

**Race and Achievement Disparities in Public Schools: Educator Perceptions, Beliefs,
and Interventions**

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine if educator training specifically focused on the correlation of race and achievement disparities was effective in eliminating achievement disparities and whether or not this type of training affected belief systems and enacted change in curriculum and instructional practices. Purposive sampling was used to select participants in this study and data was collected using interviews. The interview responses were coded based on each research question and then tagged with participant demographics to determine trends in responses. The findings in this research study are a microcosm of a larger group and should not be extrapolated as a representation of the larger body to which the participants belong. The researcher found that the training developed an awareness in participants of their own racial biases and instilled and awakened a need to take action to eliminate race-based achievement disparities in public schools. However, the effectiveness of the training in changing belief systems about race and student achievement was dependent on the participants' years of experience, race, the amount of research participants did on their own, and the number of trainings attended. The findings suggested that attendance to one training in isolation resulted in only small-scale changes in the curriculum and instructional approaches of individual educators as opposed to large-scale district-wide changes for those participants who attended multiple trainings.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Eric, who has been my best friend and one of my biggest supporters since we were 17 years old. Thank you, Eric for encouraging me to stick with it during my most difficult phases of the process and for giving me the gift of time by taking on more than your share of our family responsibilities. Your love and support is invaluable to me. This dissertation is also dedicated to my daughter, Zoe, and my son, Chaz. Zoe, the determination and work ethic you show each day inspired me to keep going. Seeing you balance such a rigorous schedule at such a young age motivated me to work through mine. Chaz, you are wise beyond your years and have a strong sense of self already. Throughout this process, you inspired me to find confidence in my work. Also, thank you both for always knowing when I needed a big hug! I want you both to know that the moments I was unable to attend gymnastics competitions or basketball tournaments because I needed time to write were spent with the purpose of contributing to academic research surrounding racial disparities in education with the hopes of making a difference for *all* students, including you. I know you might not understand all of this now, but someday you will! I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my dad, my sister, and my extended family. To Eric's entire family, I dedicate this work to all of you as well. I am fortunate to have such a strong support system of family, who not only believe in me, but also love and support me unconditionally. Lastly, to my mom, whom we lost so many years ago, I kept my promise. I went all the way! Thank you for instilling that dream in me so long ago.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Although substantial advances in education have been made in the past century, achievement disparities between White students and Black, Hispanic and Native American students still exist (Richwine, 2011; Vannenman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this achievement disparity gained national attention around the 1960s as NCES began to develop and implement “credible measures of student achievement and progress” (as cited in Beaton et al., 2011, para. 2). The main goal was to extend participation of common assessments beyond the small group of high performing students taking the American College Test (ACT) to a wider population that was representative of all students (Beaton et al., 2011, para. 4). Beginning in 2001 the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* required school districts to show that all students, including racial subgroups, were making “adequate yearly progress” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002, p. 1). This legislation also identified economically disadvantaged students as a new subgroup for school districts to focus on in their work to close achievement disparities (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). While some experts have asserted that achievement disparities exist due to a combination of poverty, class structures, and race (Murphy, 2009; Williams, 2003), other experts have stated that achievement disparities will not be eliminated until race becomes an isolated focus of school districts as it is the one factor that has not been emphasized when developing interventions or building equitable curriculum (Dixson & DeCuir, 2004; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

The complexity of achievement disparities, combined with legislation requiring school districts to show progress toward narrowing these disparities among subgroups each school year, has prompted some school districts across the nation to hire outside educational organizations to help with this work (Burch, Donovan & Steinberg, 2006; McGuinn, 2012). In the past twenty years an increasing number of educational organizations have been hired by school districts to help with specific needs ranging from “software for tabulating and reporting test scores” to “instructional materials” (Burch et al., 2006, p. 129). With the emerging belief that race is a contributing factor in achievement disparities (Dixson & DeCuir, 2004; Singleton & Linton, 2006), outside educational groups focused on instructing and training educators about the impacts of racial disparities on student achievement are joining the already large group of educational organizations hired by school districts.

Background

In order to protect the anonymity of the specific school district researched in this study, it is referred to as School District A. This school district is located in the Midwest and has 14 elementary schools (each serving students in Kindergarten to 5th grade), four middle schools (grades 6-8), two high schools (grades 9-12), and one technical high school. School District A is also home to a virtual school; however, these students are not included in the school district enrollment data provided by the State Department of Education.

Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown for school District A. The total enrollment of School District A is 12,106 students. Sixty-eight percent of the student population is White, while the other 32% are Students of Color. The table also indicates

that 39% of students enrolled are economically disadvantaged as identified through the National School Lunch Program.

Table 1

Demographics of School District A

	W	B	H	AI/AN	A	Multi-E	EconDis
<i>N</i>	8,276	761	1,086	436	476	1,071	4,758
<i>%</i>	68	6	9	4	4	9	39

Note. W = White; B = Black; H = Hispanic; AI/AN = American Indian or Alaska Native; A = Asian; Multi-E = Multi-Ethnic; EconDis = Economically Disadvantaged. Adapted from Data and Reports by ██████████ ██████████ Department of Education, 2016, Retrieved from: <http://██████████.org/k12/k12.aspx>

According to School District A’s website, they began exploring issues of race and how these issues intersected with achievement disparities in 2005 (School District A, 2016). This exploration resulted in School District A reaching out for “technical assistance” by contracting Pacific Educational Group (PEG) shortly thereafter (School District A, 2016). Table 2 shows the percentage of students across all grade levels scoring proficient and above in reading for all grade levels in School District A. The data in this table are disaggregated by race and socio-economic levels. According to this data, White students have performed higher than students from all other demographics from 2006 to 2013. Due to changes in state testing, data are not available for 2014 and 2015. Though scores in reading for all groups show significant growth from 2006 to 2013, the achievement disparity between White students and all other demographic groups still existed in 2013.

Table 2

Percentage Proficient in Reading Disaggregated by Demographics

Demographics	Academic Performance Levels By School Year						
	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
W	86.6	89.0	91.1	91.4	93.3	93.0	93.5
B	63.7	68.5	78.0	73.8	79.2	77.9	82.3
H	68.9	74.1	77.4	82.4	86.6	85.4	87.1
AI/AN	63.6	69.9	70.1	79.5	85.9	82.9	84.7
A	79.3	81.8	85.1	86.8	90.3	92.3	90.5
Multi-E	76.5	80.9	86.5	87.8	92.7	90.5	91.2
EconDis	68.8	73.7	79.0	78.8	83.6	83.6	85.0

Note. W = White; B = Black; H = Hispanic; AI/AN = American Indian or Alaska Native; A = Asian; Multi-E = Multi-Ethnic; EconDis = Economically Disadvantaged. Adapted from Data and Reports by ██████████ Department of Education, 2016. Retrieved from: <http://██████████.org/k12/k12.aspx>

School District A hired PEG to provide specific training to educators about the correlation of race and student achievement. PEG was founded in 1992 with the purpose of supporting families as they navigated the educational system in the United States (Courageous Conversation, 2017a). As PEG evolved, it was determined that in order to address the needs of families in the public school systems across the nation, there needed to be a myopic focus on the way in which systemic racism “fractures our communities and erodes the support and nourishment we would otherwise receive from them” (Courageous Conversation, 2017a, para. 2). According to PEG, systemic racism “is the most devastating factor contributing to the diminished capacity of all people, and especially People of Color and Indigenous People” (Courageous Conversation, 2017a, para. 2). As a result, PEG began designing professional learning materials and providing consultants to school districts across the United States with the focus of teaching

educators to use a process called The Courageous Conversation about Race Protocol to provide the tools to “understand and discuss race explicitly” (Courageous Conversation, para. 3, 2017a). The ultimate goal of PEG is to “achieve “racial equity in education” (Courageous Conversation, para. 1, 2017b). According to PEG, examining the role of race in school and our society will “uncover personal and institutional biases that prevent all students, and especially Students of Color, from reaching their fullest potential” (Courageous Conversation, para. 3, 2017b).

Statement of the Problem

With ever prevalent achievement disparities between White students and other racial groups in school districts across the United States, the involvement of outside educational organizations, which focus on equity in schools with the intent to eliminate these disparities, gives rise to a new educational approach. Although multiple studies have focused on achievement disparities based on race and socio-economic groups (Haskin & Rouse, 2005; Howard, 2010; Paige & Witty, 2005; Williams, 2003), there is not as much information readily available regarding the success rate of educational organizations hired by school districts to provide professional learning focused solely on race in order to eliminate achievement disparities among all students. PEG has worked with higher education organizations, non-profit organizations, law enforcement and public schools in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Courageous Conversation, para. 1, 2017a). Because school districts invest an incredible amount of money in these types of educational organizations and devote a critical amount of professional development time to teach educators in more depth about the correlation of

race and student achievement, it is imperative for district administrators to know the impact this approach has on educators in eliminating racial disparities in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The over-arching purpose of this study was to explore how educator training, specifically focused on instructing educators about the correlation between race and student achievement, potentially affects the belief systems of educators. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine whether educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement was perceived to be effective in eliminating achievement disparities in public schools. A second purpose was to explore the extent to which this type of training changed the educators' belief systems about the correlation of race and achievement in schools. The last purpose was to explore how this type of educator training affected the educators' beliefs about their professional responsibility to enact change in their curriculum and instructional approaches.

Significance of the Study

This study provides information regarding the impact of educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement in prompting educators to focus on race in their efforts to eliminate achievement disparities among students in School District A. District administrators can use the information gained from this study to drive future decisions regarding the use of interventions focused on eliminating racial disparities in schools. In addition, examining achievement disparity data from a school district that has hired educational organizations similar to PEG could provide relevant research-based information for superintendents and school boards to use as they make decisions on whether or not to invest money in this manner when the focus of elimination

of achievement disparities is a crucial initiative. Moreover, results from this study could provide data points for districts to examine regarding the impact of such organizations on teacher perceptions about success in eliminating achievement disparities using this approach. Moreover, as school districts hire educational organizations to work with teachers to modify their curriculum and instructional strategies with the focus on race in mind, understanding teacher perceptions toward this type of educator training approach and how these perceptions affect the outcome of student achievement can be valuable information. Finally, this study contributes to the research base regarding the use of educational organizations to educate and train public educators with a focus on race and achievement disparities of student populations.

Delimitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) referred to delimitations as “self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (p. 134). The delimitations in this study were:

1. The researcher interviewed volunteers who were certified staff or administrators who attended educational trainings focused on the correlation of race and student achievement in one school district.
2. The researcher conducted the interviews in the spring of 2017.

Assumptions

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated, “Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for the purposes of the research” (p. 135).

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. Teachers fully participated in the educational training focused on race as outlined in PEG's instructional model.
2. The educators understood the interview questions and were honest in their responses.

Research Questions

This phenomenological qualitative study was designed using a grand tour question. Creswell (2013) stated that a grand tour question is a central question formulated in such a way that its scope is far-reaching. The grand tour question for this study is, "How does educator training, surrounding beliefs about race, affect educators' behaviors and impact student achievement?" The following research questions, which are linked to the grand tour question, were explored to determine if educator training specifically focused on the correlation of race and achievement disparities was effective in eliminating achievement disparities and whether or not this type of training affected belief systems and enacted change:

RQ1. What are educators' perceptions of the effectiveness of educator training, specifically focused on the correlation of race and student achievement, in eliminating race-based achievement disparities in public schools?

RQ2. How does educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement change educators' belief system about race and student achievement?

RQ3. How does educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement change educators' beliefs about their professional responsibility to enact change in their curriculum and instructional approaches?

Definition of Terms

Achievement Disparity (Gap). According to Williams (2003), an achievement gap is the difference in educational achievement measured through state and national testing by different racial and socio-economic demographic groups of students. Kendi (2016), a history professor and researcher, stated that the word “gap” has a negative connotation which implies students are lacking or inferior, instead of considering multiple explanations for achievement differences such as inequities that exist in the educational system and environment the student resides in, the validity of the measurement tool, or the incapability of the measurement tool in measuring multiple facets of intelligence (Kendi, 2016). As a result, the researcher in this study used the word “disparity,” except in cases of direct quotes from literature. The use of the word “disparity,” indicates that inquiries need to be made to determine what educational needs are not being met for students.

Equality. The Education Trust (2016) defined equality as providing the exact same treatment, access, or resources to each individual regardless of need. For example, providing all students the exact same amount of reading instruction regardless of whether they perform at, below or ahead of their grade level.

Equity (equitable). The Educational Trust (2016) stated that equity is giving “more for those who need it” (para. 6). For example, equity is providing students who are one grade level or more behind in reading more targeted instruction compared to the reading instruction designated for students who are performing at grade level or higher.

Nonprofit Organization. According to the National Council of NonProfits (2016), nonprofit organizations are groups formed to “provide public benefit” and do not dispense any of its profits it potentially generates to private individuals (para. 1).

Race. Sussman (2014) stated that race is a deep-seated social or cultural construct, based on the color tone of an individual’s skin, created by the human species to classify, categorize, identify, differentiate, control, construct perceptions of, stereotype, and/or hierarchal structuralize individuals in a society.

Research-Based Instructional Strategies. Research-based instructional strategies are various methods or practices that have been identified through research as being successful in improving student achievement (Marzano, 2003). When instructional strategies are research-based, they have been tested in reputable studies and proven successful.

Socio-Economic Status. The American Psychological Association (2017) defined socio-economic status as the social standing of an individual measured by the yearly income of their household. Low socio-economic status often indicates inequities and lack of access to resources.

Students of Color (Persons of Color, People of Color). *Safire* (1988) explained that Persons of Color or Students of Color are terms used to describe “all racial groups that are not White” (para. 14).

Organization of the Study

Chapter one included an introduction to this study and background information about School District A and PEG. A statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and its significance were detailed. Additionally, assumptions, delimitations, research

questions, and definitions of terms were also included. In chapter two a literature review establishes the context of historical exclusion and inequity in American public education by providing an overview of its origination and historical practices. The literature review also examines achievement disparities, the critical race theory, and educational organizations engaged to eliminate achievement disparities. Chapter three outlines the methods of this research for this study; specifically, the research design, participant selection procedures, measurements, data collection methods, researcher roles, and study limitations. Chapter four presents the results of the qualitative analysis. Finally, chapter five presents major findings discovered through this study and offers implications for action and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) stated that the purpose of a literature review is to “provide a clear and balanced picture of leading concepts, theories, and data” (p. 74), which are relevant to a researcher’s study. Chapter two reviews literature related to various topics involved in this study with the purpose of providing a theoretical structure that can be used to “guide the data analysis, interpretation, and synthesis phase” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 107) of this study. This literature review begins with an exploration of American public education and its origins. Then, it provides an overview of research, theories and data that show how these origins resulted in achievement disparities among different racial groups. Next, the literature review outlines research to explain the concept of the Critical Race Theory and how this theory can be used as a foundation to eliminate racial achievement disparities in public schools. Lastly, it explores the history of non-profit organizations and how they began collaborating with public schools to improve education for all students. Through an in-depth review of the aforementioned topics, this literature review establishes the foundation that public schools originated with the attributes of exclusion and disparity and the effects of this are still present today as evident in achievement disparities.

American Public Education Originated with Exclusion and Inequality

The evolution of public schools in America has mirrored the evolution of values and tenets of those who dominated society. The laws that govern American society today originated from those in the majority at the time those laws were established. Likewise, the evolution of public education has been centered on those it served. Public education

in its earliest form excluded groups of students based on race and socio-economic background (Anderson, Cuban, Kaestle, & Ravitch, 2001). As public schools evolved into their current form seen today, a long-term pattern of exclusion and inequity was evident. During the mid-nineteenth century public education in the United States of America began in the form of “common schools” (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 11), which were only accessible to White children. Public schools today have evolved from this model of common schools that recent historians claim were used for “cultural conformism” (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 16), and depicted as a systemically racist because of the cultural intolerance and inequality inherent in the system.

In Gholar’s (1990) study about the evolution of equality in education, she noted that public school was originally designed for the “dominate culture,” (p. 13) while counteracting dynamics existed within the United States to “deny equal education access to members of the subordinate culture” (p. 13). The premise of her study was that practices and principles that govern society are “infused into educational policy making” (p. 13). In other words, societal beliefs and ideals about race and equality are reflected in the policies and practices of the educational system under its governance. Gholar (1990) noted that because the mid-nineteenth century ideology of all races other than Whites, specifically African-Americans, was inferior in intellect and physique, laws that impacted education were derived from these beliefs was unavoidable. Gholar’s research established that the public education of Students of Color in the United States from its inception was either non-existent or unequal and inadequate compared to the education of White students. This foundation of exclusion and inequality impacted not only the perceptions of White children regarding those of other races by teaching them that they

were of the dominant and acceptable race, but it also impacted the perceptions of their counterparts, those who were not White, in a contrasting and demoralizing manner (Gholar, 1990).

With congruence to the ideologies about race present in America just before the Civil War, Students of Color in the North were permitted to attend public school but were “segregated in separate and usually inferior facilities” (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 41). Important to note is that before this time only 7% of African-American students were literate (Spring, 2013, p. 57). Knowing that a better education would not guarantee equal opportunities in northern society, the African-American community determined it necessary to reconsider the purpose of education for their students by focusing on the pursuit of freedom (Anderson et al., 2001). This aligns with both of Gholar’s researched theories that societal beliefs and policies were infused in the public education of children and that public education was not accessible or equal for all children, regardless of race. This also marked the onset of separate but equal public education in America.

In Bordman’s (1993) study about the rhetoric of separate-but-equal in American society, she examined *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1849), *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in order to show that the rhetoric used in these racially charged cases shifted the “popular mood and attitude regarding divisive racial issues” (p. 12). According to Bordman’s research, just before the Civil War, “Massachusetts was the only state in the Union with a broad range of legal guarantees of equality that disregarded race” (p. 27). In fact, many African-Americans and White abolitionists argued against Boston’s policies regarding school segregation saying it was “immoral, impractical and illegal” (p. 28), especially since even before the Civil War,

Boston was not segregated in any other facets of life. Though the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled in favor of maintaining segregated schools in *Roberts v. City of Boston*, Bordman's research showed that rhetoric used in the case established a new frame of reference by the prosecution in this case that all students should be placed "on the same level" for the first time in education (p. 53). Bordman showed that the argument that public schools were "synonymous with public life" (p. 52) where various races exist together and fortitude and harmony would later become a cornerstone of the argument to desegregate public education. Moreover, for the first time it was suggested that "separate schools perpetuated race prejudice by instilling feelings of inferiority in Blacks and superiority in Whites" (p. 53) and that separate was not equal.

Despite these early attempts to equalize education for all children, for the next 105 years, segregated schools persisted, thereby depriving Students of Color to "equal privileges and advantages" (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 42) that were commonplace for their White counterparts. According to Bordman's (1993) research, during the segregation era the court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) "elevated the separate but equal doctrine to constitutional status" (p. 8). According to Spring's (2013) historical account of education and equality, by the 1930s common schools were created for Children of Color; however, "Black southern citizens had to pay directly from their own income to build schools for their children, while, at the same time they paid local and state taxes, which went primarily to support White segregated schools" (p. 63). This enormous disparity between funding for White schools and Black schools further demonstrates the drastic inequities that African-American students faced, not to mention the clear perception that their education was not a priority for dominant society. Not until the

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) case was the doctrine separate but equal in public education deemed illegal and unconstitutional. Burrell's research about the *Brown v. Board of Education* cases revealed that while case one mandated the desegregation of schools, case two used vague wording regarding a deadline for this to occur resulting in more than 30 years of elapsed time with many schools across the nation that still had not complied (Burrell, 1996). Many schools were still separate, unequal, and depriving Students of Color equal opportunities. The *Brown III* case, which was not finalized until the 1990s, ruled that schools were required to address the racial inequities and imbalances in schools (Burrell, 1996). Burrell's findings indicated that despite all three *Brown* rulings "segregation is still common in the public schools of America" (p. 293) which leaves unanswered questions regarding equity and access for Students of Color. Early exclusion from public education prior to the mid-nineteenth century and unequal opportunities for learning for nearly 100 years after that, resulted in a deep-rooted foundation of disparities in educational achievement between White students and Students of Color, which still exists today and are now referred to as achievement disparities.

Achievement Disparities

According to Williams (2003) an achievement gap is the difference in educational achievement measured through state and national testing by different racial and socio-economic demographic groups of students. Kendi (2016), a history professor and researcher, stated that the word "gap" has a negative connotation which implies students are lacking or inferior, instead of considering multiple explanations for achievement differences such as inequities that exist in the educational system and environment the

student resides in, the validity of the measurement tool, or the incapability of the measurement tool in measuring multiple facets of intelligence (Kendi, 2016).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2015a), “achievement gaps occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in the average scores for the two groups is statistically significant” (para. 1). Moreover, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), using state reading and mathematics tests, measures this disparity over time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). While achievement disparity data can be measured by NAEP, and trends over time can be recognized, NCES reported that the data alone “cannot explain why gaps exist or why they change” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b, para. 2). Despite the lack of information regarding the causes of achievement disparities, legislation requiring public schools to address and eliminate these achievement disparities was mandated for public schools beginning in 1965. Williams’ (2003) research on achievement disparities showed that there were “federal efforts to educate all children” (p. 14) as early as 1965 by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). However, even with this act and the “\$200 billion in federal spending” (p. 17) vast achievement disparities persisted for more than three decades. In 2001, the ESEA was replaced with new legislation called No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with the purpose of increasing accountability of schools to educate all children by requiring the evaluation, monitoring and closing of achievement disparities (Williams, 2003). Despite all of this legislation, achievement disparities continue to persist fourteen years later. The consistent documentation of enormous achievement disparities from NAEP and more than five decades of legislation requiring public schools to address these disparities

triggers several questions: Why is achievement disparity legislation ineffective in eliminating achievement disparities? What factors cause achievement disparities? What measures should public schools take to eliminate achievement disparities? Some professional studies have attempted to answer these questions with varying results.

Several studies have shown that achievement disparity legislation, such as NCLB have been ineffective because the legislation focused solely on measuring whether or not achievement disparities closed and holding schools accountable for performance instead of changing or altering practices that contributed to the disparities in the first place. For example, Holmes' (2012) study of achievement disparities in one of the largest counties in the United States found that legislation failed to eliminate achievement disparities despite its intent to do so because it was "rooted in the gap between political practices and best practice in teaching" (p. 129). Moreover, Holmes concluded that the legislation did not use researched best practices in teaching as its foundation or for its solution to eliminate achievement disparities and merely focused on simple inexpensive ways to measure performance of schools in order to hold them accountable. The results from his study indicated that the NCLB legislation was not focused on finding the root causes behind achievement disparities, but instead was primarily rooted in accountability measures that could result in political gain. Likewise, Rojas-LeBouef and Slate (2012) concluded in their analysis of numerous achievement disparity studies that in spite of the accountability measures put in place by NCLB, achievement disparities continue to persist between White students and Students of Color. Moreover, Rojas-LeBouef and Slate concluded that finding solutions to the various factors that contribute to

achievement disparities, such as socio-economic status, race, teacher quality, and more, will help educators and legislatures alike begin to close these disparities.

In Williams' (2003) text, *Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practices*, she stated that with the exception of Asians, White students are performing better on standardized tests than students of all other races. Moreover, she suggests that though achievement disparities appear to be more visible in urban schools, where there are larger numbers of low socio-economic and Students of Color and educational settings are not as optimal, that achievement disparities "transcend social class" (Williams, 2003, p. 27). Because her data show that middle class Black students are scoring lower than their White counterparts, even in suburban school districts, this suggests that achievement disparities are a product of the racial disparities still present in our culture (2003).

In Wildhagen's (2008) study on achievement disparities between Black students and their White counterparts, she suggested that inequality and lack of equal access to resources and educational opportunities are not the sole factors behind those disparities. Like Williams (2003), Wildhagen (2008) presented research showing that an achievement disparity exists between middle and upper class Black students in suburban schools compared to their White counterparts. As a result, the purpose of her study was to examine why these disparities exist even when resources and access are equalized. According to Wildhagen (2008) the Oppositional Culture Theory is when an oppositional identity occurs when the systematic and social power structures of the less dominate groups in a society prevents the less dominate group from realizing their full potential. In other words, achievement disparities will exist between Black students and their White

counterparts regardless of access or social class because of Black students' experience and belief that their White-counter parts have automatic advantages in society that are not afforded to them and that there is inequality still present in the United States. For many Black students these experiences and beliefs yield an oppositional identity which becomes "particularly salient in the educational domain" (p. 32) and is illustrated in achievement disparities that still exist between White and Black students. Living in a society in which racial inequalities still exist, results in Black students not fully believing in their potential, even among higher achieving Black students (Wildhagen, 2008). As a result, Wildhagen suggested that the social construct of race has a direct correlation to achievement disparities in education and focusing on race is essential to eliminating them.

In Hammond's (2015) neuroscience research connecting students' cultural background to the way in which they learn and their brain processes information she claims that achievement disparities have resulted in dependent learners who are unprepared to engage in higher order thinking and "creative problem solving" (p. 12). She argues that underserved students often receive instruction that is repetitive and lacking in rigor (p. 12-13). This repetitive and unchallenging instruction prohibits students the opportunity to engage in a "productive struggle that actually grows our brainpower" (p. 12-13). Hammond (2015) also emphasized that dependent learners are not deficient; on the contrary, "their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent" (p. 13). Hammond referenced the Southern Poverty Law Center's assertions to explain why: Students of Color are disproportionately disciplined in school resulting in loss of instructional time. Over time,

this evolves into a systemic cycle that resulting in Students of Color, particularly African American and Latino boys falling behind academically (as cited in Hammond, 2012). Hammond (2012) insisted that educators not only need to be aware of the role schools play in perpetuating inequities, but that educators can eliminate achievement disparities by engaging in culturally responsive practices that include a strong focus on the relationship between neuroscience, culture, and learning the development of higher order cognitive skills, as well as establishing relationships built on trust in order to relax the brain which results in learning.

According to Singleton and Linton's (2006) text about achieving equity in schools, educators recognize that racial achievement disparities exist, but "often blame social, economic, or political factors external to the school and unrelated to the quality of learning and teaching" (p.3). Another factor that prevents educators from focusing on race when addressing achievement disparities is their limited capacity to grasp the complexities of racial influences on achievement disparities (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 2). This is a direct result of the racial composition of educators in comparison to student populations. According to Singleton and Linton (2006), "the number of Students of Color continues to increase dramatically [whereas] the number of Teachers of Color is dropping" (p. 2). Moreover, they suggested that racial achievement disparities continue to exist because schools are not equipped to meet the instructional needs of Students of Color and the only way to close racial achievement disparities is to acknowledge they exist and to focus solely on race to eliminate them (Singleton & Linton, 2006). To do this, educators must be passionate and persistent in their practice and use of research-based instructional practices that are specifically geared towards engaging Students of

Color (Singleton & Linton, 2006). In addition, educators, particularly White educators, need to engage in “courageous conversations” about race to address the systemic racial disparities Students of Color face in school (Singleton & Linton, 2006). In Julian Weissglass’s (2001) text about racism and the achievement disparity, he explained that People of Color, particularly students, act on negative perceptions of others about their racial group. Internalizing negative perceptions about race prevents Students of Color from performing well (Weissglass, 2001). Therefore, educators need to create communities in schools where it is safe for the “invisible to be made visible, where People of Color and Whites can have courageous conversations about race in order to identify what needs to change within their institutions” (Weissglass, 2001, pp. 49-50), so that all students are successful and racial achievement disparities are eliminated. Likewise, Leonardo and Grubb (2014) argued that teachers need to “practice race awareness” (pp. 147-148) as part of a developmental, reflective process where acknowledging the role of race in education is ingrained in all practices on a continual basis. They further argued that because schools were created during the context of a “racialized society,” i.e. during the era of slavery, where Students of Color were excluded, that it is imperative for educators to understand and openly discuss how the issues of race and education intersect (Leonardo & Grubb, 2014). A major component of these discussions about race should center on acknowledging and understanding the critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory

Disregarding the role of race can have lasting negative academic effects on Students of Color. In Woodson’s (1933) text, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, he

asserted that education of Black students never included positive portrayals of Africans in its curriculum. Moreover, Woodson asserted that from elementary school all the way through university “you would never hear Africa mentioned except in the negative” (p. 19). According to Woodson,

the same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and will never measure up to the standards of other peoples (p. 5).

Since Woodson’s book was published, studies have confirmed his statements about the correlation of race and education and its effect on Students of Color.

In Delgado and Stefancic’s (2000) book about Critical Race Theory (CRT), the authors explained that a person’s race often intersects with the power structures inherent in society, schools, laws, jobs, and even in social atmospheres. CRT originated when advocates and stakeholders began to focus on the relationship between race and power and how race intersects with the day-to-day experiences of People of Color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). This theory was built upon “feminist insights” which suggested that men had more advantages in society than women solely based on gender and the same could be said for the dominate race in our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). In other words, there are certain privileges and advantages that those with White skin are afforded without any thought to the color of their skin that are not afforded to Persons of Color. According to CRT, many disparities still exist in our society solely based on skin color, whether intentional or non-intentional and because these disparities do not affect the

dominant race (White), “large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 3).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) found that CRT is a valuable tool in understanding and finding solutions to the racial inequities present in public schools. More specifically, they revealed in their research that our society is founded on the idea of property rights instead of human rights; therefore, the use of the CRT is only effective when the intersection of property and race are evaluated when attempting to navigate racial injustice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). When vast inequities continue to be present in the educational system for Students of Color, the only way to tackle these inequities is to acknowledge the role that race has in these systems (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Building on Ladson-Billings and Tate’s findings about CRT, Yosso (2005) asserted that social institutions in the United States were blatantly formed by racism throughout the twentieth century and “continue, although more subtly, to impact US intuitions of socialization in the beginning of the twenty-first century” (p. 70). The combination of institutionalized racism with the intentional or unintentional lack of voice given to those who are victimized by this system leads to further oppression (Yosso, 2005). Yosso emphasized that empowering People of Color to hear “their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how arguments against them are framed, and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves” (p. 75) creates a cultural capital that promotes change. This is particularly true for Students of Color. In fact, Yosso found evidence to support that CRT should be used to “identify, analyze and challenge distorted notions of People of Color,” (p. 75) especially in the realm of education. Yosso

asserted that using CRT to shift the perceptions of Communities of Color, which are often viewed as deficits to our society, to focusing instead on the vast contributions Communities of Color have made to our society, that racial justice will improve in our communities and systems as a whole, including the system of education (Yosso, 2005).

The dynamic of acknowledging the correlation of race and education is also evident in Boznak's CRT study of White educators' experiences in tutoring groups of Black students in urban afterschool programs. Boznak (2009) found that while White educators were able to realize that many of their assumptions about Black students were predisposed and unfounded; they still struggled to recognize the cultural wealth of Black students. Moreover, though the teachers in the study were able to find some successful learning strategies for their Black students, they struggled to recognize the role race had in their students' academic performance or the role of race in the educational system as a whole (Boznak, 2009). As a result of these findings, Boznak recommended that educators participate in trainings that view education from a CRT lens. Boznak also recommended the exposure of White educators to the voices of Communities of Color and their experiences in their community and educational system.

In research similar to Boznak's, Michael (2012) used action research rooted in CRT to help White teachers learn about the role of race in education and why it matters in terms of achievement for Students of Color. In Michael's (2012) action research, she conducted comprehensive case studies of seven White teachers to explore the struggles and discoveries that developed as they navigated race and how it impacted student learning. More specifically, Michael (2012) focused on questions teachers ask about race, how they use conversations about race to drive their instructional choices, what this

practice looks like, and what actions they take when they struggle in the process. The teachers in Michael's study realized that race mattered in their classroom and the exploration of why was paramount to understanding how race affected their students, their classrooms, and their schools. Michael (2012) argued that White culture, which is the majority racial group, "is not inherently oppressive, but when White people believe their way of doing things is superior, Whiteness easily becomes oppressive" (p. 423). Michael also found that teaching White teachers about racial theory and White privilege was not sufficient enough in helping them change their instructional practices. White teachers needed constant coaching as they experimented with new practices and processed questions that resulted throughout their journey of positively impacting Students of Color. Michael also found that White teachers are often scared to discuss race because they are afraid to sound racist as they process and learn. Therefore, it is important to allow them space to process with other White teachers in an inquiry, literature-based model. All in all, Michael (2012) discovered that White teachers who are not proficient in understanding how race causes achievement disparities are part of the problem; therefore, must be a part of the solution as well.

DiAngelo's (2011) text about White fragility provides an explanation as to why Whites are not proficient in understanding or discussing the realities of race. DiAngelo (2011) asserted that White people in the United States are unable to tolerate stress directly related to discussions of race, which often result in "outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation" (p. 54). DiAngelo emphasized that the majority of White people only encounter discussions of race when required to take a one-time cultural or

race training session in college or the workplace. According to DiAngelo (2011), these one-time training sessions typically use coded language that makes talking about race more comfortable for White people, instead of directly stating the unequal distribution of privilege and advantages that Whites have in our society over Persons of Color.

Moreover, Whites are further insulated from the realities of White privilege through mainstream representations that often portray Whites predominately over persons from other races in media, movies, advertisements, and other forms of mainstream culture.

Furthermore, mainstream culture typically teaches that racism is the act of an individual who is prejudiced against a Person of Color, when in reality scholars have consistently proven that racism embodies our economic, political, social, and cultural systems resulting in unequal allocation of opportunities, resources and control which White people automatically benefit from (DiAngelo, 2011). When confronted with these realities, White people often respond in anger, avoidance, strong emotional outbursts, or even argumentation or guilt (DiAngelo, 2011). Even Whites who acknowledge racism exists in our economic, political and cultural structures in the United States often experience effects of White fragility, such as anger or denial, when confronted with the fact that they benefit from these systems in place (DiAngelo, 2011). As a result,

the continual retreat from the discomfort of authentic racial engagement in a culture infused with racial disparity limits the ability to form authentic connections across racial lines, and results in a perpetual cycle that works to hold racism in place (p. 66).

Because the United States is a White dominated society, Whites have the advantage of deciding if, when, or even how much they engage in racial discussions

whereas Persons of Color confront and navigate racism on a daily basis and are unable to escape these daily realities (DiAngelo, 2011). In other words, “Whites don’t bear the social burden of race” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 63). DiAngelo (2011) suggested that the only way to confront White fragility and begin to change systemic racism prevalent in the United States is to incorporate training about race for Whites that starts with the individual and then moves to institutional levels of learning. This pacing will allow for acknowledgment that Whiteness in our society yields automatic privilege and power (DiAngelo, 2011). This type of personal reflection is essential for White participants to make connections between their own life and the systems in place in the society in which they live (DiAngelo, 2011).

McCauley’s (2013) study about the experiences of Educators of Color in urban and suburban schools using the CRT framework provided evidence that Educators of Color often feel isolated in a field where the majority of educators are White. The results of McCauley’s research also suggested that the school culture, or organization of the school, does not typically create environments where Educators of Color feel supported. In fact, her data showed that participants in her study were often aware of being a “minority” in their school setting and often experienced the feelings of being isolated (p. 60). In response to her results, McCauley recommended that a strong recruitment of Educators of Color and diversity training for all educators is paramount to decreasing the negative effects of race in the public educational system. Additionally, McCauley suggested that school districts should investigate ways to increase awareness of the correlation of race and education with their staff.

According to Boser's (2011) report, the demographics of educators in public schools have not kept up with the rapidly changing student demographics, which are more diverse each year. Boser (2011) attributed this to the need of higher quality educator recruitment programs and the undesirable experience that some Educators of Color face in schools with little to no resources and schools where they are one of few Educators of Color. Though some measures have been taken to improve educator recruitment programs, such as strengthening financial aid programs for college students interested in the field of education, that much more work needs to be done to recruit and retain Educators of Color (Boser, 2011). However, White (2016) stated that a focus on addressing the underlying reasons that decrease retention rates for Educators of Color is crucial. White (2016) emphasized that working conditions, including district and building leadership, trust, and collegiality with staff all contributed to retention rates for Educators of Color. Fowler's (2016) autoethnographic study, which is rooted in CRT, showcased the benefit for Educators of Color to be exposed to tools and strategies that could assist them in navigating an educational system originally constructed for White educators and students. Additionally, Fowler (2016) emphasized the importance for White educators to develop a racial consciousness and utilize the same tools to examine the impacts of race in education. Fowler (2016) stated that race not only impacted her life one hundred percent of the time, but that "race and ethnicity play a significant role in how students are educated and how I am perceived" (p. 2). When all educators are engaged in professional learning that promotes racial consciousness, positive impacts on instruction and student-teacher relationships result (Fowler, 2016).

Educational Organizations Engaged to Narrow Achievement Disparities

With new attention to achievement disparities in American public schools as a result of the No Child Left Behind mandates, many school districts began turning to educational organizations to help aid them in narrowing achievement disparities. The National Council of Nonprofit Organizations stated that 17.1% of nonprofit organizations in the United States specifically serve in the arena of education (National Council of Nonprofits, 2016). These educational organizations serve a range of roles from acting as educational lobbyists to providing financial support or training opportunities to schools in need. Hall's (2005) historical account of nonprofit organizations reveals that charitable organizations have existed in America since colonial times, but the notion of nonprofit organizations are a more recent entity. According to Hall, "over 90 percent of nonprofit organizations currently in existence were created since 1950" (p. 3). Before the current entity of nonprofit organizations as they are known today, the relationship between education and outside groups was charitable in nature. Hall's research showed that "educational institutions found opportunities" in terms of donations from philanthropic wealthy individuals (p. 10). Universities in particular benefited from these relationships. However, by the 1960s "professionally managed nonprofit organizations that obtained their funding from a mix of earned revenues, government and foundation grants and contracts, and corporate contributions" emerged (p. 20). These nonprofit organizations began to focus more on providing services and even began to work with educators (p. 20).

According to Russakoff's (2015) book about philanthropy in the educational arena, many "education entrepreneurs" in the 1990s began to improve education from

inside and outside of the system by donating millions of dollars to establish charter schools, and to create new professional learning programs for educators and many other undertakings designed to promote change in educational organizations (p. 8). In fact, “for generations, the foundations of deceased early twentieth century industrialists had dominated education philanthropy” (p. 8). However, Russakoff’s (2015) research indicated by the year 2000 education philanthropy shifted from “education entrepreneurs” to “venture philanthropists” who considered themselves “investors” in education instead of mere donors (pp. 8-9). These investors, such as Bill Gates, Michael Dell, and the Walton family to name a few, wanted to use their investments in education to solve specific problems (Russakoff, 2015). In other words, they donated money to educational organizations and schools with specific outcomes in mind.

About the same time Russakoff’s investigation was taking place, Haupū’s (2014) qualitative study examined the perceptions of participants in a school district that hired an educational organization called Pacific Educational Group (PEG) to provide professional learning about the impacts of race and equity in schools. Though this study has yet to be published, the results were released in 2014. This study explored whether or not professional learning, provided by PEG, impacted educators personally and professionally in terms of their belief systems and subsequent actions that resulted from this training. While all participants in this study found that their participation in professional learning provided by PEG and subsequent trainings by district equity leaders trained by PEG resulted in a deepened racial consciousness, they all expressed a common struggle to connect their learning to their own practices due to a lack of time needed to explore and collaborate further (Haupu 2014). Another common finding in this study

was the train-the-trainer model, which required colleagues to train staff before they had time to fully “deepen their own knowledge and skillsets around engaging in race-and-equity-focused professional development” (Haupu, 2014, p. 53). Overall this study found that the professional learning provided by PEG provided participants with the tools needed to deepen their racial consciousness and provide a structure for personal, professional and organizational reflection. Haupu (2014) suggests further studies expand this research to include measurements of district level administrator engagement in this work in addition to comparing those who recently participated in the trainings versus those who have been involved for a longer duration.

Summary

Several significant issues were uncovered in the literature review. Despite legal efforts to eliminate a long history of inequality and exclusion in public education, achievement disparities of White students and Students of Color still exist. Legal efforts to eradicate achievement disparities in public schools have been unsuccessful because these efforts focused on holding schools accountable for disparities instead of making changes in the educational system itself. Current research suggests that focusing on race and how it impacts student achievement is vital to ensuring that all students, regardless of their skin color, succeed in school. By focusing on the systemic racism present in social and educational structures, public educators can begin to break down the barriers faced by Students of Color in public schools. Some school districts have turned to educational organizations to provide professional learning about the correlation of race and student achievement.

Chapter Three

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore how educator training specifically focused on race affects the belief systems and behaviors of educators and impacts student achievement. This was done by researching the effectiveness and perceptions of educator training focused on race. The research questions in this study focused on the following: educators' perceptions of the effectiveness of race-based training in eliminating achievement disparities, the extent to which the race-based training changed educators' beliefs about race and achievement, and their professional responsibility to enact change in their curriculum and instructional approaches. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) stated that a "systematic approach" to obtaining and analyzing data is essential to conducting a valid research study (p. 106). This chapter outlines the systematic approach used by the researcher to explore and understand this complex issue. This chapter includes: the research design, a description of how participants were selected, the interview process, how responses were coded and analyzed, a description of the limitations faced by the researcher, and an overview of the researcher's role.

Research Design

According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore and understand how "individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Using a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to explore the complexities of a phenomenon that are experienced by individuals (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a phenomenological research design was chosen for this study to investigate

the educators' perceptions of training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement and the impact on eliminating achievement disparities.

Selection of Participants

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated that purposive sampling “involves selecting a sample based on the researcher’s experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled” (p. 175). In this study, the participants were chosen based on the following criteria: participation in the introductory training facilitated by PEG about race in School District A. In addition, participants were selected based on their role in School District A with the purpose of analyzing diverse perceptions based on each educator’s specific role: secondary certified staff with less than three years’ experience, secondary certified staff with more than eleven years’ experience, and administrators at the secondary building and district level. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that in phenomenological research design, a researcher establishes equilibrium and diligence not by quantity, but through a vigilant evaluation process that includes multiple points of view. As a result, this study involved interviewing participants until the point of saturation was reached, which according to Rubin and Rubin (2012) is the point in the process when new information or diverse perspectives are no longer offered or until the researcher ran out of volunteers.

Measurement

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) conveyed that gathering “perceptual information relies, to a great extent, on interviews to uncover the participants’ descriptions of their experiences” (p. 106) specifically related to how their experiences influenced their decision-making or influenced them to shift their mindset about a particular topic. In addition, Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasize responsive interviewing which involves

interviewing well-informed participants and building on their responses by asking follow-up questions based on participant responses. This is a more flexible style of questioning that allows for subsequent questions to develop based on participant responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using this type of process in qualitative phenomenological research allows the researcher to “seek more depth, but on a narrower range of issues” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 6). Therefore, interviews were chosen for this study because participants’ perceptions of the correlation of race and education and how race-based training alters those perceptions were critical to this study.

Interviews were conducted with each subject one-on-one. The interview questions were divided into three sections, which aligned with the three research questions (Appendix A). Interview questions for section one measured teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of trainings focused on race in eliminating achievement disparities. Section two measured how teacher perceptions of race-based training affected their belief systems about the correlation of race and achievement disparities in school. Section three measured how educators’ knowledge of race as a result of the trainings changed their beliefs about their professional responsibility to enact change in their approach to curriculum and instruction. During the interview session, probes and follow-up questions were used to elicit “depth and detail” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 6). According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), “probes are standard expressions that encourage interviewees to keep talking on the subject, providing examples and details” (p. 6). Follow-up questions encouraged participants to expound upon their original responses with more specific details and examples (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), it is imperative for researchers to show how they have ensured trustworthiness in their study. To demonstrate trustworthiness in one's study, a qualitative researcher needs to implement credible and dependable methodologies that "seek to control potential for biases" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 125). As a result, an expert panel of four professionals who specialize in education and teacher perceptions on race were selected to review and validate the interview questions. Professional #1 was an equity facilitator for a public school district in the Midwest who also collaborated with local universities and community organizations such as City Hall and Rotary clubs to address systemic racial inequities in public education. Professional #2 was an adjunct instructor of racial and ethnic studies in a private Midwestern university. Professional #3 held a doctoral degree in curriculum and administration, was a retired secondary principal of 25 years, has served in leadership positions on the local, state, and national level, and was recognized as the area Principal of the Year. Professional #4 has worked in the field of education for fifteen years, held a doctorate degree in organizational leadership and worked for and facilitated nation-wide professional learning for a non-profit professional learning organization that specializes in culturally responsive educational practices. Three of the four expert panelists identified themselves as Persons of Color. Each expert panelist was asked to review the interview questions and provide feedback with specific changes necessary for them to validate the interview questions. The researcher then considered revisions to the interview questions.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), credibility is established when the researcher demonstrates meticulous carefulness while conducting research. Furthermore, to establish credibility, it is crucial for researchers to report procedures and processes for data collection and analysis in a transparent manner (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As a result, the data collection procedures used in this study are outlined below.

A request for permission to conduct this study was submitted to School District A and permission was granted on December 22, 2016 (see Appendices B & C). In addition, a request for permission to conduct this study was submitted to Baker University (see Appendix D). Approval was granted January 17, 2017 (see Appendix E). In January of 2016, an email was sent to prospective participants, who had participated in the training facilitated by PEG, requesting they participate in an interview (see Appendix F). This email stated that interviews would be conducted during March 2017 at the participants' work location (see Appendix F). An informed consent statement explaining to participants that their participation was voluntary was included in the email. The printed statement informed participants that their responses would remain confidential, their identities would remain anonymous and that their participation was voluntary and they could choose to end the interview without penalty. The research purpose was included in the printed statement. Each participant signed this document consenting to these parameters and the researcher kept printed copies. The voluntary participation statement was also verbally stated before each interview. All initial contacts with participants during the participant selection process were conducted via email.

Profile information gathered about each participant included: role in School District A, length of time employed by School District A, number of exposures to PEG training, gender, and race. All profile information was kept confidential so that participants could not be identified in this research study. The profile information is relevant to “help explain what may be underlying an individual’s perceptions, as well as the similarities and differences in perceptions among participants” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 105). This profile information was gathered using a personal data form before the interview took place.

The researcher interviewed each participant once at his or her work location. The participant and researcher were the only individuals present during the interview. The researcher used an audio recorder to record each interview. The researcher also took handwritten notes during each interview. The researcher kept written records, indicating specific dates and times that interviews were conducted and audio recordings were transcribed. Then, the researcher sent each participant a transcript of the interview via email to confirm that the transcribed interview made by the researcher was accurate. No participant asked to make changes to the content of their transcribed interviews. All recordings, interview notes, transcriptions and written records were kept and stored by the researcher to ensure that the data process was transparent and confidential as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012) to maintain credibility.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

Data generated using qualitative methods are voluminous in nature and require a well-organized system for thorough analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Therefore, specific steps were taken to analyze the data to ensure that important insights were

effectively documented. A process called coding, “which assigns an alphanumeric system to segments of transcripts” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 135) was used to organize and analyze the data obtained through participant interviews. Survey transcripts for this study were analyzed using the Dedoose platform. The transcriptions of each interview were uploaded to the Dedoose platform. Each transcript was tagged with descriptors that specified demographic information about each participant. The descriptors were: the participants’ roles in the school district, their total years of service in education, and their race. All interview transcripts were then coded for each of the three research questions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasized that the researcher should examine and code data that is specific to the research problem explored in the study. As a result, during the coding process, the researcher highlighted the interview responses and coded them with the corresponding research question:

R1. What are educators’ perceptions of the effectiveness of educator training specifically focused on the correlation of race and student achievement in closing race-based achievement disparities in public schools?

R2. How does educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement change educators’ belief systems about race and student achievement?

R3. How does educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement change their beliefs about their professional responsibility to enact change in their curriculum and instructional approaches?

The descriptors and codes were then used in the Dedoose platform to search for emerging themes. Though Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that computer platforms can provide researchers assistance in coding data, they emphasize it is up to the researcher to

pay “attention to variation, to differences in emphasis, to shades of meaning, that go beyond mere counts (p. 192). Likewise, Saldaña (2016) stated that looking for patterns and trends is a “way to solidify our observations into concrete instances of meaning” (p. 6). Moreover, the approach the researcher takes to interprets data is dependent upon the angle in which they view the data (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, the researcher organized the data into categories in order to investigate a myriad of potential trends by printing various combinations of the coded interview transcripts to search for emerging themes based on the coded research questions and tagged descriptors. For example, the interview responses tagged with the administrator descriptor that corresponded with research question one were printed and compared to the interview responses tagged with the certified staff descriptor that corresponded with research question one to see if similar or differing trends emerged. This same process was used for all demographic descriptors and coded research questions as shown in Figure 1 below.

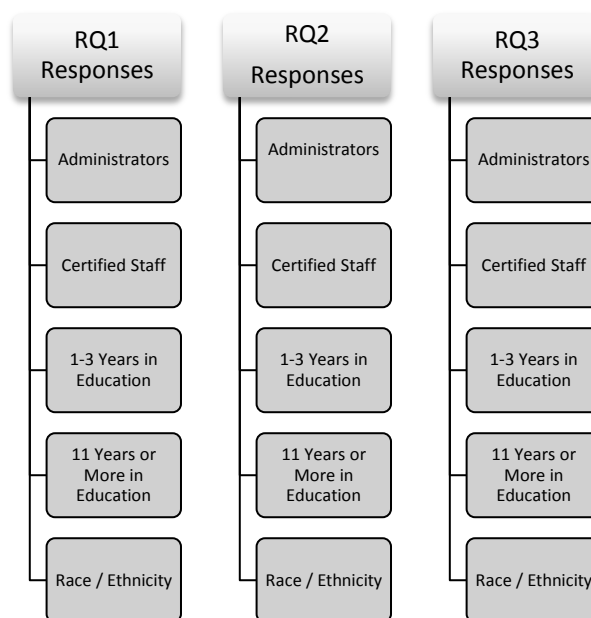


Figure 1 Researcher’s method for finding trends in interview data: Demographic descriptor comparisons for each research question.

Researcher's Role and Biases

When using a responsive interviewing technique in a phenomenological study, the researcher must maintain an active role during the interview process to invoke in-depth responses from participants in a “supportive, non-confrontational, and gentle manner” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 3). To maintain credibility and avoid bias, the researcher must build transparency and accuracy into the research design, the procedures and processes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, the researcher took prodigious care to build in transparency and accuracy throughout the research process.

The researcher participated in the trainings facilitated by PEG and subsequent trainings focused on race and equity, which could result in biases. Additionally, biases existed in the researcher because she chose this topic out of a profound interest in deepening her knowledge of racial achievement disparities and how to eliminate them for Students of Color. Lastly, the researcher works in a school district where there is a focus on eliminating racial achievement disparities, which might produce biases. The researcher was vigilant about not letting any personal experiences bias the interpretation of the data.

Limitations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) state that researcher must give careful thought to conditions that might limit a research study and minimize impact of these limitations.

The following limitations are present in this study:

1. Compared to other school districts, School District A has lower percentages of racial achievement disparities experienced by students; therefore, results may not be generalized to school districts with larger achievement disparities.

2. Many variables outside of the researcher's control could affect the interview responses. These variables may include: availability of educators to participate or individual differences and experiences outside of training that potentially affect educators' perceptions of the PEG training and the educators' beliefs about instruction.

Summary

This study was initiated to explore how educator training specifically focused on race affects the belief systems and behaviors of educators in order to impact student achievement. To determine the effectiveness and perceptions of educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement a qualitative research design was selected. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Data was collected with an interview process. Interview transcripts were coded with each of the three research questions and tagged with demographic descriptors in order to discover trends in responses.

Chapter Four

Results

The over-arching purpose of this study was to explore how educator training, specifically focused on instructing educators about the correlation of race and student achievement, affects the belief systems of educators, enacts change in professional practices, and eliminates achievement disparities. The researcher used a phenomenological research design for this study to investigate educators' perceptions of training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement and the impact of this training on eliminating achievement disparities and enacting change. Three research questions were used to develop interview questions and follow up questions for the researcher to discover in-depth answers to the research problem. The researcher invited participants in School District A to participate in the study through email. The participants who volunteered to participate in this study held the following roles in School District A: secondary certified staff members with fewer than three years' experience, secondary certified staff members with eleven or more years' experience, and building and district level administrators. Each participant engaged in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, which lasted no longer than one hour. Each participant was asked the same five interview questions which aligned with the three research questions in this study. The findings in this research study are a microcosm of School District A and should not be extrapolated as a representation of the entire school district.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

The first research question investigated whether educators perceived training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement effective in eliminating race-based achievement disparities in schools. The responses from the participants regarding the interview questions aligned with this research question were complex in nature and focused more on the impact the training had on them or other educators who attended. The responses also provided specific impacts on individual Students of Color, but did not pinpoint system-wide impacts that eliminated race-based achievement for Students of Color in School District A. One trend discovered in the responses was that the training helped bring awareness to participants' own racial biases, which is essential in eliminating race-based disparities in schools. For example, one participant said, "the heart of it I think goes to recognizing your racial biases and becoming more racially conscious." Each of the participants who answered in this manner were pressed further with the question of how effective the training was in improving student achievement for Students of Color in School District A. All of them had a response similar to the one from this participant: "I think it has from the aspect that people are aware and have recognized where they may be teaching from a biased perspective and are addressing those things." In concurrence with this trend, several participants noted specific changes they made in their roles with the goal of making a positive change for Students of Color, such as: advocating for students whose voices were not heard, being more inclusive of all perspectives in a classroom or building, or including more diverse perspectives in their curriculum or on their classroom walls. All participants mentioned at some point during the interview a renewed effort to focus on relationship building with Students of Color.

Another trend in responses was participants who stated they could not identify a specific change in student achievement for Students of Color as a result of the training or that School District A was still in the “beginning phases” of recognizing the correlation of race and student achievement. The participants who responded in this way attributed this belief to the fact that the training was conducted in isolation with no follow up activities or time built into the school year to delve further into the work. One participant stated that the training was “done in isolation and then we went back to school and there was no follow up discussion or activities due to lack of time.” This participant also expressed that the training brought forth an awareness of the problem, but did not reveal how to address the problem to enact change. Another participant stated that ideas were brainstormed during the training, but there were too many to act on and no time after the training to implement them. Likewise, another participant stated that training was effective in opening people's eyes about the correlations of race and student achievement and initiated the conversations surrounding achievement disparities, but was not effective in making significant or systemic district-wide change for Students of Color.

The findings in this research study related to research question 1, which investigated whether educators perceived educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement effective in eliminating race-based achievement disparities in schools, revealed the following:

- The training aided in creating an awareness of participants' own racial biases, which is an essential first step in working to eliminate race-based disparities in schools.

- The training instilled an awareness that participants should take action to eliminate race-based achievement disparities in schools.
- The training encouraged participants to begin focusing more on developing genuine relationships with Students of Color.

The findings related to research question 1 demonstrated that educator training focused on race did result in a deepened racial awareness for participants, which initiated an internal desire for participants to take action and build stronger relationships with Students of Color. However, perceptions of large scale changes for students were minimal.

Findings Related to Research Question 2

The second research question investigated how educator training focused on the correlation between race and student achievement changed educators' belief systems about race and student achievement. Regardless of role or years of service in School District A, Participants of Color who were interviewed expressed that this training reaffirmed and deepened their already existing belief that there was a correlation between race and student achievement. They each emphasized that their beliefs about the correlation between race and student achievement already existed prior to the training, therefore their beliefs did not change. For example, one Participant of Color said the training "reaffirmed what I already knew - that our system is built on implicit racism and bias." Another Participant of Color stated that the training reaffirmed and strengthen already existing beliefs that the correlation of race and student achievement is prevalent in public education. Though Participants of Color indicated that they possessed these beliefs before the training, they also acknowledged that the training still enacted positive

change in them. They stated that the training validated their beliefs and experiences surrounding race and student achievement, providing encouragement to continue equity work in their positions, and providing tools for them to use when engaging in conversations with White colleagues about race. One Participant of Color reported that the training was powerful and impactful because “as a Person of Color I had never been in diversity training that actually talked about isolating race and that dealt head on with White privilege.” These responses revealed an overall trend that Persons of Color who participated in educator training focused specifically on race and its correlation with student achievement felt validated, affirmed, and empowered in their already deep held beliefs about the correlation of race and student achievement in public schools.

Another noticeable trend was the difference in responses from White secondary certified staff members who had fewer than three years of teaching experience compared to White secondary certified staff members who had more than eleven years of experience. Secondary certified staff members with fewer than three years’ of experience expressed consistently that they were already aware of the correlation between race and student achievement prior to attending the training. These staff members were already engaged in research on their own due to multi-cultural education courses taken during college. For example, one participant said,

I came in with that knowledge and I make it a point of trying to stay informed and doing quite a lot of research on my own. I am a millennial, so a lot of information about race and student achievement is online and I like reading about the experiences of people that are different from me.

Another participant stated that the training reinforced the understanding she already possessed that students are coming to school with their “entire family’s history of injustice that they’ve dealt with throughout their life” with them each day. Conversely, certified staff members with less than three years’ experience did acknowledge that their beliefs about the correlation of race with student achievement were deepened because of the training. However, they also expressed that they left the training needing more. One participant stated that the set-up of the training assumed that all participants who showed up to the training were unaware of the correlation between race and student achievement in public schools. Though certified staff newer to the profession desired a differentiated approach to the training, it was a common theme among these educators that an awareness was developed in them that more seasoned educators were not aware of the correlations of race and student achievement. For example, one participant said, “seeing that some of my colleagues were in different stages of awareness was valuable.” Though a change in belief was not evident in White educators with less than three years’ experience, their beliefs that there is a correlation between race and student achievement were deepened and affirmed because of the training.

In comparison, White secondary certified staff and administrators with eleven or more years of experience said that the training gave them an awareness that they did not have before the training about the correlation of race with student achievement. For example one participant said that the training “really opened my eyes” to the correlation of race and student achievement. Another said that this training “helped me understand that some kids are so uncomfortable when they walk into a classroom because they do not see themselves represented there, race is a piece of this, and this can lead to

achievement gaps.” However, White certified staff members with eleven or more years of educational experience had only participated in one training, whereas administrators with eleven or more years’ experience had participated in many. This resulted in differing comfort levels, reactions, and levels of understanding about the correlations of race and student achievement. For example, certified White staff members with more than eleven years’ experience were able to demonstrate awareness that there is a correlation between race and student achievement because of the training, but expressed a lot of confusion in terms of why this is, how it happened, or what they should do as a result. In fact, they appeared uncomfortable when talking about their beliefs about the correlation of race and student achievement. One participant said, the training “created an awareness, but left a lot of unanswered questions.” This participant expressed later in the interview that “I can’t really say what causes achievement gaps” for Students of Color. Whereas administrators who were interviewed could not only state causes for achievement disparities, but were able to articulate specific examples in School District A that illustrated that these disparities existed. This indicated that the training in isolation was enough for White certified educators with eleven or more years of service to raise an awareness that there a correlation between race and student achievement existed, but not enough to solidify these changed beliefs with a deepened understanding of the root causes.

The findings in this research study related to research question 2, which investigated the change in educators’ belief systems about race and student achievement as a result of participation in training focused on the correlation of race with student achievement, revealed the following:

- The training validated, reaffirmed, and empowered already existing beliefs about race and student achievement for Participants of Color, regardless of their role or years of service.
- The training deepened the knowledge of already existing beliefs about race and student achievement for White certified staff members with less than three years of experience.
- The training raised a surface level awareness about race and student achievement for White certified staff members with eleven or more years of service. This awareness was not enough to solidify these changed beliefs with a deepened understanding of the root causes of racial achievement disparities.
- Because administrators attended multiple ongoing trainings about race and student achievement, their belief systems not only changed, but were significantly deepened.

The findings above reveal that the effectiveness of the training in changing belief systems about race and student achievement was dependent upon the years of experience and the race of the participant.

Findings Related to Research Question 3

The final research question investigated the effect, if any, the educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement had in enacting change in the individual professional practices of participants in School District A. All participants regardless of race, years of service, or role mentioned that the training resulted in a more intense focus on building authentic and genuine relationships with Student of Color as a key element in eliminating racial achievement disparities. For example, a White certified

staff member with eleven or more years of service expressed one change made since the training was a stronger focus on personal engagement with students by trying to be more “inviting” with Students of Color who were not as engaged in class. Likewise, a White certified staff member with less than three years of experience said that the training reinforced an effort to get to know students better in order to incorporate their interests into the curriculum more frequently. Similarly, administrators expressed the importance of genuine relationship building as a vital component from the training. For example, one administrator stated that relationships are vital and you “can’t teach anything if kids don’t feel like you care about them and who they are and where they come from.” Therefore, training in School District A with the focus of the correlation of race and student achievement in public school did enact change in terms of participants engaging in more genuine relationship building with Students of Color.

Though administrators who were interviewed felt changes in professional practices were immediate and profound when looking at district-wide practices, they also openly acknowledged the struggles certified staff, in general, were facing in enacting change in their roles after attending the training. Specific challenges mentioned were lack of time in the professional schedule to devote to additional training and collaboration and lack of “know how” in terms of next steps and culturally responsive teaching strategies. One administrator stated, “There are a lot of technical challenges that is hard for teachers” and teachers often struggle with “what can I do tomorrow?” This administrator went on to say teachers want “more actionable strategies and that is where we need to grow as a district.” This administrator also acknowledged that though it feels good that “90% of our staff has been through the training and equity teams are

established in all school buildings,” School District A still needs to provide a space to address next steps at the school building level in secondary schools. This administrator emphasized that time was a leading factor in this challenge. Corresponding to these sentiments, certified staff members also acknowledged these same concerns in terms of enacting change. One certified staff participant stated that she left the training wanting to go to the next step in her equity work, but did not know what to do, and that getting the time to work with others to develop this knowledge was a challenge. Another certified staff member stated that the training was set up for building awareness, not enacting change or actions. She stated that “many of us were ready for action, but we felt like that was not what the training was set up to do.” This indicates that the training, in isolation, was not equipped in such a way to enact large-scale systemic changes in curriculum and instructional approaches district-wide even with the establishment of equity teams.

Despite these overall findings, the training focused on correlation between race and student achievement did have powerful impacts on specific pockets of the participants who were interviewed. For example, a Participant of Color stated that the training provided them with the tools they previously lacked to have open and straightforward conversations about race with White colleagues. As one participant stated, this training “gave me, a Person of Color, the ability to have some difficult conversations with White colleagues” that prior to the training would not have been possible without people leaving the conversation thinking “that I think they are racist.” Another Participant of Color stated that the training “made me more open to having conversations and dialogues” with White colleagues who are unaware of the impacts that race has on student achievement. This participant also stated that the training made an

impact on all staff members: “We are talking about race and we are willing to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations. That hasn’t always been the case.” White participants indicated that there was immediate change in practices. For example, the training opened up an awareness that students from “different cultures and different backgrounds see our school differently and this helped me address how my Whiteness played a role in my practices.” While other White participants stated that they paid more attention to the representation of all cultures present in their curriculum or on their classroom walls as a result of the training. Though all participants indicated they made some type of change, even if small, based on their participation in the educator training focused on the correlation between race and achievement in schools, they all emphasized a district wide need to do more.

The findings in this research study related to research question 3, which question investigated the effect, if any, the educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement had in enacting change in the individual professional practices of participants, revealed the following:

- The training did enact change in terms of participants engaging in more genuine relationship building with Students of Color regardless of the participants’ race, years of service, or role.
- The attendance to one training in isolation did not enact large-scale systemic changes in curriculum and instructional approaches of the school district, though attendance to multiple trainings made larger impacts.
- The training did enact small-scale changes in the curriculum and instructional approaches of individual educators.

The above discoveries showed that though larger impacts required multiple trainings, educators who attended at least one session made small-scale changes in their practices and made more efforts to build relationships with students.

Summary

The findings in this research study are a microcosm of a larger group and should not be extrapolated as a representation of the larger body. However, the findings do reveal trends which answer the grand tour question: “How does educator training surrounding beliefs about race affect educators’ behaviors and impact student achievement?” The training developed an awareness in participants of their own racial biases and instilled and awakened a need to take action to eliminate race-based achievement disparities in public schools. However, the effectiveness of the training in changing belief systems about race and student achievement was dependent upon the participants’ years of experience and race. While training affirmed, validated and/or deepened the already existing belief systems about race and student achievement in Participants of Color, for White participants with less than three years of experience, and administrative participants, it only raised a surface level awareness in White participants with eleven or more years of experience. The training did prompt change in the professional practices of all participants regardless of race, years of experience, or role in the school district in terms of participants engaging in more genuine relationships with Students of Color. Lastly, the findings revealed the perception that the training in isolation did not enact large-scale systemic changes in curriculum and instructional approaches of the school district, though it did enact small-scale changes in the curriculum and instructional approaches of individual educators.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

Despite considerable progress in American public education, achievement disparities between White students and Black, Hispanic and Native American students still exists (Richwine, 2011; Vannenman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). This study was conducted to determine if educator training specifically focused on the correlation between race and achievement disparities was effective in eliminating achievement disparities and whether this type of training affected belief systems and enacted change. Chapter five includes a study summary, an overview of the problem, a restatement of the purpose and research questions, and findings related to literature in order to outline the rationale behind this study. The aforementioned sections in conjunction with the overview of the methodologies used in this study provide the framework for the conclusion, implications for action, suggestions for further research, and concluding remarks.

Study Summary

Achievement disparities still prevalent in public schools have resulted in a more in-depth focus on equity in public schools. An increasing number of educational organizations have been hired by school districts in the past twenty years to help with specific instructional needs (Burch et al., 2006, p. 129). Given the evolving belief that race is a relevant factor affecting achievement disparities (Dixson & DeCuir, 2004; Singleton & Linton, 2006), outside educational groups have been sought out to instruct and train educators about the impacts of racial disparities on student achievement. This

study showed that the training developed an awareness in participants of their own racial biases and instilled and awakened a need to take action to eliminate race-based achievement disparities in public schools. However, the effectiveness of the training in changing belief systems about race and student achievement was dependent upon the participants' years of experience, race, the amount of research participants did on their own and the number of trainings attended. The findings suggested that attendance to one training in isolation resulted in small-scale changes in the curriculum and instructional approaches of individual educators as opposed to large-scale district-wide changes for those participants who attended multiple trainings.

Overview of the problem. Achievement disparities have continued to exist between White students and other racial groups in school districts across the United States. Consequently, public school districts have sought assistance from educational organizations, which are designed to work with school districts in their efforts to eliminate these disparities by focusing equity and race. Because school districts invest an incredible amount of money and professional development time in these types of educational organizations to teach educators about the correlation between race and student achievement, it is imperative for district administrators to know the impact this approach has on educators in eliminating racial disparities in schools.

Purpose statement and research questions. The purpose of this study was to determine if educator training, specifically focused on the correlation of race and achievement disparities, was effective in eliminating achievement disparities and whether or not this type of training affected personal and professional belief systems and enacted change. The grand tour question for this study was, "How does educator training

surrounding beliefs about race affect the behaviors of educators to impact student achievement?” The following research questions, which are linked to the grand tour question, were explored: what are educators’ perceptions of the effectiveness of educator training focused on the correlation of and student achievement in eliminating race-based achievement disparities, changing belief systems about achievement disparities and race, and enacting change in the curriculum and instructional approaches of educators?

Review of the methodology. The researcher conducted a phenomenological qualitative study to determine the effects of educator training focused on race in eliminating achievement disparities and enacting change of beliefs and actions in educators. The participants of this study were secondary certified staff with less than three years of experience, secondary certified staff with more than eleven years of experience, and administrators at the building and district level of School District A. These participants participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher at their workplace. All interviews were recorded on a recording device and transcribed afterwards for the participants to confirm their validity. Interview transcripts were coded with each of the three research questions and tagged with demographic descriptors in order to discover trends in responses.

Major findings. The major findings in this research study correspond to each research question. They represent a small sample of perceptions from participants who work in School District A and should not be generalized as a representation of the entire school district. The first research question investigated if educators perceived educator training focused on the correlation between race and student achievement was effective in eliminating race-based achievement disparities in schools. It was found that the training

aided in creating an awareness of participants' own racial biases and instilling a notion that participants should take some type of action to eliminating race-based achievement disparities. It also found that the training encouraged participants to focus more on developing sincere relationships with Students of Color.

The findings related to the second research question, regarding the effectiveness of changing the educators' belief system about the correlation between race and student achievement, was dependent upon the participants' years of experience and race. For Participants of Color, the training did not change beliefs about race-based achievement disparities, but it did validate and reaffirm them. Participants with three or less years of experience also held existing beliefs about the correlation between race and student achievement and their perceptions were that the training deepened those beliefs. However, for participants with more than eleven years of experience, the training did change their beliefs about the correlation between race and student achievement. For those participants with more than eleven years of experience that only attended one training, the changes in their belief systems remained at a surface level and the training was not enough to deepen their understanding of the root causes of racial achievement disparities. While participants with more than eleven years of service who participated in multiple trainings not only experienced a change in their belief systems, but this change was significantly deepened with ongoing trainings about race and student achievement.

The final major findings, which were related to research question three, investigating the effect, if any, the educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement had in enacting change in the individual professional practices of participants, revealed that the training did enact change for all participants in terms of

engaging more in relationship building with Students of Color, regardless of the participants' race, years of service. This research also found that attendance to one training in isolation only enacted small-scale changes in the curriculum and instructional approaches of the individual participants. However, participants who participated in multiple trainings enacted larger changes. Lastly, it was found across all participants that more focus on "now what?" is needed in order to spark long-term, district-wide changes in professional practices.

Findings Related to the Literature

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Yosso (2005), Boznak (2009), Michael (2012), DiAngelo (2011), McCauley (2013), Haupu (2014), and Fowler (2016) all emphasized the importance of exposing White educators to professional learning centered on the foundations of the Critical Race Theory as well as the correlation between race and achievement disparities in public schools, which is relevant to the overall finding in this study that this type of training raised an awareness that prompted participants to feel the desire to do more. However, some findings related more in depth to some pieces of literature. Haupu's (2014) qualitative study, which this study parallels, provides comparable findings to those found in this study. Haupu's study examined participant perceptions of PEG trainings, which focused on the impacts of race on student achievement. The study found that training provided the necessary tools to deepen racial consciousness, but in isolation the training resulted in a common struggle amongst participants to connect this learning to their own practices. Corresponding to Haupu's findings, participants in this study all experienced an awakening of knowledge or deepening of knowledge about the correlations of race and student achievement, but

those who only attended one training were only able enact small changes in their practices as a result. Participants who shared these perceptions consistently emphasized that they need and wanted more support and tools.

Additional literature also supported the finding that this training, in isolation, is not enough to make long-term, large-scale changes in professional practices of participants. Michael's 2012 study rooted in the Critical Race Theory found that White teachers needed consistent coaching as they grappled with the impacts of race and student achievement in addition to multiple trainings in order for them to make lasting and impactful changes for Students of Color in their instructional practices. Also, DiAngelo (2011) stated that because White people are shielded from the realisms of White privilege, that some become fragile to the mention of it while others take advantage of deciding when or even how much they want to discuss it resulting in a need for training that allows for long term pacing and reflection of their learning in order for change to ensue.

The findings in this study, specifically related to the training resulting in Participants of Color feeling empowered and equipped with the proper tools to engage in conversations with White colleagues, aligned with the findings in McCauley's 2013 study. McCauley's (2013) study suggested that Educators of Color often feel isolated in their school cultures and school organizations where most of their colleagues are White. Likewise, Yosso (2005) stated that it was imperative to empower People of Color with a voice to challenge misleading assumptions made by White people about Persons of Color. McCauley (2013) and Yosso (2005) both support the notion that Educators of

Color benefit from trainings that provide them with tools to navigate difficult conversations about race with White colleagues.

Fowler's 2016 study presented a personalized account of the researcher in her journey to learn how to engage in courageous conversations about race where she was a Black administrator of a school that had 87% White educators, but 90% Students of Color. Like the Participants of Color in this study, Fowler (2016) found that the tools that were provided in her trainings facilitated by PEG enabled her to stay engaged in conversations about race with White colleagues, even when they tried to make her feel deficient.

The findings from this study also supports literature regarding the importance of educators building genuine and authentic relationships with Students of Color. Hammond (2012) emphasized the importance of educators engaging in culturally responsive practices that include establishing partnerships with students, which is accomplished through relationship building. Hammond (2012) emphasized that the foundation of building genuine relationships with students revolves around establishing students' trust. This trust will relax the brain and make it feel safe to learn.

Conclusions

This study examined how educator training, specifically focused on instructing educators about the correlation of race and student achievement, affects the belief systems of educators in order to eliminate achievement disparities and enact change in professional practices. Transcripts from responsive interviews were linked with the research questions and organized by demographic information about the participants to determine trends. In concurrence with the literature, this study found that educator

training focused on race and achievement disparities developed an awareness in participants of their own racial biases. It also stimulated a need in the participants to take action to eliminate race-based achievement disparities. However, the efficacy of the training in shifting belief systems about race and student achievement was dependent upon the participants' years of experience, race, the amount of research participants did on their own and the number of trainings attended. Though the researcher found that the participants' attendance to one training session in isolation produced small-scale changes in the curriculum and instructional approaches, that multiple trainings resulted in the perception of participants that large-scale district-wide changes were made in School District A.

Implications for action. Ongoing professional learning for all educators focused on race-based achievement disparities is essential for long-term and lasting change for Students of Color in public schools. One training session is not enough. Also, school districts should offer differentiated training based on years of service in the profession and previous exposure to this type of professional learning. School districts should also build on the desire of their educators to strengthen relationships with students by providing tools and strategies for building trust and fostering these relationships. Because White educators do not experience the systemic barriers and disparities that marginalized students are faced with, it is important to expose White educators to as many diverse voices and stories that illustrate the real life experiences that Students of Color face in their educational journeys. Deepening this racial awareness combined with continued professional learning will result in changes in professional practices.

Recommendations for future research. While this study did examine the impact of educator training focused on race in eliminating achievement disparities and enacting change in secondary schools, it did not examine all of the secondary schools in School District A. Future researchers should conduct this same study in all secondary schools in a school district to determine if similar results are found. This study did not compare results from elementary and secondary levels. As a result, future researchers should also expand the study to include this comparison. Another recommendation would be to include student and parent interviews in future studies. This would deepen the research by including first hand experiences that Students of Color face in public education. Future researchers should also consider interviewing Students of Color and Staff of Color after all of the staff in a school district have attended training specifically focused on the correlation of race and student achievement. This could potentially determine if the experiences of students and Staff of Color are more positive and whether or not instances of micro-aggressions have been reduced because of the training.

Concluding remarks. Despite legislative attempts to eliminate exclusion, inequities, and achievement disparities in public schools, Students of Color continue to experience all three. Like other systems in our society, public schools were founded in exclusion and inequality and are still heavily steeped in it today. Until those in positions of power in the United States acknowledge the systemic racism still present in this country and work to eliminate it, our marginalized public school students will continue to walk in our school doors with opportunity gaps and achievement disparities that are beyond their control. All public school educators must deeply invest in efforts to understand the systemic racism that exists in our own school systems, acknowledge the

biases that exist in all of us, consistently work to defy those biases, and dedicate time and effort to determining what our marginalized students need to succeed and how to ensure that academic success is the outcome for all students. This is our responsibility. All students are capable of accessing rigor successfully, learning, and succeeding when provided with culturally responsive instructional practices and equitable opportunities, resources, and support.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Grand Tour Question: How does educator training surrounding beliefs about race affect the behaviors of educators to impact student achievement?

RQ1. What are educators' perceptions of the effectiveness of educator training, specifically focused on the correlation of race and student achievement, in eliminating race-based achievement disparities in public schools?

1. Describe your experience participating in the Beyond Diversity training and subsequent professional learning sessions focused on racial equity.
2. Describe the effectiveness of your professional learning sessions focused on race and equity in improving student achievement for Students of Color in your school district, school building, and your classroom.

RQ2. How does educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement change educators' belief systems about race and student achievement?

1. Describe how your experiences with the Beyond Diversity training and subsequent professional learning sessions focused on race and equity have impacted your beliefs about the correlation of race and achievement in school.
2. As a result of your participation in Beyond Diversity training and subsequent professional learning sessions focused on race and equity, describe how your beliefs have changed personally and professionally regarding the impacts that race has on student achievement.

RQ3. How does educator training focused on the correlation of race and student achievement change educators' beliefs about their professional responsibility to enact change in their curriculum and instructional approaches?

1. What effect, if any, do you think the training had on your professional practices?

Appendix B: Application to Conduct Research for School District A

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN [REDACTED]

Name: Barbara Williams Local Address: [REDACTED]
 Email Address: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
 Date: 12/16/1974 Department Phone: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] 5
 IRB (Protection of Human Subjects of Research) approval number
 Date granted

State briefly the purposes of the study and summarize the procedures to be employed including unique educational values to the [REDACTED].

The purpose of this study is to determine if educator training, specifically focused on instructing educators about the correlation of race and student achievement, are effective in eliminating achievement disparities and whether or not this type of training affected personal and professional belief systems and enacted change.

I will protect the anonymity of [REDACTED] in this study by referring to it as "School District A." I will interview five to seven district employees in person. The Participants will be notified in writing and verbally of the following: Participation in this interview is voluntary. There is no penalty for not responding to any questions and you may choose to end the interview prior to completion without penalty or condition. All personal information and interview responses will remain confidential and anonymous and will not be reported to your employer, your supervisors, or any other teachers. All personal information about you will be kept confidential and the results of interviews will remain anonymous. All interview responses will be stored where no other persons have access except the researcher. Only the researcher and the research analyst, employed by Baker University, will view the individual interview responses and names of participants will be removed during this part of the process.

I will record each interview session and then transcribe them after the interview. I will then give each participant an opportunity to review the transcription before I use it as data in my research. Participants may opt out at any time during the process and their interview content will not be used.

**APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
IN [REDACTED]**

[REDACTED] was selected for this study because of their commitment to equity work and eliminating achievement disparities in their schools. Equity is an integral part of the [REDACTED] Board Goals and School Improvement plans throughout the school district. Also, they have used an outside educational organization to educate their teachers about the correlation of race and student achievement.

School(s) and/or grades(s) to be involved: Participants will be selected from staff who work in the district office, elementary and/or secondary schools.

Number of pupils or subjects involved: 5 to 7 Grade levels(s): All participants are adults (administrators, teachers, or staff of [REDACTED])

Starting date January 5, 2017

Amount of pupil/subject time required: Approximately one hour per participant

Ending date: May 1, 2017

Date project report available May 26, 2017

By signing below the researcher agrees:

- ◇ to respect the highly confidential nature of the information collected.
- ◇ to reimburse the district for any additional district staff time required to complete the project.
- ◇ that data collected in connection with an approved study may not be used for purposes other than those stated on this application form.
- ◇ to obtain specific approval prior to publication of such research (other than as specified in this proposal).

Signature of Applicant _____

Signature of Department Chairperson _____

Date Approved _____

Date Denied _____

Dr. [REDACTED]

Director Assessment, Research, and School Improvement

**APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
IN [REDACTED]**

RESEARCH APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit to the Director of Assessment, Research, and School Improvement:

- ◇ an endorsement letter from the chairperson of the department (from the researcher's institution)
- ◇ the completed *Application to Conduct Research in [REDACTED]* form
- ◇ a copy of the approval letter from the university's IRB (Institutional Review Board)
- ◇ a draft of permission letter for parents (if students are to be involved) with researcher's name and contact information included on letter
- ◇ a brief statement of the purpose of the study
- ◇ the process to be used for selection of subjects
- ◇ the procedures to be employed
- ◇ the analysis of data employed
- ◇ specimens of all tests, questionnaires, or forms to be used in collecting data
- ◇ the attendance site(s) and grade level(s) proposed to research
- ◇ the amount of pupil/subject time required
- ◇ the approximate number of pupils/subjects to participate
- ◇ the projected beginning and ending dates

Written notice will be given as to acceptance or denial of each research project. Upon notification of approval, it will be the researcher's responsibility to obtain permission from building principals to conduct research at each participating attendance site.

NO CONTACT SHALL BE MADE WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, OR PRINCIPALS UNTIL THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE DISTRICT'S INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AND THE DIRECTOR OF ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH, AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.

The permission form signed by each participating principal must be returned to the director of assessment, research, and school improvement prior to the beginning of the project.

At the conclusion of the project, the researcher will submit to the director of assessment, research, and school improvement:

- ◇ access to a copy of all data and information collected upon request.
- ◇ a summary or extract of the resulting article, research reports, thesis, or dissertation, indicating findings, conclusions, and implications.
- ◇ an abstract, one or two brief paragraphs, of the total project that could be circulated to interested staff.

Return completed application to: Dr. [REDACTED]
Assessment, Research, and School Improvement

[REDACTED]

Appendix C: Approval Letter for School District A

December 22, 2016

Ms. Barbara Williams
[REDACTED]

Re: RS4885

Dear Barbara,

Your application to conduct research in the [REDACTED] has been reviewed and approved contingent upon IRB approval from Baker University.

Final approval rests with the building principal. A copy of this letter of approval and a thorough explanation must be provided to each building principal at the time you request to work with the district's students and/or staff. Each principal must sign the enclosed Principal's Consent Form and this signed document must be on file in this office prior to initiating your study.

While we recognize the importance of your research, it may not interfere with the district's educational program. At all times during your project, researchers and subjects must be in view of school district staff. All costs associated with this research are the responsibility of the researcher. Any changes in your project must have approval from this office prior to implementing the changes.

Please note that your research project has been assigned [REDACTED] research number RS4885. Your permission to conduct research in the District expires one year from the date of this notice. If your project is to extend beyond this date, you will need to reapply for authorized permission prior to the expiration date and obtain the requisite principal signature(s). Failure to reapply will result in the inability of the principal investigator to conduct further research in the [REDACTED]. Until such time as a new application to conduct research is approved by the district's Institutional Review Board, no research may be conducted. Thank you for your cooperation with our district policies and procedures.

We request that you submit an abstract of your findings as soon as they are available for possible dissemination among interested educators. We appreciate your interest in [REDACTED] and hope that meaningful data is gained from your efforts.

Sincerely,



[REDACTED]
Director, Assessments, Research, and School Improvement

Enc: Principal's Consent Form

CC: IRB

[REDACTED], Assistant Superintendent, Teaching & Learning

Appendix D: Application to Conduct Research for Baker University



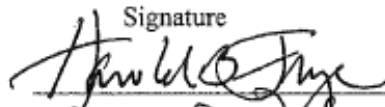
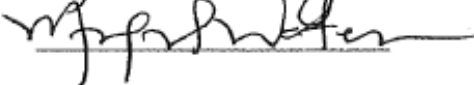
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT

Date: _____
IR.B PROTOCOL NUMBER _____
(IR.B USE ONLY)

IR.B REQUEST
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board

I. Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)

Department(s) School of Education Graduate Department

Name	Signature
1. Dr. Harold Frye, Major Advisor	
2. Dr. Margaret Waterman, Research Analyst	
3. Dr. James Robins, University Committee Member	
4. Dr. Sarah Oatsvall, External Committee Member	

Principal Investigator: Barbara Williams
Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Mailing address: [REDACTED]



Faculty sponsor: Dr. Harold Frye
Phone: 913-522-7773
Email: harold.frye@bakercu.edu

Expected Category of Review: ___ Exempt X Expedited ___ Full

II: Protocol: The Role of Non-Profit Educational Organizations in Instructing Public School Educators about the Intersection of Race and Achievement Gaps Among Student Populations

Summary

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The over-arching purpose of this qualitative study of this study is to explore how educator training, specifically focused on instructing educators about the intersection of race and student achievement, transforms the belief systems and behaviors of educators in order to eliminate achievement disparities. More specifically, the purpose of this study

this study was to determine whether educator training focused on the intersection of race and student achievement was effective in eliminating achievement disparities in public schools. A second purpose was to explore the extent that this type of training had in changing the belief systems of the educator about the intersection of race and achievement in schools. The last purpose was to explore how this type of educator training changed the educator's beliefs about their professional responsibility to enact change in their curriculum and instructional approaches.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There will be no conditions or manipulations in this study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

The instrument that will be used in this study is an interview using the interview questions attached. The participants will not encounter psychological, social, physical, or legal risk by participating in the interview.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

Subjects will not be subjected to stress of any kind during this study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way during this study.

Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

Subjects will be asked to answer questions about their personal beliefs regarding the intersection of race and achievement gaps in schools and how their belief systems about race and their teaching methods and curriculum were affected by exposure to the [REDACTED] instructional model.

Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

Subjects will not be presented with materials that might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

The interview for each subject will take a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of one hour depending on how thorough each subject is in answering the interview questions.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

The population for this study consists of educators who are employed by [REDACTED], who have participated in the [REDACTED] facilitated by the [REDACTED]. The educators who participate in this study teach in one of the 21 schools, which are located in the [REDACTED]. These educators work with all student populations in [REDACTED], including general education, special education, English Language Learners, technical education, and all race/ethnicity groups. The sample includes those educators in the aforementioned population who agreed to be interviewed.

See the letter attached, which will be sent via email to educators who work in the [REDACTED] asking for their participation in the study.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

No inducements will be offered to induce subjects for their participation in this study. All correspondence with subjects will include the statement, "participation is voluntary." Participants will be informed that there is no penalty for not responding to any questions and that they may choose to end the interview prior to completion without penalty or condition.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

The researcher will meet with the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. [REDACTED] to gain permission to interview subjects for this study.

All correspondence with subjects will include the statement, "participation is voluntary." All participants will sign a statement indicating their consent to participate in the study.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No data will be made part of any permanent record that can be identified with the participant.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

Participation status in this study will not be a part of any permanent record and will not be reported to their employer, their supervisors, or any other teachers.

What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with it after the study is completed?

All interview responses will be stored where no other persons have access except the researcher. The data compiled through the interviews in this study will be used until December 2016. Five years after this date, all interview data will be destroyed.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There will be no risks involved for subjects participating in this study. There are no offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the participants or society.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

Interviews will be conducted in order to complete this study. The responses to interview questions will be coded and used as data to analyze findings. No archival data will be used.

Appendix E: Approval Letter for Baker University



Baker University Institutional Review Board

January 17, 2017

Dear Barbara Williams and Dr. Fry:

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at EMorris@BakerU.edu or 785.594.7881.

Sincerely,

Erin Morris PhD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Joe Watson PhD
Nate Poell MA
Susan Rogers PhD
Scott Crenshaw

Appendix F: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Good Afternoon,

My name is Barb Williams and I am the [REDACTED] a doctoral student at Baker University in Overland Park, Kansas. I am writing to find volunteers to participate in an interview process related to my research study. I have permission [REDACTED] for you to participate.

If you agree to participate, you will engage in a one-to-one interview that will last between 30 minutes and 60 minutes. During the interview you will be asked questions about your personal beliefs regarding the correlation of race and achievement disparities in schools and how your belief systems about race and your approach to curriculum were affected by exposure to educator training focused on race.

Participation in this interview is voluntary. There is no penalty for not responding to any questions and you may choose to end the interview prior to completion without penalty or condition. **All personal information and interview responses will remain confidential and anonymous and will not be reported to your employer, your supervisors, or any other teachers.** All personal information about you will be kept confidential and the results of interviews will remain anonymous. All interview responses will be stored where no other persons have access except the researcher. Only the researcher and the research analyst, employed by Baker University, will view the individual interview responses and names of participants will be removed during this part of the process. After the initial interview, you will have the opportunity to read the transcripts of our interview to confirm that it accurately reflects your responses.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact me via email on or before Friday, March 10, 2017 if you are willing to participate.

Research Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine if educator training, specifically focused on instructing educators about the correlation of race and student achievement, are effective in eliminating achievement disparities and whether or not this type of training affected personal and professional belief systems and enacted change.

Researcher: Barb Williams



Baker University Advisor: Dr. Harold Frye
School of Education
College Blvd
Overland Park, Ks 66210
(913) 344-1220
hfrye@bakeru.edu