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## Getting to the Stories: Research on Participant Perceptions of Race- and Equity-Focused Professional Development

Kehaulani Haupu

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Getting to the Stories: Research on Participant Perceptions  
of Race- and Equity-Focused Professional Development

by

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study explored participant perceptions of district-sponsored race-and equity-focused professional development, specifically as it applies to racial consciousness. This study utilizes Singleton's (2006) Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) Protocol to examine participant perceptions of district race-and equity-focused professional development and its impact personally, professionally, and as members of an organization engaged in ongoing conversations about race and equity. Results showed that participants perceived a change in their racial consciousness as a result of participation in the district's ongoing race-and equity-focused professional development. The study explored the results and its implications for education, specifically regarding participant perception of the impact to their racial consciousness.

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*“Mahalo e ke Akua no keia la”*  
(Thanks be to God for this day)

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

Unlike early immigrants to the United States who were primarily from European nations, today's incoming populations to the United States reflect world populations, many of color. According to Hodgkinson (1996), it is projected that by 2020, half of the student population in our nation's schools will be students of color (as cited in Wegenke & Shen, 2005). Student achievement scores on state tests revealed racialized disparities with students of color underperforming their White and Asian counterparts. The increasing number of students of color enrolled and enrolling in America's K-12 public schools calls for an investigation into identifying and mitigating potential barriers to student learning and access to a quality education (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Nieto, 2005; Singleton, 2006; Talbert-Johnson, 2004). Teacher and administrative preparation programs are considering these changing demographics as they prepare future educators to work in K-12 public education, where addressing race, gender, and ethnicity are at the forefront of many of the issues educators face (Wegenke & Shen, 2005).

Changing racial demographics of U.S. populations of students pose a significant challenge to current K-12 public school teachers in the U.S. As a result, cultural competency is being incorporated into many state standards for teacher certification. While studies conducted in the field do not utilize one common definition for cultural competency, research at the K-12 level is examining the impact of racial consciousness among teachers in the field, including teacher personal bias, attitudes, and beliefs about race, ethnicity, colorblindness, and White privilege (Armstrong & Wildman, 2008; Cooper, 2003; Mueller & Pope, 2003; Murrell, 2006; Schniedewind, 2005).

From a personal perspective, my K-12 experience was impacted by educators with differing levels of racial consciousness. My father's job as a rigger for Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard necessitated that my family spend time both in Hawaii and on the mainland for extended periods of time. Because of this, I attended school both in Hawaii and on the mainland. When I attended school in Hawaii, teachers and students were racially and culturally similar to me. The majority of instruction was normed to Pacific Islanders. When I arrived on the mainland and began attending public school in California, instruction was normed to the majority White population, which resulted in instances where I was racially marginalized. One example that stands out from my mainland experience is that my name was changed for the convenience of the teachers, a practice that was replicated with teachers throughout my K-12 mainland experience. Practices such as these resulted in my feeling marginalized and segregated from my White counterparts for being different. As a student of color, this "othering" negatively impacted my level of engagement and academic performance. My grades routinely fell during my years on the mainland, recovering when I would return to Hawaii for schooling. I have come to believe these types of practices were unintentional and without malice and resulted from educators not having access to educational preparation opportunities which would have invited reflective practices around race, racial consciousness, and culturally responsive practices. Unfortunately, in my pre-service training to become a teacher, having received no coursework in culturally or racially responsive practice, I can also remember moments from my own time in the classroom as a middle school teacher, where I sometimes unintentionally and unconsciously marginalized minority students by having low expectations based solely on racial stereotypes and my own unexamined level of racial

consciousness. It is remembering lived experiences, such as the one described above, that has served as part of the impetus for this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Public education is currently not serving all of its students well, as evidenced by the persistence of racialized disparities in student achievement. Dubois (1903) identified the presence of racialized disparities in society over a hundred years ago and stated that the problem of the twenty first century was “the problem of the color line” (p. 54). Critical Race Theory scholars, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), draw a connection between the presence of racialized disparities in society and persistent inequities in student academic achievement among different racial groups, suggesting that these inequalities are the predictable result of a racialized society (p. 47). Ladson-Billings (2006) further reframed these academic inequities as an “Education Debt” that incorporates social, historical, economic, political, and moral factors that contribute to a state of accumulated educational injustice and debt (p.5). In a study aimed at closing the racialized achievement disparity, Noguera and Wing (2006) advocated for open and truthful dialogue about race as an essential part of the process of school reform (p. 164). The purpose of this research is to examine educator and administrator experiences and perceptions of participation in intentional ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development in a public school district in Oregon, and the extent to which it may contribute to addressing and closing racialized student academic achievement.

The purpose of this research study was to explore participant perceptions of participation in district sponsored race- and equity-focused professional development at their school or worksite, utilizing Singleton’s (2006) *Courageous Conversations about Race*

Protocol (p. 16). I explored participant perceptions and experiences of race- and equity-focused professional development in three areas: personally, professionally, and organizationally and sought to examine:

- The degree to which participants perceived changes in their level of racial consciousness as a result of their participation in the district's ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development; and,
- The degree to which participants perceived that participation in the district's ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development resulted in changes to their personal beliefs, feelings, thinking, and actions?

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions drove this study:

1. How do teachers and administrators describe their role in terms of race and equity work in their building?
2. What do teachers and administrators feel has been most impactful about participating in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development personally, professionally, and as a member of an organization? Why?
3. What impact do teachers and administrators report about their beliefs related to race and equity after participating in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development?
4. What actions have resulted from teachers' and administrators' engagement in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development?

## **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were offered:

**Adaptive Leadership**–Heifetz’s (2002) adaptive leadership theoretical model, conceptualizes the components of adaptive leadership: technical problems and adaptive challenges, leadership and authority, limit of tolerance and the threshold for learning, productive disequilibrium and work avoidance (as cited in Singleton, 2006, p. 171).

**CARE** – This term is an acronym for Collaborative Action Research for Equity. The CARE process provides teachers a framework for analyzing a focus group of students to learn how best to teach and support them in their learning. CARE teachers select a focus group of students and conduct action research to better understand aspects of teaching that positively impact student learning and pinpoint how and when they are most and least effective (Singleton, 2006, p. 233).

**CARE Team** – This term refers to a team of teachers, at a particular site, who engage in collaborative action research for equity in an attempt to discover challenges that exist in their relationships with students of color so that they can improve their instructional delivery accordingly (Singleton, 2006, p. 233).

**Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR)** - This term represents the protocol used by the district in this study for engaging in race-based conversations developed by Singleton (2006). The protocol, as defined by Singleton, is “utilizing the agreements, conditions and compass to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in order to examine schooling and improve student achievement” (p. 16).

**Critical Race Theory** – As defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), is the study of “the relationship among race, racism, and power” (p. 2). Five tenets of Critical Race Theory used to study educational structures include Counterstory, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism, Interest Convergence, and the Permanence of Racism.

**Educational Equity** – This term, as defined by Singleton (2006), is “raising the achievement of all students, while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students, and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories” (p. 46).

**Equity Team** – This term, as defined by Singleton (2006), refers to “emerging leaders who wish to develop their will, skill, knowledge and capacity necessary to support their colleagues in understanding race and deinstitutionalizing racism” (p. 231).

**Institutional Racism** – As defined by Singleton (2006), “racism becomes institutionalized when organizations – such as a school or a school district – remain unconscious of issues related to race or more actively perpetuate and enforce a dominant racial perspective or belief” (p. 41).

**Race** - As defined by Singleton (2006), race is defined as “the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bones structures of people in the United States and elsewhere” (p. 39).

**Racial Consciousness** – As defined by Pollock (2008), racial consciousness is “your awareness of how on a daily basis, complex individuals live lives as racial group members, treat one another in racial terms, and experience racially unequal systems (p. 341).

**Racism** – As defined by Singleton, racism refers to “beliefs and an enactment of beliefs that one set of characteristics is superior to another set (e.g. white skin, blonde hair, and blue

eyes are more beautiful than brown skin, brown eyes, and brown hair)” (Singleton, 2006, p. 39). Pine and Hilliard (199) further define racism as “combination of individual prejudice and individual discrimination, on the one hand, and institutional policies and practices, on the other, that result in the unjustified negative treatment and subordination of members of a racial or ethnic group” (p. 595). Weisglass (2001) defined racism as, “...the systematic mistreatment of certain groups of people (often referred to as people of color) on the basis of skin color or other physical characteristics. This mistreatment is carried out by societal institutions, or by people who have been conditioned by the society to act, consciously or unconsciously, in harmful ways toward people of color” (p. 49).

**Whiteness** – As defined by Perry (2003), Whiteness is a “social construct.” Kinchleloe and Steinberg (1998) add that it involves “issues of power and power differences between White and non-White people” and as such holds “material/economic implications” (p.4). McIntyre (2002) adds that it is a “system and ideology of dominance and superiority that marginalizes and oppresses people of color ensuring privilege for White people” (p.3). McLaren and Munoz (2000) describe Whiteness as having “an unprecedented degree of authority and power to its membership and its ethnocentric cultural, social and ideological expression, while at the same time repositioning the ‘other’ as deviant” ( p. 32).

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This was a qualitative study and was conducted with a small and specific participant pool of six central office employees, as well as ten educators, a principal, and assistant principal from a K-8 school in a school district in Oregon. This allowed for rich, in-depth information but was not broad in scope.

### **Limitations**



One limitation of this study was the specific protocol utilized for engaging in conversations for district race- and equity-focused professional development opportunities. The district utilized Singleton's (2006) Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) Protocol (p. 16). The CCAR protocol is just one of many protocols that could have been utilized; however, this study was limited to perceptions regarding participant engagement with CCAR-structured professional development.

A second limitation of this study was that it focused on a small sample of educators and administrators who were actively participating in race- and equity-focused work in their buildings in a particular school in the district and a small number of staff at the central office. The district in which this study was conducted has been engaged in race- and equity-focused professional development at various levels throughout the organization. These levels have included participant groups such as the district school board, teacher union leadership, classified personnel, tradesmen, central office personnel, custodian and facilities personnel, and executive leadership. The study did not consider participant perceptions or experiences of engaging in race- and equity-focused professional development in any other school or department in the district, nor did it seek to expand the study to include other districts engaged in similar types of equity-focused professional development.

Potential bias of both the participants and I existed as a limitation of this study, as all of the research participants were actively engaged in the race- and equity-focused work in their school building or department. Each participant had agreed to be members of either Equity or CARE teams at their site. As a result, each participant was engaged in developing, facilitating, or coaching equity professional development or was engaged in race- and

equity-focused action research in their individual classrooms. In addition, I was also engaged in developing, facilitating, and coaching race- and equity-focused professional development throughout the district in a professional capacity.

Another limitation was the fact that the school selected for the study was a school in the district in which I work. In addition, my professional responsibilities in the district were tied to the district's equity initiative and I had worked directly with both staff and administration from the school in which the study was conducted as well as with the participants at central office. This may have impacted the responses that I received from participant interviews, as participants may have perceived my position in the district as evaluative in nature.

### **Delimitations**

One delimitation was the selection of the participant sample. Criteria had been identified for participant selection to ensure active participation in race-and equity-focused professional development in the building. Participant selection was from staff and/or educators who were Equity or CARE team members. School-based Equity team members developed and facilitated monthly race- and equity-focused professional development monthly at their sites. CARE team members were comprised of teachers who were engaged in collaborative action research for equity in their classrooms. Both were evidence of active participation in the district's equity initiative. A set of criteria was used to develop a list of potential Equity Team and CARE Team participants at the selected school. The principal then extended invitations to educators to participate on the Equity and/or CARE Teams. A similar process was conducted at Central Office. Equity Team selection at Central office was by invitation of Department Heads.

Time allocated for completion of this study was both a limitation and delimitation. While the district's equity initiative is in its fifth year of implementation, this study reflected only a moment in time versus a more comprehensive, multi-year exploration of participant perceptions and experiences of participating in race- and equity-focused professional development. Another limitation and delimitation of this study was that it was also a requirement for partial fulfillment of the requirements for doctoral degree. The time allocated for degree completion did not allow for exploring the possible impact of participation in race- and equity-focused professional development over multiple years.

### **Summary**

Addressing Ladson-Billing's "education debt" for students of color requires movement away from technical fixes in favor of moving toward solutions which require deep reflection into teachers' beliefs, values, and perspectives regarding students (Howard, 2003; Milner, 2003; Young, 2007). This study adds to the literature about participant beliefs, values, perspectives, and resulting actions specifically in regard to perceptions of racial consciousness and its implications for students.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

The numbers are sobering and persistent. Ladson-Billings (2006) reported findings from the Education Commission of the States (2005) that report an achievement gap in reading between White students and their Black and Latino counterparts of more than 26 points at fourth grade and a 23-point gap by the eighth grade level (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 4). Asian and White students continue to outscore Black, Latino and American Indian students (Gregory, Skiba and Noguera, 2010, p. 61). Current trends in population growth show the number of students of color entering public schools continues to grow. The review of the literature reveals which demographics are changing and which remain relatively stable. In addition, teacher preparation programs are explored in regard to their success at preparing teachers for the student populations they will be teaching. An examination of the needs of teachers currently teaching students of color is presented, as well the intersection of teachers' and students' perceptions of race and racial identity.

#### Changing and Unchanging Demographics

Current demographics regarding student racial populations in the United States continues to change, with students of color increasing at a rapid pace. Hodgkinson (2000) notes that the inner suburban ring will "see a major increase in student diversity – more minorities, more immigrants, more students learning English as a second language (ESL) and more students from poverty" (p. 6). Denbo, Grant, and Jackson (1994) add that some urban school districts have student populations representing over 100 different home languages (p. 41).

Current trends indicate that, by 2043, a majority of students will be nonwhite, 50% of the under eighteen population will be comprised of students of color (Crouch, 2007; Maxwell, 2014; Tamayo-Lott, 1993).

By comparison, national statistics indicate that 84% of the nation's current teaching population is White (Falluzzo & Arends, 1989; Feistritzer, 2011; Grant & Secada, 1990). Researchers predict the teaching population will remain predominately White, female, middle class, and monolingual with little or no knowledge of racial populations different from themselves, as only 13% of teachers are expected to retire in the next five years (Feistritzer, 2011; Irvine, 1992; O'Malley, 1981; Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992 as cited in Denbo, Grant, & Jackson, 1994). Gay and Kirkland(2003) add that the national profile of teacher candidates entering teacher preparation programs are also predominately White, middle-class, female, and monolingual, who have little if any substantive interactions with people of color (p. 182). Statistics indicate the current teaching population is expected to remain relatively stable in terms of the percent of White educators. However, it is anticipated that the number of teachers of color will continue to decline (Weiss, 1986; Zimmer, 1990 as cited in Denbo, Grant, & Jackson, 1994). Denbo, Grant, and Jackson (1994) offer that schools are challenged with providing equitable educational opportunities in the absence of faculty that is philosophically and pedagogically equipped to educate all students (p. 42).

### **Teacher Education Programs**

Hilliard (1995) stated there are “no pedagogical barriers to teaching and learning when willing people are prepared and made available to children” (p. 20). Challenges arise as colleges and university teacher and administrative preparation programs grapple with

increasing racial consciousness of their cohorts of pre-service teachers and administrative leadership cohorts. Challenges include the hiring and retention of racially diverse university faculty, efforts to increase racial consciousness in teacher preparation programs, and dealing with student resistance to anti-racist curriculum that examines current racialized societal and institutional structures, specifically in regard to increasing racial consciousness in educator preparation programs.

Victorino, Nylund-Gibson, and Conley (2013) found persistent underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minority faculty in higher education (p. 769). Additionally, existing barriers for university faculty of color appear in employment trends appearing to support segregation within the profession, with professors of color concentrated in lower levels as assistant professors and non-tenured positions (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Lindsay & Justiz, 2001). Overcoming barriers around faculty hiring to increase the diversity of university faculty can have both primary and secondary benefits. Racially diverse faculty can provide role models for educators who are White and educators of color, who then see themselves as viable candidates for higher education positions. In turn, the university can benefit from multiple perspectives resulting from a racially diverse faculty.

As universities are charged with preparing teachers to educate a racially diverse student population, research highlights the current trend of educator preparation programs to include race-based curriculum aimed at increasing cultural competence of the teacher/administrative candidates and course content examines existing institutional barriers to student achievement found in institutional practices, policies, and procedures (Cooper, 2003; Gordon, 2005; Melnick, 1998; Singleton, 2006; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, &

Nolly, 2004; Wegenke & Shen, 2005). One potential barrier at the university level is the racial makeup of university faculty charged with teaching race-based content.

Pence and Fields (1999) identified three negative classroom responses to teaching White educators about colorblindness and White privilege. These include resistance, paralysis, and rage. As a result, discussions on colorblindness and White privilege may remain at the intellectual level since many race-based privileges are invisible to and taken for granted by most Whites and some people of color. Even upon recognition of privilege, White educator resistance to acknowledging unearned privilege and advantage can manifest itself as either overt hostility or silence (Pence & Fields, 1999, p. 150). This same resistance was also found at the university level during research conducted at Monmouth University in New Jersey (Cohen, 1995). Both studies conclude that teaching about colorblindness and White privilege through action research can be a highly effective method when working with White educators and advocate for ongoing professional development as a means of deepening racial consciousness once teacher/administrative candidates enter the educational workforce.

### **Teachers Currently in K-12 Public Schools**

Changing racial demographics of U.S. populations of students poses a significant challenge to current K-12 public school teachers in the United States. As a result, cultural competency is incorporated into many state standards for teacher certification. While studies conducted in the field do not utilize one common definition for cultural competency, research at the K-12 level examines the impact of racial consciousness among teachers in the field, including teacher personal bias, attitudes, and beliefs about race, ethnicity, colorblindness, and White privilege (Armstrong & Wildman, 2008; Cooper, 2003;

Mueller & Pope, 2003; Murrell, 2006; Schniedewind, 2005). Much of the research noted in this review used Critical Race Theory to provide a context for examining colorblindness and the presence and role of Whiteness in educational practices among teachers.

A common research practice for examining development of cultural competence within teacher ranks is the use of case studies of teacher practice. Several studies focused on teacher effectiveness (Cooper, 2003; Howard, 2001; Schniedewind, 2005). Teacher development of racial consciousness was assessed for both effective and ineffective teachers along with implications for their work. Self-examination of the teacher's own racial identity provided a baseline for the various studies. For many White educators, this was their first self-examination of their lived experience from a racial viewpoint.

In two different qualitative studies, teachers who provided evidence of working effectively with students of color were found to have an understanding of their own racial identity and understood its corresponding impact on their students (Cooper, 2003; Schniedewind, 2005). Cooper's study focused on three White teachers who were identified by their Black counterparts as being highly effective with Black students. These White teachers voiced their understanding of how their experiences, identities, beliefs, and values shaped their attitudes toward their students and impacted their teaching. Additionally, all spoke to a level of awareness around racism towards students and populations of color both within the school environment and within society at large, which resulted in increased empathy toward communities of color as a whole. By comparison, Schniedewind (2005) followed a group of five educators participating in a long-term professional development program on diversity education and recorded similar teacher self-reflection and increased racial consciousness of both self and their students (p. 282).



This heightened awareness was supported by research identifying components of successful multicultural approaches to diversity and race (Onyekwuluje, 2000). Successful teachers of students of color were intentional in their attempts to counteract racism within their classroom and their schools, also working with their White students to see and talk about the subject of race to address stereotypes about people of color, and to explain and challenge students' level of colorblindness and White privilege. The results of the research around effective teachers supported ongoing professional development in the areas of cultural competence and culturally relevant instructional practices as an effective model for increasing teachers' racial consciousness.

### **The Intersection of Teachers' and Students' Racial Identity**

Research regarding student perceptions about race varied in structure. Perry (2003) noted the need for White teachers to create a safe space for students of color who reside in predominately White classrooms especially when race is being discussed (p. 229). Several studies explored student perceptions of the race of their instructors and its impact on teaching and learning about race and racism (Epstein, 2000; Housee, 2008; Howard, 2001). Two additional studies focused on teacher consciousness as it impacts student attitudes and beliefs about race (Johnson, 2002; Macombre & Rusche, 2011). A common finding in all of these studies was the strong correlation between school climate and student success, specifically in the area of interactive teacher-student relationships

The study by Housee (2008) examined the impact of a teacher's race in terms of the perception of believability by both White students and students of color, specifically when addressing issues of race and/or racism. Housee noted a definite affinity felt by students toward teachers of their same racial group, which positively impacted learning around

race-based content (p. 418). Students of color reported feeling disconnected from White teachers who did not appear to have an experientially lived experience that they could bring into the classroom and questioned White teachers' capacity to understand the lived experiences of Black communities, drawing a connection between a lived experience and the ability to be empathetic to their Black students. For some Black students, the study found having a Black teacher present lectures about race was empowering, validated their own experiences and increased their sense of safety within the classroom. For many White students, these race-focused courses were their initial foray into discussions of colorblindness and White privilege. Conversely, many White students indicated they were less likely to share their racial experiences with a teacher of color, initially choosing to remain silent during classroom discussions.

A study by Macomber & Rusche (2011) focused on culturally competent teachers and their use of specialized curriculum, adapted from bell hooks, to expose White students to the concept of White privilege through the use of racial autobiographies. This was done in an effort to place institutional racism in a current context as compared to something that happened in the past. Students were asked to write about an early racial memory. As students examined their own lived experiences from a racial context, teachers worked to present larger patterns of inequality, power, and privilege operating around their students' lived experiences. Teachers then used their students' writings to help lay the foundation for classroom discussions around students' racial identity. Having students examine how race was lived on a daily basis provided a context for class discussions around colorblindness and White privilege, from which they could expand to institutional practices and barriers within society. Key researchers in the field of culturally relevant practice

support this use of racial autobiographies at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Villegas, 1991; Zeichner et al., 1998).

The practice of using lived experiences and personal narratives was also utilized by Johnson in a study examining racial consciousness of a group of six teachers instructing in racially diverse classrooms in New York (Johnson, 2002). Johnson found that, while autobiographical narratives were found to be helpful in developing racial awareness, narratives could also be used to obscure conceptions of race and racial privilege when left unexamined. Johnson also found that the writing of racialized autobiographies is insufficient unless coupled with an opportunity to consider experiences and situations from multiple racial points of view.

A review of literature by Hanley and Noblit (2009) found that positive racial identity promotes academic achievement and resilience for African, Latina/o, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) students (p. 6). They found that culturally responsive pedagogy also promotes academic achievement and resilience for ALANA youth.

Cruz and Duplass (2009) describe the use of literature to provide student opportunities to engage in conversations about the social and ethical considerations of race and racism (pp. 425-440). The literature selected was chosen for its readability, as it allowed students a way to quickly engage in the subject matter around what the authors describe as the “meaningless notion of race and its harmful, if not tragic, consequences (p. 434). In addition, it allowed for class analysis of the power of racial categories and the changing and fluid concepts of race and identity (p. 432).

## **Professional Development Programs**

A review of literature regarding professional development opportunities highlighted several benefits of providing professional development opportunities and offered some key components of effective professional development. Research also investigated the question of how educators actually benefit from professional development.

Darling-Hammond (2003) notes “...well prepared capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning and they need to be treasured and supported” (p. 7). Rowe (2003) states, “What matters most is quality teachers and teaching, supported by strategic professional development” (p 1). There is a body of research that finds in order to change practice, teacher learning opportunities must have some common elements. Professional development opportunities must be ongoing, supported by both modeling and coaching, collaborative, authentic to the classroom and school, allow educators to collaborate and be reflective, and foster support for teachers to be adaptive and take risks testing new teaching ideas (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, Cutress, & Kilcher, 2005; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2002; Garet et al. 2001; Killion, 2007; Parson et al. 2006). Stewart (2014) suggests the use of professional learning communities to deepen learning from professional development opportunities (p. 28). Cooper, He, and Levin (2011) stress, “through professional development activities that engage educators in critical examination of their beliefs and identities with the goal of increasing self-understanding, they are encouraged not only to be aware of their assumptions and potential biases but also to make explicit their visions, goals, and practical theories that guide their actions and interactions with all students” (p. 5).

Given access to effectively structured professional development opportunities, Freire (1998) notes, "...as women and men, simultaneously reflecting on themselves and the world, increase the scope of their perceptions, they begin to direct their observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena" (p. 63). Milner (2006) suggests, as teachers begin to grapple with real and the authentic issues that could bring them into new levels of consciousness, it can simultaneously result in change in their classrooms. In other words, "what teachers think shows up in what they actually do" (p. 85).

Borko (2004) cautions, "We don't know much about what and how teachers learn from professional development" and warns that not all professional development is effective, especially if it is unfocused or disconnected from the educators' lived experiences in the classroom, is imposed from top-down, ignores adult learning or follows a pre-packaged, one-size fits-all formula (Borko, 2004; Bredeson, 2002; Fullan 2008). Even if all of the components of effective professional development are present, Fullan (2008) offers professional development aimed at changing teacher behavior and/or practice, is often a slow process that can take from three to six years or longer for successful change to occur (p. 581).

Research is working to link effective professional development to high quality teaching resulting in improved student achievement (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond, Wei & Andree, 2010; Desimone, 2009; Smith, 2010; Stewart, 2014; Yoon, Duncan Lee, Scarloss, & Shapely, 2007). In terms of professional development's role in school reform, Fullan notes, "Concern for finding spiritual meaning in reform is on the rise." He goes on to say, "The moral purpose of reform is to make a difference in the lives of students" (p. 584). He adds, as school systems gain access to "good ideas in the marketplace," schools and school

systems increase their capacity to find out about, select, integrate, and use new ideas effectively (p. 584).

### **Conclusions from the Literature**

Research is clear in regard to the challenges surrounding attempts to increase racial consciousness at all levels of education. At the university level, research conducted on diversifying university faculty and increasing racial consciousness among university faculty offer both primary and secondary benefits to programs for pre-service teachers and administrators preparing to teach and supervise students in K-12 public education. Once teachers and administrators leave these preparation programs, researchers advocate for ongoing professional development in these areas so as to increase educators' racial consciousness and ability to examine colorblindness and Whiteness, including addressing potential resistance, both on an individual basis and systemically throughout the educational system in which they interact. Likewise, researchers examining administrators, educators, and students in the K-12 system, point to the need for teachers currently teaching in K-12 public education in the U.S. to become more culturally responsive, strengthen interactive teacher-student relationships, and utilize culturally relevant instructional practices and curriculum to address racialized disparities in student achievement.

Research regarding effective professional development opportunities for teachers currently in K-12 educational settings provide some guidance regarding structures that must be present for professional development to be effective but warn that there is needed clarity around how the process of learning actually occurs for educators participating in

professional development opportunities and offer that sustained change reform is a long process at best.

While there are multiple studies focused on the need for educators and administrators in schools to enter into the conversations around increasing racial consciousness, there is currently little research focused on the impact of raising racial consciousness on the operational side of education versus the educational side, even though the operational side of K-12 public education is tasked with decisions which directly impact schools. Wegenke and Shen (2005) do make brief mention of raising racial consciousness in their study on school principals, specifically regarding the need to challenge the “mental models” of those within the school system who make principal hiring decisions (p. 28). For example, if decision-makers on the operational side of K-12 public education are not racially conscious, what becomes the basis for decision-making? The lack of research on the impact of colorblindness and White privilege at the operational level and the benefits of increasing racial consciousness on the operational side of K-12 education are offered as areas for further study.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methods

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore educator and administrator perceptions of participation in ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development at their school utilizing Singleton's Courageous Conversations About Race Protocol (Singleton, 2006, p. 16). I explored educator and administrator perceptions and experiences of race- and equity-focused professional development in three areas: personally, professionally, and organizationally. Data was collected through the use of personal interviews and a small group interview with a criterion sample of participants, which included teachers, the school principal, and assistant principal. I conducted the pilot study interviews, personal interviews, and facilitated the small group interview. In addition, I kept a research journal was also kept throughout the research process.

#### Setting and Participants

I selected a K-8 school within the district in which I work. The district is located in a metropolitan area in the state of Oregon and has been participating in ongoing district race- and equity-focused professional development since 2009, utilizing Singleton's protocol for Courageous Conversations About Race (2006). The district's race- and equity-focused professional development structure provided ongoing, sustained, and intensive professional development. It was supported at both the district and building level, through the use of district equity TOSAs (Teachers on Special Assignment) who serve as equity coaches, as well as building level Equity and CARE Teams, which are led by the building administrator. In preparation for district-wide engagement in race- and equity-focused



professional development, administrators from the district's schools were asked to self-evaluate their readiness to engage in race-based conversations with their staff. School administrators from various sites identified their readiness levels for engaging in race- and equity-focused professional development with their staff at their sites. The first level of engagement targeted equity-focused professional development at increasing the capacity of the building/site administrator to lead race-based conversations with staff. The second level of engagement targeted building the capacity of a small team of staff known as equity teams to engage in monthly race-based professional development with staff at the building/site. The team was led by the building's administrator. The third level of engagement targeted accelerated monthly race- and equity-focused professional development, utilizing a small team of staff known as an equity team at the building/site, led by the building administrator. The building's site administrator led the team. The school selected for this study was selected because it was one of the sites engaged in accelerated race- and equity-focused professional development.

At the time of the study, the racial composition of educators in the district is 83% White and 17% educators of color. The racial composition for staff at the school site was comparable with the district profile. The racial makeup of the teachers at the school consisted of twenty White teachers and four teachers of color. One hundred percent of the teachers were designated as Highly Qualified by the Oregon Department of Education and the average length of teaching experience was 16.3 years (Retrieved from [www.pps.k12.or.us/school-c/profiles/enrollment/enroll\\_out.php?rpt=689](http://www.pps.k12.or.us/school-c/profiles/enrollment/enroll_out.php?rpt=689)). The principal was Black and the assistant principal was White. The school had a student population of

approximately 500 students. White students comprised 55.5% of the current student population and students of color comprised 44.5% of the student population.

At the school site, data was collected from five personal interviews, one small group interview, and through maintenance of a researcher journal. Personal interviews were conducted with a criterion-based sample of three educators that were currently participating on either the Equity Team or CARE Team at this site. Both administrators at the site were also individually interviewed. Upon completion of the personal interviews, one small group interview was conducted with a total of nine participants, which included both administrators, the three participants from the personal interviews and four additional Equity and/or CARE team members.

### **Role of the Researcher and Bracketing**

The topic under investigation was in partial requirement towards completing the Doctorate of Education degree through George Fox University and, as such, I have a vested interest in conducting this research. It is also an area of personal and professional interest. Research involved personal interviews with a small sample of educators and administrators participating in ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development within the district where I am employed.

In my professional role during the research study, my work was focused on coordinating, facilitating, and supporting race- and equity-focused professional development in the district. This research could directly inform the district's work and, as such, would also inform my work in the district. On a more personal note, as a woman of color who has navigated American public education in both culturally responsive and culturally unconscious environments, I am passionate about providing students access to

racially conscious educators who work to construct culturally responsive learning environments in which all students can thrive. I have experienced, first hand, the positive impact that racially conscious and culturally responsive educators can have on all students, but especially on students of color who may be unintentionally marginalized as a result of systemic inequities in the current educational system. Conversely, I have also experienced learning environments that are mono-cultural and have been negatively impacted by racially unconscious educators who failed to see my own cultural capital as an asset.

Acknowledging my professional role in the district as well as my personal perspectives, I was aware that the study had the potential for both participant and researcher bias. Since it is work I was engaged in professionally in the district, participants might have felt they should have responded in only positive ways toward the race- and equity-focused professional development, because of conscious or unconscious awareness that I represent the district and/or central office.

Personally, because I have lived experiences with racial marginalization and racial norming, and have potential for researcher bias, I wanted a way to examine where bias might arise throughout the process. Ortlipp (2008) advocates for the use of a reflective journal during the qualitative research process as a way to create transparency in the research process (p. 695). As such, I strove to address my own potential researcher bias through the use of a reflective diary. I used a research journal throughout the process to analyze the research process and to pinpoint emerging patterns from the interview data collected. Keeping a research journal provided a vehicle to reflect on how my own prior lived experiences, unexamined biases, personal beliefs, and values influenced my

interpretation of collected data as well as serving as a tool for considering the types of things I may have taken for granted (Ortlipp, 2008; Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004).

### **Research Ethics**

Since participants in the research study revealed information about personal racial bias, ethical consideration was given to building, supporting, and sustaining a safe environment where any discussions were kept in confidence. As such, it was necessary to develop structures that protected confidentiality from being violated.

Prior to participation in this study, the research proposal was submitted to the George Fox University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. No data was gathered until approval was granted by the IRB. A request to conduct research was also submitted to the district's Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Department and permission was secured before any data was collected for this research. The George Fox University IRB proposal and district proposal requests provided the scope and significance of the study, the research design, logistics of the study, sources of data, quality of the data, survey distribution methodology, proposed start and end date, informed consent form(s), and copies of any survey instruments utilized in the research.

Once university and district consent was granted, I secured informed consent forms from participants. The informed consent (see Appendix A) identified the nature and purpose of the study and ensured confidentiality of the participants. It also informed participants that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could decline or opt out at any point in the study. A letter to the school principal (see Appendix B) was sent to the principal to secure permission to conduct the research study at the site before any research participants were contacted. The letter outlined the proposed

components for the research study and requested permission to conduct research at the site. Signed consent forms have been kept in a secure locked cabinet at the researcher's home and will be kept and remain separate from any data collected from the research. Participants were provided written documentation outlining the parameters for use of collected information.

Security measures included the use of assigning alphabetical letters to identify participants in lieu of their actual names to assure confidentiality of participants. Inquiries regarding specific findings were responded to on a case-by-case basis to assess for possible ethical violations. Any data collected and analyzed will be stored on an external hard drive and kept in a locked container alongside any digital recordings of interviews and/or paper copies of data used in the research. Disposal of data will follow university parameters regarding the length of time that research documentation must be kept. Once the required time has expired, all confidential documentation will be shredded or destroyed through appropriate measures.

### **Research Design and Data Collection**

The design of this study was qualitative, exploratory, and contextual in nature. Its qualitative structure offered the opportunity to uncover participant perceptions of race- and equity-focused professional development. Creswell (2008) explains the exploratory nature of qualitative research tends to address "...an exploration in which little is known about the problem" (p. 51). A goal of this research was to explore participant perceptions of their experiences with racialized conversations. The contextual nature of this study was in terms of its immediate significance to education, both structurally and with regard to present and future educators (Mouton, 1996).

Creswell (2008) describes qualitative research as “...the type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner” (p. 46). A qualitative research structure was selected because attempts at measuring shifts in racial consciousness are difficult to quantify statistically since changes in perceptions and perspectives precede actions and cannot easily be statistically represented by numerical data. The value of utilizing a qualitative research structure can be seen in the ability to capture individual participant reflections around changes in attitudes and beliefs, and their corresponding impact on classroom practice, since qualitative research deals with the “collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive, narrative, and visual (i.e., nonnumeric) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest” (ibid). Also, while a change in quantitative data may be an outcome of raising racial consciousness in an organization, if one considers that belief precedes action, then actual changes in data may become visible at a much slower rate than the actual change in an individual’s racial consciousness. Fullan (2008) offers professional development aimed at changing teacher behavior and/or practice, is often a slow process that can take from three to six years or longer for successful change to occur (p. 581).

The structure for this research was purposeful sampling. Creswell (2008) notes that purposeful sampling is useful for selecting participants and sites that are “information rich” (p. 215). Invitations to participate in the research study were extended to a criterion sample group of educators and administrators from the selected site. Patton (2001) describes criterion sampling as involving “predetermined criterion of importance” (p. 238).

The decision to select a criterion sample of participants was made to ensure active participation in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development. By utilizing criteria for selection of participation in the study, it increased the likelihood of interviewing participants actively engaged in race- and equity-focused professional development at the site versus passive observers. The sample included educators that were at that time either members of the site Equity team or were participating in Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE) in their respective classrooms.

The school's Equity Team was comprised of six members and included four teachers, the school's principal and the assistant principal. There were eight teachers teaching in grades kindergarten through eighth grade participating in Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE) at the school. Some members of the school's Equity Team also participated on the school's CARE team. The sample size in the study was originally ten educators and two administrators. After securing requisite permissions, the primary tool utilized for conducting this research study was personal interviews. Equity and Care Team participants were invited to participate in personal interviews, as well as the small group interview, which was comprised of members of both the school's Equity and CARE teams combined. The audio of the interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. Personal interviews were conducted with both the principal and assistant principal. Both administrators also participated in the small group interview. In addition to personal interviews, I also sent out a writing prompt via email to both the teacher participants and administrator participants asking them to reflect upon their experiences pertaining to their experiences with the district's race- and equity-focused professional development. The original purpose was to analyze responses to the written prompt for

theme generation. However, time constraints and job responsibilities proved to be an issue for the participants. This resulted in only one of the participants expressing a willingness to complete the written prompt. Because of this, I made the decision to forgo the written prompt and to instead include the writing prompt questions as part of the interview process.

The district is in its fifth year of race- and equity-focused professional development, which has been framed through the use of Singleton's (2006) Courageous Conversations About Race Protocol (see Appendix C). One of the tools from Singleton's (2006) Courageous Conversations About Race Protocol is the Courageous Conversations Compass (p.19). The Compass represents four different ways that people may enter into conversations: thinking, feeling, believing, and acting. Because participants were familiar with this tool, open-ended questions generated from each of the four quadrants, were used for both small group and personal interviews:

- (All Four Quadrants) - "What has been your experience in participating in the district's race-and equity-focused professional development?"
- Thinking – How would you describe your role in terms of race and equity work in your building?
- Feeling – What do you feel has been most impactful about participating in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development personally, professionally, and as a member of an organization? Why?
- Believing – In your role in the district, what beliefs about race and equity have been impacted by the race- and equity-focused professional development you participate in?



- Acting – What actions have resulted from your engagement in the district’s race- and equity-focused professional development?

Personal interviews were conducted to explore educator and administrator perceptions in three key areas: personally, professionally, and organizationally.

Prior to the actual research study, a pilot test of the research questions was conducted with a small sample group from the district’s Central Office departments, who were not originally part of the actual participant sample (which would be comprised of participants from the selected school site). Participants in the pilot study were selected because they were actively engaged in departmental Equity teams at Central Office. Pilot study participants were individually interviewed. Each pilot study participant was asked to respond to the research questions, in order to determine what, if any, refinements were needed to the research questions and procedures, as well as to assess the degree of researcher bias that might be present in the research questions.

For the actual research study, I anticipated that the research activities would cover a two-month period, from February 2014 through April 2014. The actual research window was slightly longer, with interviews finishing in May 2014.

### **Analysis of the Data**

Participant interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed in preparation for theme generation and data analysis. Transcripts were compiled, sorted, and grouped by clusters based on similarity of issues. Data collected was analyzed for trends and patterns in the perceptions and views of participant responses to see what, if any, indicators were present that would suggest movement in racial consciousness of the participants. Open coding was utilized initially to generate key patterns and/or ideas from

the responses as a preliminary method of categorization Creswell, 2008, p. 250-252). Once this process was complete, lean coding was utilized to identify similarities in the data to determine where categories can be combined into themes. Thematic coding was then utilized to identify where and how themes were interrelated. Finally, themes were then aligned with the four quadrants of the CCAR Compass: believing, acting, feeling, and thinking. Participant responses were initially categorized by the designation “R” for respondent and number (i.e., R1, R2, R3, etc.) throughout the coding process. Once the coding was finalized and themes were aligned with the CCAR Compass, results were placed into a table by quadrant. Results obtained using these processes are presented in Chapter 4.

### **Potential Contributions of the Research**

Findings from this research can help inform educators, K-12 districts, and higher education organizations of the importance and impact of incorporating race- and equity-focused professional development as part of ongoing professional development opportunities for educators and leadership currently in public schools across the United States. The study may also help inform hiring practices and teacher and administration evaluation practices by incorporating a racial consciousness element in hiring and/or evaluating educators. In addition, teacher preparation programs can utilize findings from this study to inform entrance requirements for pre-service teachers, as well as curriculum and program structures for pre-service training. Additionally, data collected from this research can help inform educational regulatory bodies regarding possible inclusion of racial consciousness as a core competency for teacher licensure. Another potential contribution of this research is in engaging the operations side of education in dialogue

around the impact and importance of recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of a racially diverse workforce that supports educators in classrooms. Finally, this research can provide a perspective of how or if racialized conversations regarding operational decisions, such as funding, boundaries, and resource allocation, may impact student outcomes in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore participant perceptions of district sponsored, ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development at their school and/or site in three areas: personally, professionally, and organizationally. The research was structured around Singleton's (2006) Courageous Conversations about Race Protocol (p. 16).

#### Research Questions

The following research questions drove this study:

1. How do teachers and administrators describe their role in terms of race and equity work in their building?
2. What do teachers and administrators feel has been most impactful about participating in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development personally, professionally, and as a member of an organization? Why?
3. What impact do teachers and administrators report about their beliefs related to race and equity after participating in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development?
4. What actions have resulted from teachers' and administrators' engagement in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development?

The same questions were used for the pilot study, small group interview, and individual interviews. Data was collected through the pilot study interviews, one-on-one interviews and a small group interviews conducted at the school site. Six participants were individually interviewed during the pilot study. One White female, one Black female, one

Asian female, one Native American female, one Latino male, and one Black male participated in personal interviews. Participants for this research study worked in different capacities in the district and served on departmental equity teams. Pilot study interviews ranged in length from two to four hours each. Pilot study participants were identified in this research by letter assignments: Participant A, B, C, E, J and O.

At the school site, two female administrators and eight educators (six White females, one Black female, one Biracial male and one Biracial female, one Asian female) participated in a small group interview lasting approximately one and a half hours. Additional individual interviews were conducted with two administrators and three of the teachers (One Black female, one White male, and three White females). Individual interviews lasted from one to three hours each. Site research participants are identified in this research by letter assignments, similar to the Pilot Study participants: Participant D, F, G, H, I, L, M, and N.

Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed. A research journal was kept throughout the research process to record both content and process-related reflections. At the onset of the data analysis process, transcripts were initially read to get a sense of the flow of responses. In preparation for a second reading, transcripts were reformatted into a two-column structure so that participant quotes could be identified and then copied and pasted into the empty second column for analysis. One benefit of reformatting the transcripts was that it allowed for participant quotes to be identified and pulled out for theme generation, while also having the quotes in close proximity to the full response of the participant, which proved very useful for understanding the context from which the quotes were situated. Ideas, questions, and possible themes were jotted alongside the quotes column as they came to mind. This process was repeated several times, as

rereading different quotes often generated different themes with each subsequent rereading. A list of themes, generated by the multiple readings, was then constructed to begin clustering like statements. Topics were then divided into major and minor topics, noting where participant statements overlapped on two or more different topics.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study of the research questions was conducted prior to collecting any data at the selected site. Six participants for this study were selected from among two central office departments: the Equity Department and Procurement and Contracting Department. Participants were selected because each was actively engaged in the district's ongoing race and equity professional development as part of the district's central office operations staff. The six participants in the pilot study represented classified, certified, and non-represented employees. Pilot study participants were interviewed using the research questions and their responses were digitally recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were sent to each pilot study participant for feedback about the accuracy of their interview transcripts. Participants were informed that they could clarify any comment made and have any comments deleted that they were uncomfortable with being used in the study. The original purpose of the pilot study was to solicit feedback from a small group regarding the questions that would be asked of participants and to determine whether pilot study participants felt the questions were clear, understandable, and open-ended enough to allow participants to answer the questions from their perspective versus questions that were leading in structure. Pilot study participants indicated that they did not perceive the questions as being leading in nature.

One of the unintended outcomes of the pilot study was that participant responses mirrored many of the responses of participants in the actual research study. Because of this, I have included their responses in this dissertation. Since this was an unintended outcome, permission was secured from the district Research and Evaluation department to include the pilot study responses in the actual research study.

### **Individual and Small Group Interviews**

Individual interviews were conducted with five participants at the selected school site and ranged in time from one to three hours. One purpose of conducting individual interviews was to provide an opportunity for participants to be interviewed absent their peers and/or supervisor. A secondary purpose was to determine if and how individual responses were similar or different in an individual setting than during the small group interview

After all of the individual interviews were completed, a small group interview was scheduled. A total of ten participants were interviewed in the small group setting. One purpose for the small group interview was to provide educators, with limited time available for interviews, an opportunity to participate in the research study. As mentioned previously, a secondary purpose was to analyze response data to determine if and how individual participant responses were similar or different in the small group setting from individual responses. The small group interview lasted approximately one hour.

## **Results**

The same questions were asked for all three forms of interviews conducted: the pilot study, individual interviews, and the small group interview. Research participants from all three interview structures affirmed their belief that participation in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development resulted in deepening their racial consciousness. All research participants also affirmed their perceptions that race- and equity-focused professional development resulted in changes to the way they felt, believed, acted, and thought about the impact of race in their life. In addition, participants spoke to how their increased racial consciousness impacted their lives personally, professionally, and as members of an organization engaged in race- and equity-focused professional development system wide. Participants also voiced their perception that they positively benefitted from being members of a race-and equity-focused professional learning community.

### **Participant Perception of Racial Consciousness**

When asked to respond to whether participants perceived a change in their racial consciousness as a result of participation in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development, all participant responses were consistent. While each participant perceived a deepening of their racial consciousness, responses highlighted racialized experiences that were different for participants of color than their White counterparts.

Responses describing changes in personal beliefs ran along a continuum between awakening and validation for both participants of color and White participants. However, participant responses were highly racialized and could be racially categorized into stages of racial identity development that are also specifically racialized. Two models of racial identity development, Highlen's (1988) model of identity development for the oppressed



and Helms' (1990) White identity development, were used to consider which stages of identity development were reflected in participant responses.

For participants of color, Highlen et al. (1988) describe two stages of development that closely align with participant responses, which are internalization and integration. The internalization stage of development is characterized by an "increasing awareness that all beings struggle with some form of oppression. The view that the world is "we" vs. "them" no longer seems valid" (p.12). The integration stage of development is characterized by the individual's sense of community expanding. "As the person feels more connected to all people, she or he sees their struggles as his or her own. The focus is more on similarities between peoples. The person recognizes, understands, and experiences all oppression similarly. Oppressors" are seen as being created by societal problems" (p. 12)

For White participants, responses fell primarily within three of the six stages of Helm's (1990) White racial identity development. Some responses were indicative of Helm's pseudo-independent stage, which is marked by an intellectual understanding of racism as a system of advantage (but people at this stage of identity development may not know what to do about it). Other participant responses more closely aligned with Helm's fifth stage of White identity development, which is immersion/emersion. At this stage, White educators seek new ways of thinking about Whiteness at the immersion/emersion stage. For others, their responses placed them in autonomy stage, which is characterized by an increasing awareness of one's own Whiteness and an increasingly strong development of a non-racist White identity.

### **Initial Changes in Racial Consciousness**

Participants of color shared examples of struggling with aspects of their lived experience with race and racism prior to participation in the district's race-and equity-focused professional development. Participant E, a Native American female, spoke of the impact of having negative racial experiences as a person of color living in a home absent of racialized conversations among her family, which resulted in an initial hesitancy to engage in racial discourse at her place of employment.

I have never been allowed or allowed myself to talk about race outside of our home, outside of my close friends who looked like me or had similar biases or racial issues...This has changed me in a way that made me face race in a way that I never faced my hurt and pain before.

Participant N, a Biracial male, talked about his struggle growing up Black in a multi-racial household, with one Black parent and one White parent. Participant A, a Black male, offered, prior to engaging in the district's professional development, he had believed that he had been able to successfully disregard his negative lived experiences around race, only to see them resurface as he engaged in Courageous Conversations About Race. All three participants spoke to gaining a sense of empowerment and validation to face and process those very painful experiences from their past. Participant E stated, "I hate to use the empowerment word...but it's given me the self-assurance that I can tell my story and I don't need a certain reaction."

As a result of engaging in the district's race and equity professional development, several participants of color perceived a deepening of their racial consciousness as they reflected and processed various lived racial experiences. For example, Participant J, an Asian female,

offered, “Through this work I’ve gained a great level of understanding and justification as to why I felt uncomfortable in certain situations.” Participant A spoke of having unresolved issues concerning his personal experience with race and racism resurface:

I have a lot of unresolved issues concerning race and racism and doing this work has helped me realize that. I have definitely become more racially conscious, whereas I realized that over the years I had kind of tried to ignore things and tried to just kind of put it off as background noise and ignore it and just say, “Well, that’s just the way it is” but now I’ve become more sensitized to it and also more accepting of my feelings concerning it.

Participant B, a Latino male, shared his sense of empowerment as a result of participation, stating, “This work has given me a framework to address my own personal stuff and issues concerning race and racism in my life, both present and past. That’s one of the changes that’s occurred.” Speaking to the personal impact of participation in the district’s race- and equity-focused professional development, he said, “I think it’s really changed my personal reflection of myself as a Brown male... my racial consciousness is much deeper and at a much higher level than ever... I just feel like I’ve gotten grounded in my race and my culture...and I’m just much more aware of it and how I live my life now...I live in a lot less shame about it now.”

Participant J spoke about the change in the way she now processes racial situations as a result of her participation in the district’s race-and equity-focused professional development. She recalled a situation where she entered a space where she was the only person of color in the room. She recalled, “I think self-confidence and self-understanding, to me, is evidence of my racial consciousness increasing...race is so present in my filter

versus before it was not at all.” Participant H, a Black female, spoke to the usefulness of having a tool like the Compass. “What particularly the compass has given me is the ability to really try to understand where somebody else is coming from, whether their lack of racial conscious or whether they were not conscious of race.”

White participant responses touched on a sense of awakening to their own racial identity, their lived racial experience of being White, and the impact of being a member of the dominant society. Participant C, a White female, noted, “The difference with the protocol was that I really had to look at me. Being able to do that and to really start to see that I had an experience as a White person and that I’d had that all my life but I had never really seen that before.” Participant F, a White male, offered:

One of the things I’ve had big breakthroughs with this year is my racial consciousness of my own race. Now, six years later I’m just still getting there and what my Whiteness means and brings to what I do. Race is always an issue and for a White person like myself, it wasn’t always there. I realize that it is always there but it’s not there in that same way for me as for people of color, who say, “I can’t avoid this. I know I can avoid it. I can just say “whatever”! That’s where that realization has come. I just really think this work has transformed that.

For other White participants, it was less an awakening than a validation of their racial consciousness. Many of the participants described participation in the district’s equity and race focused professional development as validating, affirming, and strengthening their commitment to social justice. For example, Participant G, a White female, stated, “I think I came into this profession with really strong beliefs around equity and I wanted to be an anti-racist teacher...So I don’t think my belief system has changed but maybe how I acted

upon that belief system has changed.” Participant F offered, “when I look at it in terms of my beliefs, I don’t think my beliefs have changed dramatically. I think what it has done is solidify my beliefs.” Participant D, a White female, added, “It’s hard for me to filter out what is just me figuring out how to be a good teacher and what is the result of the district’s training...It didn’t become a mission for me until I had the training...I wouldn’t want to work for any other organization.”

### **Participant Perception of Change in Beliefs, Feelings, Thinking, and Actions**

Cooper, He, and Levin (2011) stress the importance of engaging in self-reflection about one’s own cultural identity and lived experience to surface bias and beliefs that can guide and even transform education practices, specifically with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse populations (pp. 3-4). Research questions invited participants to share their reflections on perceptions of changes to their racial consciousness, as well as changes to beliefs, feelings, thinking and actions. Since the research prompts were structured to address different quadrants of the Courageous Conversations About Race Protocol (CCAR), participants often structured their responses to align with the protocol.

Participants were asked to describe changes to their personal beliefs, feelings, thinking, and actions as a result of participation in the district’s ongoing race and equity professional development. None of the participants indicated their beliefs remained unaffected. When asked whether they credited their change in belief to the district’s race- and equity-professional development, each answered in the affirmative. Participant quotes related to responses addressing Singleton’s (2006) Compass quadrants are recorded in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Quadrant-specific quotes related to quadrant change in racial consciousness

<b>Dimensions of Change</b>	
<b>Quadrant</b>	<b>Quadrant-specific Quotes</b>
Belief	<p>Summary: Participant responses about the impact of the district’s PD on their beliefs included examination of their own personal beliefs about racism and institutional structures.</p> <p>“A lot of the invisible beliefs that I held became visible to me...I had to challenge a lot of my hidden subconscious beliefs that caused me to operate the way that I did” (Participant L; “I now believe in the reality of systemic racism and that that is the way our country was set up....my beliefs have changed and the way they’ve changed was through somebody offering me a different perspective and hearing somebody else’s story and really getting to know lots of people of color with lots of different experiences...The PD has a focus on a belief that it’s not our students of color who have the deficit. It’s the system where the deficit is and we need to work to fix the system...As the adults in the system, we need to check our beliefs and challenge our own beliefs and to get to know families, get to know students and see that though they may have a different experience than I do, they want the same things for their children in terms of access and a good life... For me, the work has been a lot around examining my own beliefs, the beliefs I grew up with in a racist society and with some pretty openly racist family members as well...it was definitely a huge awakening for me and I really credit Beyond Diversity” (Participant C); “I think that I came into this profession with really strong beliefs around equity and I wanted to be an anti-racist teacher...I had the belief that, to be a good teacher I needed to be an equitable teacher that that didn’t mean there was a one size fits all approach, it wasn’t the fair approach, so I believe my belief was validated by the equity work but my actions changed in that it opened my eyes to what was actually happening in the classroom that was in contradiction to that belief” (Participant G); “I believe it’s not that people don’t want to do it. It’s that, again, the system is built to do something else”; “I’ve always been racially conscious since I began in education. I don’t think that has changed. It’s been more focused and intentional. That’s the difference” (Participant H).</p>
Thinking	<p>Summary: Participant responses to the impact of the district’s PD to their thinking included: thinking about their life through a racial lens, having shared vocabulary, needing multiple perspectives and equity vs. equality.</p> <p>“I needed to hold intellect alongside feeling. I couldn’t do just feeling”; “I think about where I am and consider where other folks in the room are coming from around any given meeting” (Participant H); “I think I already had a high level of racial consciousness”; “When I’m out in a different place, even in my</p>

neighborhood, I have to come at it a different way and understand where someone else is coming. They don't have the same shared vocabulary that we have here" (Participant F); "I think when I came into it I had already a consciousness about it"; "If you consider the emotion and belief pieces of a problem, it looks like a totally different problem" (Participant J); I think that I came into this profession with really strong beliefs around equity and I wanted to be an anti-racist teacher...so I don't think my belief system has changed but maybe how I act upon that belief system has changed. A simple example is the idea of fairness isn't equitable. I think another interesting thing is when things from my past can come to my mind...it's interesting to go back and think about how your ideas and feelings are shaped from these difference experiences you have. I think, professionally, the thing that's been the most impactful has been doing the CARE work and learning about the framework for developing culturally relevant lessons and doing the peer observations...I would say that's been the most impactful thing...that's changed my practice the most...I think that a CARE lesson is different than differentiation because you're not meeting the needs of those kids after you teach the whole lesson...but you actually teach the whole lesson to those kids...changing that framework has been really challenging but I think that that's been really impactful"(Participant G); I think there is a lot of internalized racism that I have carried that I need to unlearn...I think that the work has also enable us, as people of color, to have our internal dialogue also (interracial and intraracial) and to help us to see how we have a lot of internalized racism and how we oftentimes throw each other under the bus in professional settings"(Participant B); "I think, before, when I thought about race, I always thought about it in terms of people of color. I think the Courageous Conversations protocol, for me, really was what made that change in being able to think about 'how does this personally apply to me?' ...the difference with the protocol was that I really had to look at me. Being able to do that and to really start to see that I had an experience as a white person and that I'd had that all my life but I had never really seen that before...I really had to think about things that were influencing my beliefs, like a lot of the media, all kinds of things that people you've been raised with say and you don't question things, you kind of go along...a lot of those stories...what if they're not true? My beliefs started to be impacted there" (Participant C); " I think, definitely, personally and professionally, I have an awareness, a presence of being awake in the world. That wasn't there before" (Participant F).

### Acting

Summary: Participants responding to how their actions have been impacted by the district's PD spoke about how their actions have become more intentional and their awareness of their actions have increased.

"It just made it more active and proactive verses it being something that's in the back of your mind, something that you think about" (Participant I); "I have a whole new set of tools now when I'm in the acting quadrant"; "My actions have changed. The classic White behavior has been to cross over to the other side of the street... I'm colorblind...I'm not racist. Those are the kinds of things that are

now in the awareness of who I am and how I am personally in the world and how I look at issues of race“ (Participant F); “We’re very action oriented I guess so, for me, the real belief that’s changed is this whole thing with White liberalism” (Participant I); “I think I wait a lot longer. I don’t move as quickly. We can’t solve this problem overnight and so we really should not do anything quickly” (Participant J); “I don’t think my belief system has changed but maybe how I acted upon that belief system has changed...I make sure every voice is heard and that I respect, even kids that maybe don’t talk as much out loud, but that there are still ways for their voices to be present in the classroom...What I realized is that when I make sure that my really shy black girl, who would never talk, when her voice was heard, it didn’t just help her. It changed everybody’s racial consciousness and affected everybody. For my really loud, well-meaning white boys...for them to learn that very important lesson, that they were not the only important people in the world, was really good...I feel like my huge battle is to change kid’s assumptions that they make around other kids. If that’s the one thing I could do this year, that would be great” (Participant G); “At the behavioral level, I question, because I now feel like it’s my moral obligation, I am much more confrontational and I publicly question a lot in meetings where I never used to before”; “I’m trying to speak up more in all kinds of environments, not just at work” (Participant D).

**Feeling** Summary: Participant responses to the impact of the district’s PD to their feelings included topics such as increased awareness of their racial identity and the importance of all four quadrants in educational processes.

“The thing that really most surprised me and I realized was my biggest problem with doing this work was the recognition that my feelings...I hadn’t properly dealt with my feelings and emotions” (Participant A); “I am the epitome of code switching”; I just feel like I’ve gotten grounded in my race and my culture. I’m much more aware of it and how I live my life now” (Participant B); This work gave me an opportunity to, in fact required me to acknowledge the feeling part of the compass, in general, at a professional and organizational level...I had internalized a belief that, in the professional environment, feelings are not valued, beneficial, or seen as a strength to show your feelings vs. I feel, even though that was a huge disconnect for my personal life and my culture where I grew up...(where so much is about feeling and relationship and emoting and connecting and noticing all of the details in relationships equally, as it’s important to notice all the details in a staffing equation...I feel like the work has helped me become more authentic....there’s a whole side of the compass that we’ve not been paying attention to” (Participant J); “To bring in the believing and feeling pieces...it really addresses me as a whole person and asks me to respond as a whole person and not just who I am professionally or who I am only in my thinking...I feel like, as a white person, I’ve been socially trained to not notice how people of color might be having a way different experience than I am...having a more realistic view of the world in terms of seeing how race plays out is something that makes me really feel grateful...I feel like I do have a



place. My story's important as well...I feel like I can't go anywhere now or even sitting in my own home without thinking about things. I'm always conscious now" (Participant C).

### **Professional Experiences**

Several participants spoke to epiphanies regarding their practice with students.

Participant B, a White female shared one example of an epiphany. Prior to her engagement in the district's equity and race focused professional development, her classes had been ability grouped based on test scores. Because there were only two levels of classes, an unintended result was that classes were racially segregated, with students of color grouped into the lower class and White students occupying slots in the higher-level class.

Participant B recalled, "One of the most scariest things for me is to still notice when I have lowered expectations of kids based on race." As a result of reflection around the awareness of low expectations, Participant B worked with the administrator to develop and construct equitable placement practices regarding ability-based placements, which resulted in untracking students for the majority of the day, with the exception of math classes. One effect of untracking students was more racially diverse classes. Participant B offered, "When you separate kids like that in a small environment, they're friends. They're all with their friends because the kids are racially segregated in their friendships too, so it can come out in really ugly ways when you only have two classes of kids." Research by Lightfoot (1978) drew similar conclusions (pp. 85-86).

Another participant spoke to the impact of the district's race- and equity-focused professional development on her classroom practices. Participant G spoke to this realization, "The work has made me realize that even something like calling on people...to realize that my quiet Black girl has an equal voice in the classroom as my loud, confident

White boys...What I realized was that when I make sure that my really shy Black girl, when her voice is heard, it didn't just help her...it changed everybody's racial consciousness and affected everybody. For my really loud well-meaning White boys, for them to learn an important lesson...that they were not the only important people in the world...was really good." Ferguson's (1998) research also studied teacher bias of reinforcing the propensity of White children to speak more often in class" (p. 483).

Another participant shared their perspective regarding working with White students and families about students of color. Participant L, a Biracial female, shared:

This work made me realize, 'Oh, I can work on the White kids too.' Our kids of color aren't always wrong and they shouldn't have to assimilate into White culture, necessarily, in order to be successful in school. That was my awareness. I can bring that to light to these families. "This is why your son, everyday, calls the only Black boy in the class by a different name, since the beginning of the year.' I get to call you out on that and question you about that and I get to hear a response from you and make you accountable to that.

Another commonality of experience with Equity team and CARE team participants was a perceived benefit of race- and equity-focused professional learning communities, which was a component of the structural design of the district's ongoing race-and equity-focused professional development. Stewart (2014) offers that learning communities thrive when all participants are invested in the work they are doing" (p. 28). Participant L noted, "We have a commitment to work on race and that may not be true for someone else."

Participant K offered, "I know I can talk to the people in this room about it...not having to start from the beginning and keep explaining it over and over...but just have the

conversation.” Participant I, a White female, credited the district’s race and equity professional development opportunities as a springboard for her reflective work on White privilege. “I credit the team in the room for a lot of the growth I’ve had the honor of experiencing. I always had antiracist perspective at the center of what I did and taught. That was always a value that I held and I was lucky enough to meet other people who were trying to do that too.”

### **Journal Experience**

The experience of keeping a research journal was mixed. Given the time and effort of recording both process data and my own personal reflections on participant responses, I did not find the utilization of a research journal particularly useful as a tool for examining potential bias during the research process. In addition, the process data that I recorded did not serve to inform the research as it was not consistently focused on one particular process or data point.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Conclusions

#### Discussion

The district's race- and equity-focused professional development structure provided ongoing, sustained, and intensive professional development. Much of the initial professional development was provided by Pacific Educational Group. (PEG) Additional professional development was provided and supported at both the district and building level, through the use of district equity TOSAs (Teachers on Special Assignment) who serve as equity coaches, as well as building level Equity and CARE Teams, which are led by the building administrator. Without exception, participants in this research study all indicated they perceived a deepening of their racial consciousness as a result of participation in the district's ongoing race-and equity-focused professional development. A deepening of racial consciousness was true for participants who stated that they had previously been unaware of their own racial lived experience, as well as for participants who indicated they had perceived themselves racially conscious and committed to social justice. This was true for both participants of color as well as for White participants.

Participant responses exemplified this type of far reaching reflective activity, as they recounted examples of how participation in the district's ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development impacted them personally, professionally, and as a member of an organization engaged in this type of race and equity work. Research from both Milner (2006) and Freire (1998) come to similar conclusions.

Participants spoke to their perception that their deepened racial consciousness impacted decisions in their classrooms. These decisions impacted lesson selection and development,

classroom management structures, interactions with students and their families, and decisions on student placement and advancement into more rigorous classes. Research by both Milner (2006) and Howard (2003) also reached similar conclusions.

Participants spoke to how participation in the district's race-and equity-focused professional development also crossed over into their personal relationships with families, friends, colleagues, and other acquaintances. Participant responses support current research on effective professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2002; Garet et al. 2001; Killion, 2007; Landsman, 2006; Milner, 2006; Parson et al., 2006).

### **Limitations of the scope of the research**

In considering the district's ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development and participant perception of its impact on their level of racial consciousness, the study was narrowly focused. As such, it did not consider other participant perceptions regarding the district's race- and equity-focused professional development. Participants offered perspectives on various topics that were outside the scope of this research study but were voiced by participants in both the pilot study and the main research study. Two main themes surfaced with participants: challenges navigating responsibilities connected to their participation in the district's race and equity work, and participant perceptions of incongruity between the district's race and equity work and actual practices, policies, and procedures being implemented by district leaders.

One major theme regarding participant challenges was in regard to time. Participants shared feelings of being limited in their ability to sustain and deepen personal work around racial consciousness, as well as not having enough time to make a concerted effort to

connect the district's race- and equity-focused professional work to their practices in the classroom. Research by Joyce and Showers (2002) offer a similar conclusion.

Participants advocated for more time to spend with colleagues in professional learning communities, as well as time for implementation of culturally relevant teaching strategies. In addition, since the district's model for race-and-equity-focused professional development was a train-the-trainer model, participants experienced challenges with being able to have time to deepen their own knowledge and skillset around engaging in race- and equity-focused professional development while simultaneously being tasked with providing staff level race-and equity-focused professional development to their colleagues at their sites. Participants voiced frustration at some of the policies, practices, and procedures being executed by district leaders, such as school boundary decisions and decisions to close certain schools while allowing other schools to remain open. These decisions were perceived as inequitable by some of the participants who voiced their frustration and the incongruity. For example, Participant G stated, "In our equity training, we read an article...about teachers that were successful with kids of color...these teachers felt like teaching was an art, not something that was scripted or easily replicated...it was very passionate...That very same week or the week before, we had gone to enhancements training where we were literally handed a script that we had to follow ...It said what the teacher had to say and the person doing the training said we should have that in our lap so we could make sure we were saying it. I was so offended that I was given a script to teach from and that's an example that really hit me of where there's this discrepancy between what we are saying about equity and then what we are being told we have to do as educators." She also summarized a news article about the district's transfer policy: "PPS's

transfer policy allows people to reap the benefits of cheap housing while allowing them to not invest in their community schools.' It really hit the nail on the head with my personal beliefs around the district's transfer policy." Participant E offered, "I believe and I've seen that the district works this and walks the talk until it become inconvenient and then goes back to old behaviors...The positive part is that this still exists and all parts are moving at so many different levels simultaneously that it's indescribable. I've never seen this work at this level before."

### **Journal experience**

The experience of keeping a running experiential journal was mixed. One of the challenges early on was my confusion of what I was actually striving for in keeping an experiential journal. I researched several articles on the use of reflective journals in conducting research but was not satisfied with what I read (Janesick, 1998; Ortlipp, 2008). These articles were focused on the actual day-to-day experience of journal writing as opposed to the elements of journal writing and each element's purpose and so I found them limited in their usefulness. Throughout the journaling process, I cycled through several questions: Was the purpose of the journal to record process-related musings or content-related responses? Was the importance of the journal to make sure I was using equitable techniques in my follow-up questions so that I could strive to stay within the parameters of the various prompts participants were asked to respond to? Just what was it I was supposed to be recording in my journal? There was no real rhyme or reason to what was recorded in my journal. Sometimes it was notes regarding my own reflection around something one of the participants said during the interview. At other times, I recorded wonderings about whether I had asked the right follow-up questions. Still other recordings

were more running commentaries of something that a participant had said which set my mind racing toward examples of my own similar experiences. One difficulty of keeping a research journal was the lack of clarity I had around what should be recorded. Many of the journal entries reflected my personal responses to stories research participants shared in response to the various research questions. One conclusion that I reached from this journal experience was that I continually utilized my own racial and cultural lens to construct meaning from participant responses. I believe that personal bias was embedded throughout that process of constructing meaning for myself. One positive outcome of journaling was the opportunity to write down questions that I wanted to consider about my own lived experience, as a result of recording questions regarding some of the participant responses.

## **Conclusions**

The data from conducting this research found participation in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development consistently resulted in participant perceptions that deepened their racial consciousness. In addition, the district's race- and equity-focused professional development impacted participants personally, professionally and as members of an organization engaged in race- and equity-focused professional development.

Participant responses provided examples that, as educators increase their racial consciousness, participants perceived a strengthening of teacher-student, teacher-parent, and teacher-teacher relationships. Participants recalled examples of improved student feelings of belonging in the classroom. For example, Participant D recalled a conversation with a group of students of color, who were designated as TAG students. She asked them,



“do you feel like, when you go in a classroom, that any given teacher expects you to be smart?” One of the girls replied, “not until I was in your class.” Participant F, who has had the opportunity to co-facilitate race-and equity-focused conversations with parents, stated, “it’s been really interesting seeing some of our families, white families, who are stepping forward in this work.” During the small group interview, several participants voiced beliefs similar to one voiced by Participant I: “For me, I credit the team that’s in the room right now, for a lot of the growth I’ve had the honor of experiencing.”

The research also showed that, absent educator racial consciousness, participants reported that their academic content and processes were, by default, reflective of dominant societal norms and practices that were not always relevant to their students of color. Participation in the district’s race- and equity-focused professional development provided tools to surface where this was occurring in their practice so educators could determine ways to address that.

Some participants voiced frustration with not being able to directly connect their increased racial consciousness to increased academic success for their students of color in their class. Gay and Kirkland (2003) also address this disconnect. Analyzing whether there is a correlation between racial consciousness and student academic success fell outside of the parameters of this research.

Participation in the district’s ongoing race and equity professional development was designed to provide a structure for reflective work combined with ongoing collegial conversations about accelerating achievement for all students, especially students of color. It will be important to be explicit and intentional about the importance of and the interrelatedness of racial consciousness with other core competencies such as culturally

relevant craft knowledge, and culturally relevant classroom management skills for producing academic achievement for all students.

The original timeline anticipated for conducting the research interviews proved to be too ambitious when implemented. The actual research activities covered three and a half months. One factor contributing to the extended time for the research activities was the challenge of scheduling the pilot test, ten individual participant interviews, and a small group interview within the two-month window of time.

During the process of administering the pilot questions to the sample group, a request was made to expand the research participant pool to include participants on equity teams at the district's central office. The decision to add research participants required an extension of the timeline to conduct participant interviews.

Throughout the research process, I was mindful of the nature of my professional role in the district and the unintended impact it might have on participant responses. I looked for evidence that my professional role did not impede participants from responding completely, for fear of perceived retribution for any negative responses participants might be inclined to voice. However, throughout the various interviews, participants appeared to speak openly about perceived negative experiences and beliefs regarding engagement in the district's race-and equity-focused professional development.

## **Recommendations**

Research findings from this study trended in a positive direction regarding participant perception of increased racial consciousness. Participants consistently affirmed their belief that participation in the district's ongoing race-and equity-focused professional development resulted in deepening their racial consciousness and also spoke to their belief

that participation impacted them personally, professionally, and as a member of an organization engaged in equity and race focused conversations.

Since the race- and equity-focused professional development is occurring system wide across the district, one recommendation for the school district is to expand this research to include schools and central office departments at various levels of engagement with the professional development.

The participant sample was restricted by both size and time. Research was limited to participants who were actively involved in equity or CARE teamwork in their buildings or departments. This research did not consider educators who were engaged in the district's race- and equity- focused professional development but were not directly tasked with the responsibility to facilitate it or participate in action research or who had participated in the district's professional development but had since left either team or the school itself.

Another recommendation to the school district is to conduct an expanded analysis of participant perception to see whether those who participated in the past but were not currently on either team would have responded in kind with their colleagues.

Another recommendation for the school district is to conduct an expanded analysis of the impact of district race and equity professional development opportunities, to include schools and central office departments at various levels of engagement. This may include participants who may be recently employed by the district and have just begun participating in the district's race- and equity-focused professional development, as well as participants who have been engaged in the district's race-and equity-focused professional development for the entire duration of district implementation and all points between.

**Potential Contributions of the Research**

This research can inform educators, K-12 districts, and higher education of the importance and impact of incorporating race- and equity-focused professional development as part of ongoing professional development opportunities for K-12 educators and leadership. It can inform hiring practices and teacher/administrator evaluation practices and also provide criteria for entrance requirements for pre-service programs, curriculum and training of pre-service teachers. Regulatory bodies can utilize findings from this research as a core competency for teacher/administrator licensing, as well as to inform institutional policy, procedures, practices regarding hiring, retaining, and promoting a racially diverse workforce supporting educators in the classroom.

For researchers, this type of study should be replicated to better understand the impact of racial consciousness on the learning environment, policies, practices, and procedures impacting students of color and other students who have historically been underserved by our educational system. Researchers can determine if and what impact racial consciousness has on systemic educational systems and structures including both instructional and operational practices, policies, and procedures. This includes the impact of racial consciousness on decision making processes such as budgeting, boundary alignments, allocation of resources, hiring, retention and promotion, contracting and procurement, etc. Research of this nature could also inform both the public and private sectors of education regarding inequitable outcomes for populations of color in education.

Practitioners in the educational field would benefit from opportunities to explore how race is being lived in the classroom, both for the educator and the student and what the impact is on student learning and academic achievement. For both groups, researchers and

educators, the investment in providing professional development opportunities for educators, and those who support educators, to examine their racial consciousness and its impact on learning can challenge us to reconsider what core competencies educators need in order to be effective for all students, especially students of color who have historically been underserved in our educational system.

### **Implications for Future Study**

I am inclined to believe that racial consciousness is a core competency that must be present for educators, in conjunction with other core competencies like culturally relevant classroom management skills, culturally relevant teaching practices, and strong craft and content knowledge. Collectively, these core competencies may provide structures for accelerating academic learning for all students. For example, a teacher skilled at implementing and supporting culturally relevant classroom management practices may produce a class with smooth running and an environment conducive to learning. Does this result in academic achievement? Not necessarily, especially in the absence of academic rigor. What if an educator has a high degree of craft and content knowledge and provides instruction that includes academic rigor? Does that, in itself translate to student academic achievement? Not if the environment is chaotic or if students are unable to see the relevance in what is being taught. The same may hold true for racial consciousness. Porter and Brophy (1988) offer, "Today educational practitioners are looking less for prescriptions and more for principles that will increase their effectiveness as semi-autonomous professionals who negotiate and mediate among complex and sometimes contradictory task demands as they pursue goals of excellence and equity" (p. 74). This work has implications for both the research and practice components of education.



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APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Participant Informed Consent Form

<b>Participant Informed Consent Form</b>
------------------------------------------

I consent to participate in a research project, which is being conducted by Kehaulani Haupu, (503.964.0045 or 503.916.2000.ext. 71006), Doctoral Candidate, George Fox University. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw consent at any time without penalty.

**Please acknowledge that you have read and agree to each of the following paragraphs by checking each box.**

I understand that this study will focus on educator and administrator experiences and perceptions of participation in intentional, ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development in a public school district that has an equity initiative.

I understand that I may end my involvement in the study for any reason without penalty or loss of Equity or CARE team member standing, loss of relationship with the researcher, George Fox University or other opportunities.

I understand that the time commitment for this research project will be spread out over the course of two consecutive months. My time commitment will consist of participation in a small group interview, which will require a commitment of one hour. If I choose to participate in an individual interview, this commitment will require an additional time commitment of one hour. In addition, a period of one month will be allotted for responding to the written prompt. Small group and individual interviews will be spread over a period of two consecutive months.

I understand that the researcher is willing to answer any research-related questions I might have regarding the study. I also understand that the researcher reserves the right to answer questions regarding the findings of the study until after the research project has been completed.

I understand that individual data will be reported under pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality. I also understand that I will have the opportunity to eliminate any comments I have made that I do not want included in the study. I permit the publication of the results of this study with the agreement that confidentiality is ensured.

I understand that matters relating to this study can be directed to Kehaulani Haupu at 503.964.0045 or the George Fox University Dissertation Chair, Dr. Suzanne Harrison at 503.554.2855. If I have additional questions or concerns about this research project, I can contact the George Fox University Human Subjects Research Committee.

Again, I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary and that I have the ability to withdraw at any point without penalty or loss of Equity or CARE team member standing, relationship with the researcher, George Fox University or other opportunities.

**Please be advised** that although the researcher will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of small group interviews prevents the researcher from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researcher would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the small group interviews to others.

---

Participant Name (Printed)

---

Participant Signature / Date

I have presented this information to the participant and obtained his/her voluntary consent.

---

Researcher Signature / Date

**The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep. The researcher will collect a signed copy prior to the start of the first small group interview and/or individual interview.**

## Appendix B: Letter to School Principal

Email/Letter from Kehaulani Haupu, Educational Foundations and Leadership Doctoral Candidate, George Fox University

RE: Request to conduct doctoral research study at your school site

Dear School Administrator,

I am a doctoral candidate at George Fox University and am excited to learn more about how to improve teaching and learning for all students, especially students of color who have been historically underserved in public education across the country. I am conducting research to examine the degree to which participants perceive changes in their level of racial consciousness as a result of their participation in the district's ongoing race- and equity-focused professional development, specifically as it relates to possible changes to personal beliefs, feelings, thinking and actions.

The study will consist of both a written component and one-on-one interviews with members of your school equity and CARE teams. Participation is strictly voluntary and will not in any way harm their professional standing or team membership. I project that the interviews will be approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed by me and kept in a locked and secure location to ensure confidentiality. Participants will be assigned letter designations (i.e. Participant A, B, etc.) for anonymity. Participants will also have the opportunity to review transcripts to ensure fidelity of transcription and may request any part of their interview be deleted, if they so choose. Any requests will be honored without recourse.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Kehaulani Haupu  
*Equity Coordinator*  
Portland Public Schools  
*Doctoral Candidate*  
Graduate School of Education  
George Fox University

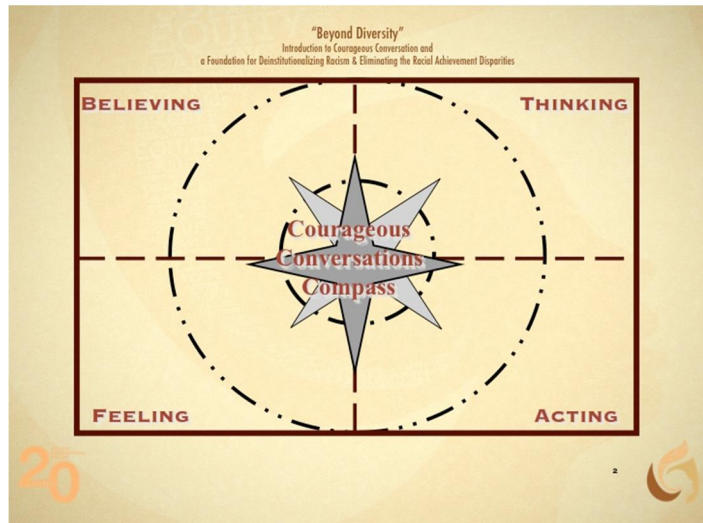
Dr. Sue Harrison  
*Dissertation Chair*  
*Professor*  
George Fox University School of Education

## Appendix C: Courageous Conversations Protocol

### The Compass:

#### Four Agreements:

- Stay Engaged
- Speak Your Truth
- Experience Discomfort
- Expect/Accept Nonclosure



#### Six Conditions:

1. Establish a context that is personal, local, and immediate.
2. Isolate race while acknowledging the broader scope of diversity and the variety of factors that contribute to a racialized problem.
3. Normalize social construction of knowledge, thus engaging multiple racial points of view in order to surface critical perspective.
4. Monitor the parameters of the conversation by being explicit and intentional about the number of participants, prompts for discussion, and time allotted for listening, speaking, and reflecting. Use the Courageous Conversation Compass to gauge where you and other participants are in terms of your emotional, intellectual, moral, and social proximity and connection to a given racial topic.
5. Establish agreement around a contemporary working definition of race that clearly differentiates it from ethnicity and nationality.
6. Examine the presence and role of Whiteness, its impact on the conversation, and the problem being addressed.

(Singleton, G.E. & Linton, C. (2006). *Courageous conversations about race*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press)