

Narrating Identities: When Race Surfaces

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present our¹ analysis of a data corpus of race narratives that were told during a meeting of community residents, service providers, and initiative leaders during the planning phase of a major community change initiative. Building on earlier analyses of a critical juncture where race and class emerged as salient to moving forward, we use Critical Race Theory and narrative analysis to understand what stories were told and what those stories meant to participants in the meeting. We argue that content of the narratives and whether the story was about self or other are differentiated based on the race of the narrator.

Context: The “zone”

The northeast sector of Rochester, NY is a community with a history of intergenerational poverty, student underachievement, mental and physical health problems, adult unemployment and underemployment, violence, and crime. Many reform efforts have been directed toward improving the lives of children in this community without sustained success. One local leader claims that "Rochester is great at starting things, but not at finishing them". This lack of follow through and consistency has produced deep and longstanding mistrust in community members and to a vigorous stance that they do not need "fixing" from outsiders. In 2005, the Rochester City School District, with support from community residents, local government, and business and social service organizations, began a major community development program called the “Rochester

¹ While Larson, Simmons, and Lewis are co-authors of this paper, the full ethnography team also includes: Nancy Ares, Kevin O'Connor (UR faculty), Stephanie Webster, Mindy Hopper, Sandra Quinones, and Courtney Hanny (doctoral research assistants).

Children's Zone² (known colloquially as the 'zone')." The RSC2 aims to bring together, coordinate, and expand existing efforts by the school district, individual schools, community service organizations, not-for-profit organizations, social service agencies, churches, the business community, and local government in order to address the complex challenges in this part of Rochester, with the specific aim of producing more positive developmental and learning outcomes for children and youth.

The comprehensive and multi-level effort represented by the initiative has unique features that make it an important site for research in human development and community change. One such feature is a focus on families and communities within the area as having important resources to contribute to the reform. Thus, of particular interest is the focus on "embattled" communities as being, instead of embattled, full of important resources, practices, commitments, and insights that need to be brought to the table for the whole effort to proceed and be sustainable. There is also, based on our observations and conversations with initiative stakeholders (e.g., District staff, parents of students in schools within the area, community volunteers involved in planning and implementation), both a keen awareness of the institutional, historical, and political barriers that such an effort faces; and a determination to confront those squarely. We view this as an important, unique opportunity to examine the complex and multi-dimensional factors that shape children's learning and development and to bring our insights back to the community.

² Due to conflicts with Geoffrey Canada of the Harlem Children's Zone over copyright issues, the initiative's name has been changed to Rochester Surround Care Community or RSC2. Further name changes are impending due to resident dislike of the revised name.

We use the now publicly available community plan document to present the description of the zone used by participants as they work toward change. They used the demographic factors listed below to identify the geographic area on which to focus. Initially, the Rochester City School District noted that the lowest academic performing schools (4,300 children in grades Pre-K- 12) were clustered in the 14605 and 14621 zip codes (City Sectors 9 &10) – the Northeast section of the City of Rochester. Upon further inspection, this geographic area also presented with the following demographics:

- high concentrations of teen pregnancy, drug trafficking, high school drop outs, and HIV/AIDS;
- 42% of the residents are below poverty compared to the citywide poverty of 26%;
- median household income of approximately \$19,000 compared to the citywide income of \$27,000;
- 8.3% of RSC2 residents are unemployed;
- 68 % of households are headed by females;
- 96% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (13% higher than rest of the District);
- highest concentration of lead poisoning cases in the city (30 to 34 percent of kids screened had some level of lead poison.)

This area of Rochester is home to approximately 50,000 residents; 50 percent are African American, 30 percent are Latina/o (half of the City's Latina/o population), 30 percent speak a language other than English, and 10 percent were born outside the United States. Poverty levels in schools within the zone range from 94.6% to 98.5% (based on the percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunch – a NYS measure of poverty).

The RSC2 assumes a collaborative partnership between provider organizations and community members to improve student achievement and graduation rates (community articulated goals), the revitalization of neighborhoods and communities, and the well

being of children and families. The rationale for this coordinated and targeted approach is to more effectively “deliver” integrated services that improve the health, wellness, education, living conditions, and livelihoods of children and families in specific sections of Rochester’s Northeast geography. The process relied on the formation of a leadership team, the Subcommittee (see figure 1), which was a collection of residents, social service providers, city government staff, and school district personnel charged with marshalling resources and people to begin the first phases of the effort. The Subcommittee served as a proxy for the Zone itself, given the entities the members represent i.e., residents, social service providers, city government, and school district. They bring the historical development and current milieu of the Zone with them through their own personal and professional experiences in and with the Zone.

Name	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Organization
Anna R.	Asian	Female	Community Organization
Julie C.	White	Female	School District
William G.	African American	Male	Provider Organization
Sharice C.	African American	Female	Resident
David H.	White	Male	Provider Organization
Alicia J.	African American	Female	Resident
Reginald J.	African American	Male	Provider Organization
Moses L.	African American	Male	Principal
Karen L.	White	Female	Provider Organization
Netia P.	Latina	Female	School District
Derrick P.	African American	Male	Mayor’s office
Helena E.	Latina	Female	Provider Organization
Jesus S.	Latino	Male	Resident
Carina W.	Biracial (Puerto Rican, African American)	Female	Resident
Terrence W.	African American	Male	Resident
Dennis	African American	Male	Facilitator
Anika	Latina	Female	Facilitator

Figure 1. RCZ Subcommittee Members

The Strategy Team consisted of approximately 116 residents and community or agency representatives intentionally composed of 51% residents from the designated geographical area and 49% non-residents / service providers. The Strategy Team’s role

was to make critical decisions about the *content* of the plan for community change. The Subcommittee was comprised of individuals and organizations who represent a cross-section of the community and whose role was to maintain the integrity of the planning *process* and organize information for Strategy Team decision making.

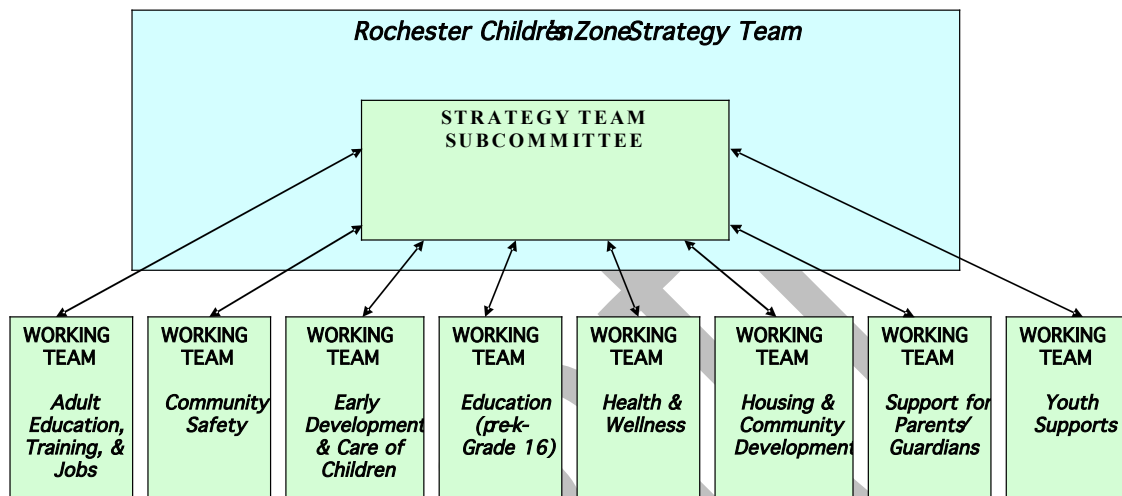


Figure 2. Organizational structure for participation in the planning process.

Dennis and Anika from the Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC), an outside consultant organization, helped guide and facilitate the community planning process. The IISC (<http://www.interactioninstitute.org/>) has facilitated successful community collaborations across the country and the world, and brought their expertise and experience to Rochester. Between January 2006 and February 2007, the IISC provided skilled facilitation, community planning and capacity-building expertise, content management, and training to participants in the initiative's planning process.

Theoretical Framework

Research on robust learning communities (Gutierrez, 2002; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) has involved the analysis of how classroom practices can occasion a productive mixing of perspectives, experiences, and resources, and how this contributes to students' learning. Our work builds upon and extends this work by examining broadly how cultural, social, and political entities are brought intentionally into contact at the intersection of school and community practices. To this end, the RSC2 initiative provides an important opportunity in that it is working for broad coordination of institutions that impact children's lives and are impacted by them. Rather than examining efforts that seek to socialize children into particular disciplines or communities, or school reforms, we are approaching this as a study of community development that is focused on bringing children into successful futures.

We are guided in our work by critical theories of social practice, which take people's participation in social activities as the starting point for analysis. A key claim of social practice theories is that practices are not 'given,' but rather always subject to contestation and negotiation. As Lave (1993, p. XX) argues:

The heterogeneous, multifocal character of situated activity implies that conflict is a ubiquitous aspect of human existence. This follows if we assume that people in the same situation, people who are helping to constitute "a situation" together, know different things and speak with different interests and experience from different social locations.

In this view, conflict is not only ubiquitous and inevitable, as Lave claims, it is also generative— individual and collective futures are actively formed in these struggles over the identity and meaning of practices and the persons participating in them.

We use critical race theory (CRT) as a lens in our analysis given the embedded nature of race in this community activity. CRT began as an outgrowth of critical legal studies as a response to the former critical paradigm's inability to address the fluidity of power in social systems, the importance of the lived experiences of people from non-dominant communities, the discussion around the functionality of "rights" to legally redress wrongs experienced by people from non-dominant communities, and the inability to "articulate how law reflects and produces racial power (Crenshaw et al, 1995, p. xxiv). CRT (as it applies to law and education) is a broad prospective that examines the role systems (legal, educational, and social) play in maintaining racial subordination of people from non-dominant communities in the US (Yosso, 2002; Stefancic & Delgado, 2001). Furthermore, CRT looks at ways in which the various "isms" experienced by non-dominant communities intersect to double or triple the effect of subordination, and has been utilized by scholars of color to analyze education as it relates to the maintenance of power and privilege for the dominant group in the United States and abroad (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Although the RSC2 project does not exclusively lie in the legal or educational realm, its interdisciplinary nature exemplifies how systems of oppression intersect in complex ways to maintain the subordination of children and families from non-dominant communities in the northeast section of Rochester. Because of the myriad issues the community movement attempts to address, CRT is a useful tool in the examination of the ways in which race is involved and evoked in a community effort that primarily affects African

American and Latino/a families and children in an urban setting. Through this lens and in response to specific requests from study participants, we are able to ask questions of the data concerning issues of race and racial organization as they present themselves during each phase of the RCC2 initiative.

We draw on CRT's conception of the "normal" science of racism in US society act as a basic premise for our investigation of race and its operation in this context (Tate, 1997). In this view, racism exists as a permanent part of American society. Specifically, CRT's focus on voice helps us understand how community voice was constructed and positioned as the initiative evolved. Ladson-Billings (1998) describes the important of voice in CRT as closely related to the way stories and/or narratives add "contextual contours to the seeming 'objectivity' of positivist perspectives" (pg. 11). Throughout our analysis, the stories that are told about racial discrimination and exclusion center around the ways in which participants learned inculcated racial designations and their meanings in relationship to themselves that are discounted and ignored because they are often not a form of outright racial discrimination. Using these principles of CRT, we locate the ways in which race and racial narratives play out in the initiative across multiple contexts.

Study design and data corpus

This multi-year ethnography of the RSC2 community change initiative draws on numerous sources of information and insight. As is characteristic of such methodologies, we are identifying data sources (people, documents, events) in an iterative way, following leads, suggestions, intuitions, and emerging themes that surface as important. A broad

listing of the kinds of data we are gathering includes:

- *Audio and videotaped interviews* with children, their families, and adults involved with the children in the community (e.g., school, social service and community development personnel), and the initiative's leadership.
- *Videotaped and audio taped observations* and *field notes* of community activities and meetings of leadership groups. Ethnographic approaches warrant a fluid process for selecting which settings in which we observe; therefore, as the study continues specific contexts are being selected, with the input of participants.
- *Documents*, including minutes of meetings, documents planning or reporting on the RSC2 initiative. Community records, including achievement and other test scores, staff comments, demographic data, news stories, community web logs (blogs) – any and all information associated with the community. This information is giving a picture of the ways that the community is portrayed in relation to institutionalized expectations.

For the analysis of the race narrative data, we found Goffman's concept of frame to be a useful tool in understanding how race and racism played out in interactions. Building on Bateson's (1972) concept of bracketing, Goffman (1974) defines frame as "the principles which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them" (p. 10). Similar to Gee's (2007) concept of D/discourse, frame constitutes and is constituted by ways of being and doing in interaction. In interaction, people project their "frames of reference into the world immediately around them, and one fails to see their so doing only because events ordinarily confirm these projections, causing the assumptions to disappear into the smooth flow of activity" (Goffman, 1974, p. 39). Assumptions in these

cases can be such things as taken-for-granted notions of gender, race/ethnic, and/or class relations. Frames we have thus far identified in the data include: power and money when race is involved; inter-group tensions (Black vs. Latina/o, white vs. Other, us vs. them, biracial vs. mono-racial); institutional and personal identities; social class (middle, working poor); white money and power vs. community/residents; white money versus service provider money; District money versus service provider money; geographic tensions (all the children in the Zone versus the original 7 schools); and the blaming of social service providers versus schools for failures in Zone schools (Ares, O'Connor, Larson, & Carlisle, (2007).

Lastly, we analyzed the narratives as interactional achievements that serve as resources for socializing emotions and attitudes, developing identities and interpersonal relationships, and constructing membership in specific communities and serve as primary means of making sense of one's own experience (Ochs & Capps, 1996). According to Johnstone (1990), a narrative is a story that is made up of a series of events and has a specific reason or point for being told. Narrative allows the teller of the story to establish order among events and is a powerful way for a person to create and communicate their identity (Young, 2008). This communication can also operate as a valuable social tool for connecting the self to others. Narratives are not only a reflective account of a situation; they present the narrator's unique point of view on the occurrence as they are both teller and listener (Ochs & Capps, 1996; Schriffin, 1996). In accordance with Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, the patterns of learning and interaction adjust over time both individually and within the group. This process impacts both new

and old members, thus it will impact the subsequent joint relationship of future participants as all stories and practices become unified. In the case of these race narratives, we must acknowledge that each narrator was influenced by their peers around them and any narratives that they heard before reciting their own. While we did not focus in detail on the interactions during the production of the narratives we use for this paper, they were nonetheless constructed in small group interactions and were comprised of personal experience in a story genre.

One thing we can say now about what we have learned from looking at the interactional piece is that when African Americans and Latina/os told their stories, group members from non-dominant communities in the circle responded most typically using affirmations in a call and response pattern. However, when white people told stories, the members from non-dominant communities shifted into more of an explanatory discourse and register that resembled teacher discourses. Using this framework to analyze the narratives enabled us to understand how narrators shaped and were shaped by their experiences with race and how they came to develop a self through an evolving reflective awareness of themselves in relation to people, events, and time within their narrative. We focused in particular how narrators indexed their own viewpoint through epistemic modalization (Wortham, 2001). In our data corpus, viewpoint was indexed primarily by the use of first person and third person pronouns.

Data Analysis

Race comes to the surface: The critical juncture

As the process of recruiting residents evolved, it became clear that there needed to be a person to lead the effort to bring in more residents, and to lead the Youth Support Work Team in particular. At a Subcommittee meeting, Helena suggested that Maria, a Latina and a native Spanish speaker, should be the person to do this. Reginald countered that he felt it should be an African American since they were the majority population in the zone. Unbeknownst to participants present at the time, this comment deeply offended Helena. At the next Subcommittee meeting, Helena lets the group know that she was upset about Reginald's comment. Given that Reginald was not present, the group resolved to bring it up at the next meeting when Reginald would be there.

At the next meeting, Dennis, an African American male and IISC facilitator, asks the group to go to the back of the room and form a circle to have what he called the "difficult conversation." He asked them to tell a story about a time when race became salient in their lives. Reginald was not there at the beginning, but when he arrived, the narratives paused while Helena told him that his earlier comment hurt and offended her. He immediately apologized, although he reframed his comments to be about class rather than race. Underlying tensions between African Americans and Latina/os were framed as something he did not know about or understand. As the initiative has moved to implementation, this worry about Latina/os not feeling part of the change has indeed been the case. As we continue into the third year, the RSC2 is perceived as an African American initiative and Latina/o participation is virtually non-existent.

This event set up a motivation to devote substantial time at a subsequent meeting to sharing experiences of race and racism among the Subcommittee members to clear the air and to determine how these issues could inform the larger process and plans. The group decided to bring discussions about race to the Strategy Team meeting. We use the stories generated at this larger Strategy Team meeting as the focus of our analysis and discuss these in detail in the next section.

Eliciting Stories about Race

After several Subcommittee meetings and daylong retreats, the Subcommittee took the race discussion to the larger Strategy Team. Dennis and Anika facilitated the meeting by introducing work by Singleton and Linton (2006) called Courageous Conversations. Participants were given a set of agreements to follow as they committed to "take the risk of being as honest as you can because this is one of the most difficult conversations one can have. In this country we don't know how to talk about racism, at least not across races". The agreements were to: stay engaged, experience discomfort, and expect and accept non-closure. Dennis explicitly stated the aim of the small group work as "to begin to unearth people's assumptions and beliefs so we can have a better chance at examining some of the stuff behind that". He began with his own story as a model for the group work. They had put a Subcommittee member at each table to guide the discussion given they had already experienced this process in earlier subcommittee meetings. Dennis's story:

So here's my story, so you can time me if you wanted to, oh actually Donna is going to time me in back. So I was the kid who loved school. I wanted to go to

school 365 days of the year and I campaigned for year round school when I was in elementary school and I wasn't very popular with my friends as you can imagine. So my parents are still (unclear) school and I loved coming home and learning and talking about what had happened in school. Well I went to junior high, so I was in 7th grade, and all of a sudden in algebra class people started calling me Oreo ... I had no idea what Oreo meant, I had no idea, and I could tell from how they were using it that it probably wasn't a good thing to be and so I went home and asked my parents and they explained to me what it was and I was crushed, because it was one of the first times in my experience of being in my black skin and being a male in my black skin that I came to understand that not everyone thought that I could or should love school and that I could be smart, not everyone thought that. Some people didn't make that simply because of the color of my skin. So it was one of the first times I had this rude awakening ... I was one of the first times that had become aware that somebody else could think that right. So I used to think that everyone thought that everybody could and should love school and do well in school and what I found out was that wasn't the case, that there's some people who made assumptions about me as a black male and that I shouldn't be interested in certain things or like school in a certain way and that hurt me, it hurt me pretty deeply, and so it developed my awareness of my, not so much of myself but an awareness of how other people might see me, simply because of the color of my skin. So for those of you who don't know, Oreo, Oreo cookie, black on the outside, white on the inside, so the idea was that I am black, have black skin and because I love school and love learning that that was the white thing and that that wasn't something, that wasn't a right of black people and we know that's not true.

At the close of the meeting, one of the subcommittee members, an African American male, came forward in front of the now reassembled whole group to apologize to Dennis. In a confessional tone, he said, "I was one of those kids who called you Oreo". He went on to talk about realizing how wrong this was and publicly apologized. Dennis was visibly moved. This confession prompted another Subcommittee member, a Latina, to say that she was ashamed now that she had tied up a "little white girl" when she was in elementary school. Her brief story generated laughter from the audience and served to release some tension.

We videotaped all of the small groups and audiotaped as back up at each table. The group

Narrating Race

broke up to "start thinking about a time or experience that developed your awareness of your race or ethnicity that led to a deeper understanding of your race and how others view your race". In what follows, we identify general patterns we found throughout all the narratives and provide examples. We separate themes for purposes of analysis, however, there are significant overlaps and connections between and across the themes that must be acknowledged. Figure 3 lists the narrative corpus (44 total stories, with 5 subcommittee members having 2), the race and gender of each person, the "location" of their story, whether they told their story about themselves or another person, and whether the story was told in the first or third person. The majority of participants were African American (60%); whites made up the next largest group (22%) and 12% were Latina/o; there were two self-identified biracial (1) and Asian (1) participants.

Race	Gender	Location	Self	Other	1st person	3rd person
Latina*	Female	College	X		X	
Latina (SC)	Female	Applying for job	X		X	
African American (SC-R)	Female	School	X		X	
African American (SC)	Male	School	X		X	
Biracial (SC-R)	Female	School	X		X	
Asian (SC)	Female	School/College	X		x	
African American (SC)	Male	School	X		X	
Latina* (SC)	Female	School	X		X	
African* American (SC)	Male	School/general	X		X	
African American*	Male	School	X		X	
White* (SC)	Female	School		X		X
African American (SC)	Male	School		X		X
White (SC)	Male	Travel		X		X
African American	Male	Wedding	X		X	

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African American	Female	School	X		X	
African American	Female	Workplace	X		X	
Latino	Male	Workplace	X		X	
African American	Female	Store	X		X	
White	Male	Public place		X		X
African American	Male	Shopping	X		X	
African American	Female	Job Interview	X		X	
African American	Female	General feeling	X		X	
White	Female	Travel		X		X
White	Female	School/neighborhood		X		X
African American	Male	School	X		X	
White	Male	Family beliefs		X	X	
African American	Female	Family (in the south)	X		X	
African American	Female	Job application	X		X	
African American	Male	School	X		X	
African American	Female	School	X		X	
African American	Female	Public places (in the south)	X		X	
White	Male	Job interview (in the south; Black girlfriend)	X		X	
African American	Female	Doctor's office	X		X	
African American	Female	College	X		X	
African American	Male	Shopping	X		X	
White	Male	Housing (landlord)		X	X	
White	Female	Housing (landlord)		X	X	
African American	Female	Waiting in line	X		X	
African American	Female	School		X		X

Figure 3: Race Narrative Data Corpus Overview

* Indicates two narratives in data corpus (one at subcommittee meeting and one at strategy team meeting)

Stories about self vs. stories about the "other"

Experiences participants told were all linked to systems and practices; that is, one to one

discrimination stories were not the majority. We found the majority of stories were about schools (37%) – *the educational system*; workplace or applying for jobs (.09% each) – *the employment system*; stores and shopping (.09) – *the economic system*; and quite a few stories about general activities such as attending social events, being in public places, and waiting in line (24%) – *the social system*. In this section, we offer description and analysis of each type of story and use representative examples of full narratives (without interactional responses) in our discussion.

Furthermore, one trend we noticed immediately was that the majority of participants from non-dominant communities (75%) told stories about what happened to them personally, while all but one of the white people (19%) told stories about what happened to other people. As the following example illustrates, the *education system* in the US is not immune to the crippling effects of racism:

I got to 6th grade and the teacher said that she had to break me to show me that no matter what that those tests must be wrong and what the test said was I cannot be still in (unclear). So (unclear) when I was very little I realized that no matter how well I read, no matter the fact that my (unclear) always agree, no matter what, this was what was going to matter when I first walked in the building, that I had to better, stronger, smarter, and faster just to compete; I don't care what anybody else thinks because I'm young, educated and black and I love myself and I love my blackness above all else, but I think what that taught me was that obviously I had to hold tighter to my blackness because if it threatened that many people that they had to say it because prior to that coming up before I went to school all I got was your blackness is your beauty, your hair is beautiful, your skin I beautiful, you're coming a part of mother Africa ... that's what was poured into me growing up and when I went to school kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade and 3rd grade my teachers I never had a black teacher until I got to college and (unclear) otherwise that's what the mindset was.

As this example shows, experiences with racism or the understanding of one's racial position were learned in educational contexts for the majority of African American and Latina/o participants (37%). Furthermore, the example illustrates one frame clash we

noticed (and discussed further below) between family values around race and deficit models of race endemic in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

There is also a clear distinction here between what the narrator learned about what it means to be Black from her home and what she learned at school about her racial designation, and what it means in the larger society as it related to her academic potential. The teacher in this case took the perspective that as a Black person, she was intellectually inferior and that the tests were wrong since, in her view, she could not be as smart as they said she was. And while the narrator resisted racist treatment from the teacher, she learned that as a Black person in America, her race would always matter. Similarly, the following narrative illustrates the frame clash between home and school, and the power of schools to position children from non-dominant groups as incapable.

Okay. I'm Alicia. I came from a large family, lived in a Hanover Housing. A family of—well, we lived in two parts of the city. The Rochester Housing Authority, Hanover Housing. And then, we lived on Reynolds Street across town. What I didn't know was I was Black. I did not know that. And my mother taught us that we were human beings and I was American. And that if I got a proper education, that I could be anything or do anything I wanted to do. And she said that when I go to school that the teachers are there to educate me and to, you know, give me more understating about reading, writing, and all the other things. Because I had a—I wanted to learn. I wanted to learn a wealth of knowledge. I love learning. And then, I went to school. And when I got to school, I found out I was Black. Everybody around me were—role models were White. There wasn't that many people of color that was in positions that made me think that if you get a good education you could move up the corporate ladder or something like that. And I wanted to write. I wanted to put my feelings and thoughts into writing. And my experience with my first teacher told me that who—who do you think you are? You're this little Black girl. You can't write. You can't put all those words down on paper. Who are you? So, that made me say, what's going on in this world. I thought I was a human being. That's what I am. I thought I was American. And I found out that you could be a human being in this world and be American, but you're Black. And that makes you less acceptable than all the other races that are around you. And I always asked the question, why. Ten seconds. Why? And it just confused me. And that was my first experience of what I did not

know. I didn't know I was Black until I came into the Rochester City School District.

In this example, the narrator clearly states that she learned of her racial designation and the derogatory meaning ascribed that designation in her schooling experience. This consistent pattern of racist transmission through schooling contexts reflects Bell's (1992) claim that, "despite undeniable progress for many, no African Americans are insulated from incidents of racial discrimination" (p. 3). In the case of the Black woman above, despite her mother's efforts to develop a "counter-narrative" to the master narrative of what it means to be Black, she was still forced to experience the oppressive nature of insidious racism. And this experience occurred in the very place where most African Americans send their children to get an education to better themselves socially and economically: school. Instead of reinforcing the student's understanding of herself as a capable and equal member of society, she was notified that she was not capable because of her racial background; a very different message than she heard at home. These early school experiences made her aware of her race and showed her the institutional boundaries that she could come to expect throughout future endeavors.

Unlike African Americans, the narratives of whites in this activity demonstrated a disassociation of sharing personal stories of race. Rather the tendency was to take an outside position when telling their stories and discuss the lives of other people. The following story told by a white male represents how whites talked primarily about what happened to other people and is representative of stories told about general activities (travel in this case):

Let's see, okay, start me. Mine was about 10 years ago I was rooming with (name deleted). Those that don't know, (name deleted), he happens to be Black. And we were in the (conference name deleted). So, we would travel together and we'd room together. And there's a couple of things I didn't know. We had some discussions and just the first night he put on this thing of baby oil. What are you doing? What the heck? ... And all of the sudden, he starts—brings out the baby oil and he starts putting it all over. And he goes—(name deleted), why are you doing that? He says, because otherwise I turn White. I didn't know about this. And then another one, it really hit me is when—I was going to talk about I really didn't know, is growing up of thinking that police were fair and that there wasn't any bias. And (name deleted) and I, laying there at night, shared different experiences. And even at—he was director of human personnel at the time. And he said in the last year he'd been pulled over like five times. I said, for what? He said, once I was walking down the street and they wondered what I was doing in the neighborhood. And other times, they just pulled me over. And I said, why? And he looked and me and—he really didn't look at me, but I go, seriously, what do think. And that just sort of hit me, that, in fact, he was being pulled over. He—not because of his education, I mean not because of his leadership, but because he was Black. And that just hit me, of just the inequities and the unfairness that was—that occurred towards Black men that I had never—and still have yet, to this day, I always tried walking down different neighborhoods, but I haven't gotten pulled over yet, so.

As an outsider, this person explains racial awareness through the account of one of his Black friends. While the narrator has no direct experience or emotional attachment to the situations that he has explained, his understanding of the stories positions him to learn from these stories and try to see from the lens of the story participant. Here it is clear that the first-hand experiences of being “raced” in America are exclusive to people from non-dominant communities. As a white male, the speaker has not himself experienced racism, which means that he does not have first-hand knowledge of what it means to be a marginalized person in this society. This absence of first hand knowledge created a void of knowledge for the White male as he did not understand the nature of his friend's cultural orientation exemplified through his “ignorance” of his friend's basic need for

skin moisturizer. Additionally, this conversation reifies the idea that white male discourse is the dominant discourse in US culture, so much so that there is little to no understanding among whites of the lives of people from non-dominant communities.

This exchange also brings up the importance of the voice of color in constructing the counter-narrative to the dominant White male discourse. CRT's voice of color thesis situates non-dominant narratives, specifically African American, to be valid knowledge, and in this case about the automobile stopping, expert knowledge on the issue of race in American society (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). These experiences revealed to the speaker that there is an alternative view of the world with which he is not familiar that is specifically tied to the friend's racial designation. In this instance the African American and his white companion experience the "lived" world differently because of race. That difference is reflected materially through the unequal number of times that they were both stopped for alleged traffic violations.

In addition to education, participants from non-dominant communities had an array of first-hand experiences that were shared. The following example represents stories told about the workplace – *the economic system*. Jesus, a Latino member of the Subcommittee, recalls when he went to apply for a job at another car dealership:

About how I got in car business, only three Latinos in the whole business in the 80's and so I would sit around with these guys and I would see how they would treat the minorities you know, because I didn't want to lose my job I would listen to them. They actually told me that you're not going to last long here, you know. So I proved to them that I was going to be better than them and I became a top salesman; I said I would like to have an application please and she looked at me and the first thing that came out of her mouth was that person's job has already been filled. I wasn't applying, I was applying for sales person. So she saw me as Latino right away she said, you know, she thought this guy is going to be ... so I

ask her the question why are you assuming that that's what I am applying for and she says oh nothing because you know, well actually she said Puerto Rican she didn't use the word Latina, Puerto Ricans usually we get a lot of Puerto Ricans applying for that job; So we're good for cleaning, no, kitchen work, that was an experience you know, really, and it made me stronger though because I started saying I'm going to be better, I'm going to be better, I'm going to prove myself, I'm going to prove that I can be a top notch salesman, eventually I did too, but the things that I hear you know telling me this is statements that actually come from people ... you're two steps from a coon, talking about black people you know, and I would have always, and I spent 20 years and I had to always stand up to them and say and throw something back at them to defend myself to say you know I prove it to you and eventually as time went on, you know, but this is the kind of thing, today you still hear it you know. They see you coming and they already.

This story explains Jesus' struggle in the workplace and the difficulty that people from non-dominant communities face when trying to achieve employment. Here, access to a job represents a privilege/property of whiteness (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1999) in which people from non-dominant communities must work harder than their white counterparts to obtain and keep employment. This narrative also identifies several stereotypes that the Latina/o population must endure in institutional settings. Additionally, the Latino male identifies an ascribed marking of status used by those in power to differentiate the Latina/o and Black populations, "you're two steps from a coon, talking about black people..." This tension reflects the situation explained in the critical juncture as aforementioned, and the historical misunderstandings that have taken place among these respective communities.

Furthermore, in this instance a Latino community member experiences first-hand racial discrimination as a fact of assumption. This situation is akin to accounts of racial profiling that have been reported by many scholars (and in the media) of people being stopped or prevented from going forth with their day, generally involving traffic stops

and White police officers, because they “appear” to be doing something wrong (Harris, 1999). In this case, our narrator was committing a racially charged act: applying for a job reserved for whites while Latino.

Jesus’ presence forced the clerk at the car dealership to access her racist card catalogue that framed him as only being capable of applying for positions as a cleaner at the dealership. The attendant was utilizing a series of shorthand, invisible cues that allowed her to act as a vehicle to perpetuate a system of inequality in the workplace. Delgado & Stefancic (2001) express how this happens when discussing issues of hate speech, “the history of racial depiction shows that our society has blithely consumed a shocking parade of Sambos, coons, sneaky Japanese, and indolent, napping Mexicans – images that were perceived at the time as amusing, cute, or, worse yet, true” (pg. 28). They go on to explain that these images are difficult to fight against and become a default index when referencing people from non-dominant communities. These stereotypical images support and maintain systems of inequality by allowing racism to reoccur in insidious forms that are later passed off as mistakes or white innocence. This system of inequality positions people from non-dominant communities as subordinated to whites and is deployed whenever white privilege’s “absolute right to exclude” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1999, pg. 60) is threatened by the, “contaminating influence of blackness” (pg. 60). In this case a Latino being admitted amongst the ranks of what had previously been an all-white, possibly male sales staff.

Frame Clash: Landlords and Residents

In an analysis of the relationship between teachers and students in learning situations, Green & Smith (1983) explain a frame clash as a “discrepancy between expected and actual events” (p. 360). They identify a frame clash when either one or more participants in an interaction come to feel that their expectations are not being fulfilled. Generally the results of frame clashes include situations of misunderstanding, confusion, tension, anger, hurt and/or conflict (Green & Smith, 1983). In the case of the race narratives, we observed the presence of a frame clash through the motives of a family of landlords who own properties within the zone. According to their narratives, there is a clear distinction between their reasons for affiliation in the zone, and the reasons of the zone’s residents. We present two such narratives below, first one from a white male who is the brother of the white woman whose narrative follows his.

In the two examples below, we show how the difference in views that are held by the white landlords and the residents of color are made explicit when White landlords voice a master narrative about housing issues. This perspective is in direct opposition with the problems and conflicts residents of color have expressed about the housing crisis in the zone. One particularly poignant viewpoint that the male landlord offers is that instead of the mother of the child that has lead poisoning being responsible (where if she was white she would be responsibly caring for her child) she is positioned or framed as being “hard headed” because she did not inspect the home diligently enough before moving in and is now suing him.

White male landlord:

For every one bad person, there's ten good ones behind 'em. But what so what happens when you've got, when people get done wrong by that one bad one, some people lose sight of those good ones behind 'em. That's one of the reasons that I've stayed and tried and think about staying and trying to stay (inaudible)... Because I know that there's a lot of really good people. It's unfortunate that we have to look hard at every. A lot of people have to look hard at everybody to wonder if they're good or bad because (inaudible)... There's a man that was in my building twenty years (inaudible) . He only had a niece in California (inaudible – other conversations louder)... I've got another woman now. That's trying to sue me for lead poisoning to her kids. She moved into my house that was my own home (inaudible)... An excellent environment to raise a family. (inaudible). Only lead they found just was one threshold. Four inches by thirty-six inches with only about an inch and a half of paint remaining on it. And it was like that and I didn't paint it... Because every time you paint something, you gotta keep painting it. It is a solid oak threshold. Nevertheless it's cost me twenty-five hundred dollars so far against that lawsuit. And... I'm sorry that people are hard (heads?). And they don't really look. But...everybody puts their shoes on the same way. Everybody puts their pants on the same way. One leg at a time. And I don't see people as (inaudible)...

White female landlord (his sister):

I was raised in the suburbs. I've spent most of my adult life in the-in minority neighborhoods. Just-not-not be-for any reason, only because I like them. Because they're less money and I don't need to spend a whole fortune and be house-poor. So um, so anyway, what I didn't realize – I have two main points I wanna say but. What I didn't realize growing up is that seeds were planted kind of just in my head. I didn't even know were there. Mainly, not because my parents did it. They weren't like that at all. But um but, being segregated and when you only see the black community on TV and some violent – you know - in a mugshot. Y-Y-You do start to have these ideas in your head. And I remember having myself slapped in the face. Because I became a landlord when I was about 25. And um after actually in a building that um on in the-in the zone. And these two people came at one time and looked at my apartment. Two different candidates. And one was a white couple that looked like they could be my relatives. They were in their mid twenties. No kids. Um married. And umm...then there was this teenage girl with a baby who was black. I mean mixed race but would be considered black. And um I didn't realize but the whole time I was totally thinking I'm gonna rent to the couple. I just talked to them more. Made more I contact with them. And I didn't even realize I had these seeds in my head. And then I went home, checked their application, and she blew them out of the water. She absolutely gave me a wonderful application, and they gave me a horrible application. Like (inaudible) .

And I was like ‘O my God. I am prejudice...’ I guess I just have to...I just have to accept the fact that I am you know. That this is a part of my programming. I didn’t realize it’s there. And so I mean that’s me. It’s a huge awakening. And it’s something I try to be conscious of. And I would have to say things flow through my head that because of the way I was raised. It’s like a program in a computer. And it’s not because anyone taught it to me. It’s because I was segregated...and the media showed things a certain way. So um but in my adult life I have many many stories on both sides that I - I would say. Both were positive experiences in the black community and negative. I would say (inaudible).. But then the other one I really wanted to say is last week in this I had experienced the other opposite racism in this process. I have found that when I speak up in my group I am condescended to by our facilitator. Who oddly even though I am a ghetto dwelling white female....so our facilitator is a very very young black suburban dwelling male. And I find he condescends me frequently in the group. And I’m just amazed about it I’m just like whoah. And I’m thinking, who are you to decide about (inaudible)... And that at the end of the group, a person of – a black person came up to me and said ‘do you realize that you are perceived as a rich white woman looking out for your- your own interest?’ You know you’re not perceived as having credibility. Like when you speak up you’re being dismissed. And I mean I am fighting this whole (inaudible). And I have been told by people in the black community ‘you will be painted this character.’ (inaudible)..

Bell (2004) indicated, “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policy-making decisions. This convergence is far more important for gaining relief than the degree of harm suffered by blacks or the character of proof offered to prove that harm... [and only so far so as not to be disturbed, or to disrupt] the superior societal status of whites” (p. 69). It is clear in these examples that the white landlords are willing to participate in and entertain conversations about community development and reform when there is a perceived benefit to them (allocation of funds for rental housing repair, relief from current lawsuits for lead, etc.). Based on the interest convergence thesis, if there was no “perceived benefit” to this involvement it could be expected that the white landlords would be apathetic or vehemently opposed to the community development

movement. The source of this opposition or apathy would be related to the level of threat the movement held for the safety of white privilege.

In this case, the landlords are outraged at the implied “accusation” that they could be racist, as they have Black friends or have lived in Black neighborhoods. They are acting as oppressive agents and asserting their white privilege (white innocence is not a plausible excuse in this case) by re-offering a master narrative in the place where the voice of color is being privileged. This privileging of the voice of color is a direct assault on white privilege’s ability to grant whites the rights to “reputation and status property” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1999, p. 60). They are thereby being associated with the negative image in this environment (racist) and feel the need to counteract that association with a master narrative that only reinforces the ideals that they are participating in the community development project to advance their own interests.

Overt racism

We found that stories about overt racism (defined as experiences where they felt discriminated against) were told by virtually all people from non-dominant communities in attendance. An African American male told the following story about shopping for school clothes with his mother:

About seven years ago, me, my mother, and my two little sisters, we were shopping for school clothes and—in a store. The lady had rung something up and it was a different price from the sign because it was on sale. And my mom said, I’ll show you the price (inaudible) she went to go get it. And then the lady said, we can’t trust her. She probably moved it. And then on the—and then she—my mom started talking to her about (inaudible) she thought my mom was getting loud, so she called the police and (inaudible) she said, there’s a Black woman in here

causing trouble. And my mom's like, what does that have to do with it. So, the police came and the lady ended up getting fired. So, I was seven years old, (inaudible) what does the color of skin have to do with us buying clothes (inaudible).

In this story, the speaker invokes a stereotyped image of African American women as troublemakers. Fordham's (1993) research on how African American women resist images that describe them as contrary helps us understand how this mother was positioned. By equating loudness with criminality, the saleswoman hides her fear of an assertive Black woman who is contesting accusations about switching price labels and thus constructs permission to call police. The story construction mirrors standard expectations (beginning, middle, end) that in some ways neutralized the negative shaping of the self that might have also occurred. The matter of fact closing ends similarly to "just so" stories in children's literature ("so, the police came and the lady ended up getting fired"). This ending symbolizes the end of one chapter and the moving toward a new one. For people from non-dominant communities, often times these racial experiences are merely one of many to reference, and there is an understanding of the possibility that there are many more experiences to come.

Other overtly racist events included name calling in school or when moving from one school to another, being followed in stores, staying in segregated areas in the south "staying in your place", and finding racists notes in school desks or on car windshields.

I was taught the difference between ra- racism when I was very young. I was born and raised in Baltimore Maryland (inaudible...). I went to school and (inaudible..) pledge of allegiance (inaudible...). My parents separated. She (we) came to Georgia. It was a hard lesson you know. The first day of school. (inaudible...)He told the principal and they took me in the office and beat me for there for more

than three hours. Before I admitted saying something to him that I didn't even say. I spent eight years in Georgia going to the office almost every day. Getting ten licks or more, more than once a day. With boards with duck tapes on them. And the barber straps (*then*)? Hit me so many times pain didn't even (inaudible...). And it went on that way all the time I was there until I just dropped out of school (inaudible). Because the teachers called me – I mean I learned so many names. Coon-these are teachers – porch monkey you know darkface. I had one teacher take me out to the hallway and threaten to take me out to the back there and beat me up. And Maryland was like the Mason Dixon line. So you come up here you're gonna say I'm from the South. I go down there they call me Yankee. I didn't know what a Yankee was. Still don't really know. But you know that's what they call me. Yankee, (n-word³), porch monkey. I seen the Klan. At that point in time I learned. Twelve, I think like twelve or thirteen, I learned a big difference between...(colors). I wasn't used to , I didn't- In Baltimore all I seen was blacks. I didn't even see anything-see that many whites until I went down South. Then didn't see thing besides whites – like Hispanics and stuff – until '91 when I came to Rochester. So... I guess it just came to me in. Like it like... It wasn't like in small sections it came like in one powerful bunch.

This speaker tells the story in temporal sequence, although he goes back and forth between past and present verb tenses to accommodate the audience. The inciting event, moving to Georgia after his parents separated, is when he “learned a big difference between (colors)”. The physical and verbal abuse, while traumatic, seems almost normalized through the use of commonly accepted narrative structures such as past tense, temporality (Ochs & Capps, 1996), and in the closing lines that bring the plot to an end with a resolute theory of the events (“so...I guess it just came to me in, like it like, it wasn't like in small sections it came like in one powerful punch”).

Narratives can give insight into how the narrator, protagonist, and listeners intersect at a multiplicity of morally organized, past, present, and possible experiences (Ochs & Capps, 1996). The two excerpts we present below represent how a cultural narrative common in

³ We substituted “n-word” for the term used due to our political stance regarding the power of words to do harm.

the African American community, that of “staying in your place”, is located in the past and the present. The first story told by an older African American woman recalls her experiences growing up in the segregated south before the civil rights movement.

Well coming from... Virginia I realized a difference from the moment I went to school in first grade (inaudible)...and from there I started noticing how when we came down the street, my mom would say, ‘we gotta... stay on this side of the street’ (inaudible)... ‘why we can’t walk over here?’ you know and she’d say ‘no we gotta stay on this side of the street’. Because sometimes (inaudible)... I noticed that when we went to like restaurant areas in the neighborhood, we had to go to the window. They went in the door (inaudible). So I knew-I knew right from there.... its a difference. I mean we had to, stay - you know like momma said, ‘stay in your place’. And when we went to the theatres, we couldn’t sit in certain sections. And when we had to go to the bus we had to go to the back. So I noticed it from early on (inaudible)... ‘don’t get into trouble’. If you did something (inaudible), you would be the one to get into trouble. My mom still wouldn’t go into the restaurant. So it stayed with my parents you know even though I tried to overcome it.

This example shows how racial positionality is learned through interaction. In the case above, there were real consequences for this African American mother not teaching her daughter the racial rules of her time and requiring her to act accordingly. This ideology was transmitted from mother to child not to instruct her that she was inferior, but to instill a sense of racial awareness that was tied directly to the threat of legal or physical harm. This example illuminates the ideals of racial realism. In this case it is evidenced that racial categories have real “tangible benefits” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17) expressed through the ability of whites to go into the restaurants and sit down to eat as opposed to picking food up at the window to take it home to eat. There was a clear difference in allocation of privilege between Blacks and whites that may have been too complicated to explain to a child, but the underlying message of danger was clear: there will be consequences if we do not “stay in our place”.

These ideals maintain themselves across time and space and affect persons long after the perceived real threat of violence or outright racial discrimination is gone. As we illustrate below, a more recent story by a younger person suggests a similar cultural development of these ideas throughout the African American community – based on the shared experiences of others. An African American woman tells the second example as she remembered visiting her grandmother in Mississippi and a trip to the store. She was incensed that the store clerk asked her for three forms of ID when she went to pay for their purchases.

I'll go next, you guys. I grew up in Mississippi. I was born and raised in Mississippi... Belzoni, Mississippi. And I came to Rochester when I was 13. But firsthand, I grew up everyday knowing that I was Black. There were just a lot of—just the way that people would look at you when you came down the street—my grandparents were—I mean, they reared me, but the way that we were all brought up—the same thing as (name deleted), education was top. You've got to work your—you do your best to always excel and do well. And we would just get these stares because we always—my grandparents worked really hard to make sure that even though we didn't have as much as everybody else, we always had nice clothes. I mean we—and education was just poured into us. Just do your best, do your absolute best. So, as I grew up, going into the grocery store with my grandmother, because we had money to pay for our food, it was the way that she was treated—I was very angry inside because I'm—as a young person, I'm growing up and I'm like, how dare you talk to my grandmother that way or treat her that way. And later on as I grew up and became an adult and made trips back home because she still lives in Mississippi—I remember going into a store to purchase an outfit for her and I whipped out my credit card. And they're looking at me like—three forms of ID. I'm like, you know what? If you don't believe this belongs to me, I can take my money and shop elsewhere. Come on, mom. Let's go. And she's like, wait, wait, wait. I still have to live here when you're gone. And I'm like, oh my gosh. That was like late '90s. So, it's still today.

The narrator uses her rearing in Mississippi to illustrate how she conceives of herself in the present. Her moral stance is indexed by her references to doing her best and in the high value she places on education. The “stay in your place” narrative is invoked when

her grandmother cautions her to not make a fuss because “I still have to live here when you’re gone”. She brings her understanding and emotion to the present as she ends the story with “so, it’s still today”, thus linking the past and the present.

This link between the past and the present shows the contradiction that while, race is a social construction, and it is maintained or upheld by racial minorities. In the case of both of the narratives above these socially constructed meanings for Blackness were upheld by the narrator because there were real “material” consequences associated with the daughter’s misunderstanding or the granddaughter’s disregard of the power behind the social construction of race.

Conclusions/Implications

We have presented preliminary analysis of a comprehensive collaborative community initiative in which community members, school district leaders, and community organizations completed the planning year. We presented evidence on two claims: 1) social, cultural, historical, and political relations between groups have significant impact on the community’s ability to construct and implement the initiative; and that, 2) race proved to be at the forefront of their conversations and slowed trust building, had material consequences for the ways that race were included and excluded in documents, highlighted existing power relations, and invited or not the participation of community members.

As the personal experience narratives we have presented indicate, racialized events are "ordinary, not aberrational - 'normal science'", the usual way society does business, the

common, everyday experience of people in this country" (Delgado& Stefancic, 2001).

The basis of this country's race problem is the black-white binary that stems from slavery in the US (DuBois, 1903, Delgado& Stefancic, 2001) and is endemic to everyday life for communities from non-dominant groups. The potency of this problem is exemplified in our claim that racism extends to all non-dominant groups regardless of shared historical experience of the Atlantic slave trade. For our study this inclusion (by exclusion) includes Latina/os in the zone. The prevalence of race and racism in America privileges whiteness by the means of excluding all people of color and positioning them as "other" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The persistence of racial formations as constitutive of daily activities helps explain why African Americans and Latina/os participating in this activity told stories about their personal experiences with racism as opposed to observed experiences of racism. The matter of fact "its just the way it is" resignation was palpable.

This resignation to the fact that racism will always be experienced in this country shows how people from non-dominant communities will resign to not fighting racism at every turn and will not take the liberty against all odds to name their reality through the use of their unique voices of color. Bell (1992) discusses this point by discussing the views of Franz Fanon, "In a similar vein, Franz Fanon conceded that 'I as a man of color do not have the right to hope that in the white man there will be a crystallization of guilt toward the past of my race....My life [as a Negro] is caught in the last of existence'" (p. x). Bell himself goes on to comment that although Fanon recognized [as Bell does also] that racism was endemic in US society, he also "insisted" that people of color recreate their reality at every turn and refuse the prescribed narratives put before them by the dominant

group. This is a difficult task that must never be put aside. The apparent unwillingness to stay the course because of the dismal outlook is one of the reasons why race is such a difficult topic to discuss. The danger lies in allowing that perceived hopelessness to eradicate racism prevent the conversation from occurring in the first place.

These findings have significant implications for teachers and teacher education programs. Based on our analysis, a great deal of what subordinated groups learn about their subjugation in society is learned in schools/educational settings. Recognizing and fighting against these marginalizing practices should impact the ways in which teacher education programs engage in conversations about race and racism with all students, especially mainstream students as they tend to represent a large portion of our teaching force in urban areas. To that end, it will be important for teacher education programs to ask the “hard questions” about race and white privilege that will help students work through their conceptions of race and racism in US society. This is important work that must be done. Teacher education programs that do not attempt to engage pre-service teachers in examination of their views and change them will do a disservice to all the children that the candidates will encounter in their teaching experiences.

The nature of the race conversation in the meetings we showed was useful in its potential to exhaust new and different communication on race than that which would normally come up in day-to-day interactions. On the other hand, the flaw in this process is that there was never a follow-up on the results of these conversations, nor was there any further direction on how the RSC2 initiative would move forward after receiving such

information. Therefore the results of this communication may have benefited those who participated, but may not have transferred into a measurable impact for the RSC2 or within the zone.

Our analysis indicates how important racial identity is in current times, e.g., it is not a historical problem that we have solved. In many ways, what we have presented here is not new, at least not to members of the African American and Latina/o communities; daily microaggressions inflict deep and long-lasting pain (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The believability of their narratives to those present reflects the historical embeddedness in African American experiences and culture that is not just a performance, but a felt reality (Maines, 1999). It is also not a new finding that white narrators invoked white innocence (Ross, 1997) as an excuse for their shock at the realization of racism. What we hope to accomplish through this work is the continued conversation, reflection and action, or praxis (Freire, 2007), about race and racism that will move this country forward.

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