendance and registration rosters for the Beyond Diversity Workshops and SEED professional development offerings. Each spring, the assistant superintendent for student services will generate a list of those who have attended Beyond Diversity or an applicable workshop, SEED I, or SEED II. This list will be disaggregated by department and distributed to department chairs and supervisors. Each staff member is required to have a yearly goals conference with their

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department chair or supervisor. At that conference, progress toward meeting this policy

will be discussed and appropriate professional development selections made for the

following year.

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

The impact of this policy can be assessed each year. The yearly presentation to staff of the data regarding students' performance and experience at Spring Valley serves as a natural moment of assessment for this policy's effectiveness. Each year, the assistant superintendent for student services, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and other leaders in the school can examine these data for evidence of impact on students' learning and experience within the school.

If the policy produces the desired changes, there should be advancements in several areas. First, the achievement of students of color on standardized tests should improve. This improvement will likely also be seen in the performance of White students as well because a focus on improved instruction and challenging curriculum impacts the entire student body. This policy assumes that as staff members participate in the professional development offerings, they will identify areas of change. Some of these areas of change will likely be in curricular content. New educational resources, textbooks, works of fiction, or other educational materials may be selected to support the goals of culturally relevant teaching.

In addition, the goal of this policy is to impact classroom instruction. As stated previously, the message that teachers send to students about their capabilities, their worth as people and students, and their potential to learn have a profound impact on the performance of students in our schools. Culturally relevant teaching is not just about what is taught, but how it is taught in the classroom. What are the teacher's expectations? When does the teacher praise a student or correct their behavior? What does the language that teachers use and the expectations that they set tell students about

their individual potential? An assumption of this policy is that as classroom instruction shifts to be more culturally relevant, student performance academically will improve.

There should also be shifts in the number of students assigned individual education plans through the Special Education Department. This policy assumes that perceptions of student ability are impacted by racial stereotypes. As those stereotypes are questioned, perceptions of student ability should shift. This policy hopes to produce a critical review of the designation of "disabled" that assigned to students when they do not perform well academically. Do these students truly have a learning disability? Or, is there some other factor, such as racial stereotyping, responsible for their lower academic performance?

This policy also assumes that recommendations for level placement are impacted by teachers' perceptions of students based upon race. As teachers and staff begin to examine what racist assumptions are at work in their level placement recommendations, it is likely that there will be some shifting in the level assignments of students of color. The hope is that more students of color will be recommended for higher level placement. It is also possible that this policy may lead to a larger examination of the level system itself. Is it an accurate representation of student ability, or does is more accurately reflect a distribution of students based upon factors such as motivation, learning disabilities, racial stereotypes, and individual social and emotional strengths?

As staff engages in reflection on the impact of race on their lives and the lives of our students, and our work with students shifts to become more culturally relevant, this policy assumes that there will be an impact on the overall climate within the school. Students who may currently feel that they receive treatment at our school based upon

racial stereotypes may see that treatment become more positive and accepting. When students share that they feel marginalized or mistreated due to their race, they may find adults and other students who are more willing to listen to those experiences, accept that they are true, and work to provide support for those students. Shifts in climate should be evident in the responses gathered on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and other climate instruments.

A longer term assessment will be to examine the responses on the Graduate Survey concerning students' feelings of preparedness for greater racial diversity in their post-high school experiences. This may be a more difficult change to create. Though greater cultural relevancy in our classrooms should improve all of our students' understanding of their own racial experience and the wide variety of racial experiences beyond themselves, the community in which our students live remains largely White. As a result, students may still feel some level of unpreparedness as they begin to live in communities that are more racially diverse.

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

I am often asked why anyone at Spring Valley would spend time considering the impact of race on a school that is so predominantly White. I think that this demonstrates our national view of race in education. Race is seen as something that "others" have when viewed by White America. The very language that we use to describe race in our country and in education demonstrates this. Rather than saying Black or Brown students, we more often use labels like at-risk or disadvantaged students to avoid having to name race. When we do name race, it is to use terms like White or students of color, as I have done in my writing. The problem, of course, is that the color white is often seen as the absence of color all together. For many White people, this is their view of race.

Being White in America means striking a deal for privilege. To receive the privileges of cultural dominance, White Americans are asked to ignore our race and the very real impact that it has on our experiences. My answer then to those who ask why a school that is predominantly White should care about race is to say that we care because everyone at our school has a race, even the White students.

Perhaps this is too flippant of a response considering the serious implications that examining race in the educational experiences of our students can have. Our culture is a White dominant culture. Dominant culture also values what is male, heterosexual, middle or upper class, and able-bodied. All of those elements intersect at Spring Valley. So, if we hope to ever change the structure of racial dominance in our culture, Spring Valley is an important place to begin. The students who graduate from our school come from privilege and will likely experience privilege in their later lives. With that privilege

will come power, and that power can be used to either create positive social change or reinforce the structures of racial dominance.

We want our students to be agents of change, to use that power to improve the lives of others. This belief is present and internalized by staff, parents, and students and thus is a living part of our school culture, a guiding principle of our practice, and an energizing force in our planning Promoting culturally relevant teaching that honestly and openly examines the impact of race will support this purpose in our school. We have a moral obligation to ensure that every student receives an excellent and equitable educational experience. All of our students deserve to be not only well-prepared with the skills necessary to succeed in their endeavors beyond our school, but to be inculcated with the deep-seated belief that they are capable of achieving great things and a desire to continuously learn and grow. When we examine markers such as standardized test scores, special education placement, and level placement, we should see that student success is not predictable by race but rather by effort.

If we want students to create a more racially just society as adults, we must provide them with a model of that society within our school. Culturally relevant teaching values all racial cultures as adding to the collective experience. It attacks racial dominance by allowing students to better understand and embrace their own racial identities, and finding beauty and worth in the racial identities of others. Interactions with people of a different race other than one's own should not be an experience disfigured by the fear of stereotypes but embraced as a moment when we can learn more about what it means to be human.

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