ABSTRACT

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON RAISING ISSUES OF RACE AND RACISM

WHEN EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN

By

Oona Fontanella-Nothom

January 2015

This qualitative research study brings to light the need for a Critical Race Theory approach to early childhood education. Ten early childhood educators were interviewed and asked about how they teach about race and racism with their students. Four major findings are identified and described within the study, Devaluing Children's Ability; Ethnic Identity and Cultural Belonging; Critical Race Turning Points; and Challenges of Teaching About Race and Racism. Critical Race Turning Points is new, innovative conceptual tool and model that describes motivations of educators that work towards positive, social justice oriented change in their teaching. Conclusions recommended in this study include: the need to for a professional organization for early childhood educators working for racial and social justice, a mandate for more consistent education levels for early childhood educators, and inclusion of topics of race, racism, and social difference in early childhood education curriculum.

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON RAISING ISSUES OF RACE AND RACISM

WHEN EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN

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CRT   Critical Race Theory

EC   Early Childhood

ECE   Early Childhood Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the field of early childhood education (ECE),[1] the curriculum for young

children centers predominantly on cognitive development, physical development

milestones, and social and emotional development (Miller, 2001). Additionally, teacher

preparation focus in the ECE field is typically concentrated on teachers preparing their

students for future grade levels, referred to as "school readiness" (Pelo, 2008; Schiller,

2009; Wortham, 2011). Frequently, ECE curricula tend to overlook the importance of

teaching young children about societal differences. Research has shown that children as

young as 2 years old begin to notice distinctions between themselves and others

(Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 2001). What they may see and experience is a

world of social stratification and structural racism. For example, new data has recently

surfaced demonstrating that although Black children make up only 18% of the preschool

population, they are expelled from preschool at a rate of 48% (U.S. Department of

Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). People of Color are jailed and criminalized at

higher rates than their white[2] counterparts (NAACP, n.d.) and are dramatically

underrepresented in political office (Baxter & Keene, 2014). Early Childhood (EC)

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[1] ECE refers to the education of young children, from age birth to age 8.

[2] I purposefully have chosen not to capitalize the w in white throughout this study
to call attention to the unearned privileges of people who identify as white in the United
States.

educators, certainly, have the opportunity to work on addressing issues of race and racism with ECE curriculum in meaningful ways. The purpose of this research study is a deeper understanding of the manner in which early childhood educators approach ideas of race and racism with their students. In addition, the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of EC educators' experiences and approaches in their field regarding race and racism, in a field where little is written that documents teacher experiences.

A Brief History of Early Childhood Education

Several sources place the origins of a formal ECE schooling close to the 18th century (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000; Peltzman, 1998). Most of these formal educating experiences originated from Europe as a direct result of the Industrial Revolution. Previously, young children were primarily cared for in the home by family. At the turn of the 20th century, an educator by the name of John Dewey, an American of European descent, had a large impact on ECE that shaped early education and theory. Dewey believed the function of a teacher was to be guide or facilitator, a role that still resonates with many current educators. John Dewey's lab schools demanded the need for kindergarten schooling while simultaneously focusing on the need for learners to be invested in schoolwork by mandating topics to have meaning and purpose, in order for true learning to occur. Italian educator Maria Montessori, originally a doctor, developed the Montessori method in poor areas of Rome with children who at the time were considered to be deficient. Montessori noted how children developed individually and she developed self-correcting sensorial learning materials to assist children to learn and develop. Jean Piaget, a psychologist who was born in Switzerland and resided

throughout Europe during his life, created a set of four specific ordered stages that children go through in their development.

The education concepts developed by these three theorists are much of what guides early education and teaching today. However, these educational theories lack in the acknowledgement and exploration of racial and social difference and how this impacts young children's learning and development. In fact, the theories that currently support ECE largely originate from theorists of European descent (Cruz, 2009; Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997). Evidenced by the white, European origins of ECE, ECE theorists accepted as prominent within this field do not include any Persons of Color (Cruz, 2009). Consequently, this one-sidedness permits the Euro-centricity of ECE to go unchallenged.

As early education became more widespread in the United States, an organization named the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) was formed in 1926. Originally named National Association for Nursery Education (NANE), this group has become the primary advocate for best practices for the education of children from birth through age 8. Shortly after the civil rights movement, concerns were brought to mainstream media and politics regarding families and children in poverty and many of those included Families of Color. Born out of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty platform, The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created the federally funded Head Start early childhood program that was introduced in 1966 for families of low socioeconomic status. At the same time, ECE programs and schools that were privately funded through tuition, fundraisers, and in kind donations thrived as well. The Head Start schooling program was designed for economically and socially disadvantaged

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children (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). The main goals of the Head Start program were to place children from disadvantaged backgrounds who were, and continue to be, mostly Children of Color, on more equal footing with their middle class peers and provide comprehensive services to families. A lesser-known aim of the Head Start program was to raise socioeconomically disadvantaged children's IQ scores (Zigler & Muenchow, 1994). Head Start was originally conceived upon a deficit mindset regarding socioeconomically disadvantaged Children of Color.

An important milestone for the field of ECE is when NAEYC put forth the publication, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (DAP) in the 1980s. The DAP guidebook emphasized achievable, developmentally appropriate learning goals for young children. Furthermore, DAP advocates for the need for ECE curriculum to be responsive to a children's present level of development. In 1996, DAP was revised to include a section on cultural differences. Canella, Swadener, and Che (2007) have critiqued DAP for its surface level approach and its disregard of the unique needs of culturally, socially, and racially diverse students.

Recently, ECE has been a prevalent topic with policymakers and others involved in decision-making regarding education. With large slashes in education in the United States federal budget as well as most state budgets, Head Start as well as other state funded early childhood programs, have been forced to grant admission to fewer young children and in some cases, close their schools completely (Cook, 2013). Nevertheless, for the first time, a president mentioned the importance of early childhood education in his speech to the nation (Nyhan, 2013). In February 2013, President Barack Obama remarked,

Study after study shows that the earlier a child begins learning, the better he or

she does down the road… but fewer than 3 in 10 four-year-olds are enrolled in a

high-quality preschool program. Most middle-class parents can't afford a few

hundred bucks a week for private preschool. And for the poor children who need

it the most, the lack of access to a great preschool education can have an impact

on their entire lives. And we all pay a price for that. And as I said, this is not

speculation. Study after study shows the achievement gap starts off very

young. Kids who, when they go into kindergarten, their first day, if they already

have a lot fewer vocabulary words, they don't know their numbers and their

shapes and have the capacity for focus, they're going to be behind that first

day. And it's very hard for them to catch up over time. And then, at a certain

point--I bet a lot of teachers have seen this--kids aren't stupid. They know they're

behind at a certain point, and then they start pulling back, and they act like they're

disinterested in school because they're frustrated that they're not doing as well as

they should, and then you may lose them. And that's why, on Tuesday night, I

proposed working with states like Georgia to make high-quality preschool

available to every child in America. Every child. (Obama, 2013).

The importance of ECE is stressed in the President's speech as well as the discrepancy in

access in quality ECE programs by socioeconomic status. As the President stated in his

speech, "kids aren't stupid" and we as a country currently deny access to ECE by

socioeconomic status and therefore, by association the child's race (Ross, 2011). Having

most early childhood classrooms filled with mostly white, mostly economically affluent

children reinforces the structures of racism (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

<u>The Problem: Teaching About Race and Racism in Early Childhood Education</u>

A solution to dismantling structures of racism and social stratification is through a liberating approach to education (Freire, 2000). A liberating education or education for liberation can be defined as a problem posing method of developing a critical consciousness of the world. The problem posing method uses questions to encourage deeper thought about topics, compared to a rote learning approach that emphasizes the memorization and restating of facts. In this critical consciousness, students and instructors alike seek to free themselves from the bonds of political, social, educational, and economic oppression. Liberating education is one of the main pillars of critical pedagogy. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) contend, "critical pedagogues… draw on social and critical educational theory and cultural studies, [to] examine schools in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes dominant society" (p. 23). Without engaging in critical pedagogy, educators remain unconscious in regards to social, political, racial, and gender differences and issues that affect how they relate, consider, and treat students.

Teacher education and preparation is a possible site where EC educators could be taught about critical pedagogy and ways to approach topics of race and racism with young children. Unfortunately, EC teacher preparation requirements vary in consistency from state to state. In California, where this study takes place, one only needs four college courses to teach in private preschool. At federally funded programs, requirements are higher but there is still inconsistency in educational attainment. Illustrated in the diagram below, educational attainment of early childhood educators across the United States is varied and irregular.
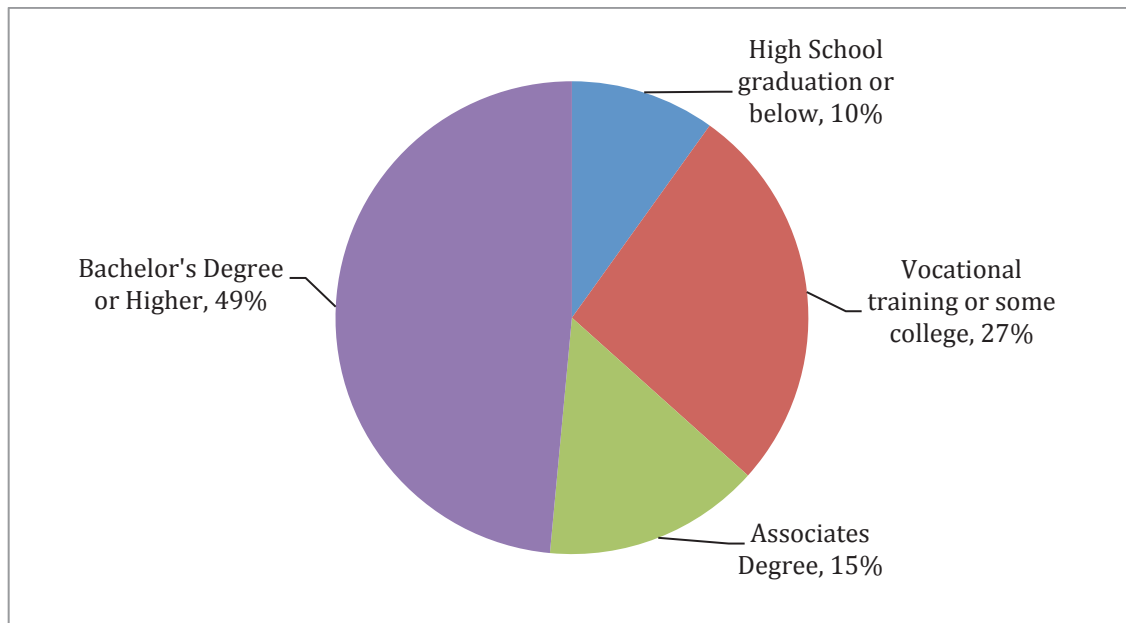
FIGURE 1. Estimated EC educator educational attainment in the United States. Source: Saluja, Early, & Clifford (2002)

As shown in the figure above, less than half of all EC educators have a bachelor's degree or higher. With more than half of all EC educators having associate's degrees or less, it is difficult to know what amount of teacher preparation coursework they have taken. Additionally, these educators may not have been exposed to ideas like critical pedagogy in the limited coursework they have taken. Therefore, most educators may not fully realize the benefits of talking about race and social difference with young children.

Compounding the challenges that exist when considering EC educators' preparation to teach young children about race and racism is the fact that ECE literature is limited in the area of critical pedagogy, critical race studies, and early childhood

development. A great breadth of work can be found regarding general education, K-12

education, and higher education and critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres,

2009; Delpit, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000; Kumashiro, 2004;

McLaren, 2006). Therefore, it is very likely that many young students will and are

receiving an ECE void of critical pedagogy. The consequence of this type of education

of students further maintains structural racism, educational inequities, unequal social

status, and other oppressive conditions in society (Brown, Souto-Manning, & Tropp

Laman, 2010; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). However, one critique of critical pedagogy is

the underestimation of the significance of race in lives of all people, instead placing a

sizeable focus on class relations (Allen, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1997). As a result of the

limited amount of critical research done, the research field of ECE provides inadequate

amount of critical inquiry work toward race studies.

This study focused on exploring the ways in which early childhood educators

teach about and raise issues regarding race and racism with their students. This study

helps to provide a deeper and more complex comprehension of the manner in which early

childhood educators approach ideas of race and racism. In order to do this, I used a

critical race theory framework to examine how race and racism mediates educational

experiences.

<p align="center">Theoretical Framework</p>

Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated from the legal field. CRT developed from

a need by legal scholars, lawyers, and others involved in policy to name oppressive

experiences, policies, and conditions specific to People of Color (Bell, 1989, 1995;

Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1984; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012;

<p align="center">8</p>

Matsuda, 1991). CRT underscores the necessity of experiential knowledge and storytelling of Communities of Color as an integral part of understanding and analyzing racial inequality. One of the fundamental principles of CRT is that racism in our society is indeed the norm and thus is rooted in the configuration of our nation and maintained through policies, institutions, and other structures. CRT assists scholars, educators, and other activists in understanding that racism exists within a complex interaction with other social and cultural factors. CRT also takes a critical look at many factors affecting people such as gender, social class, and sexuality and acknowledges the intersectionality that these multiple, often overlapping identities play in attempting to name multiple forms of oppression that people experience. Nevertheless, CRT generally focuses on the centrality of racism in the lives of all people, while acknowledging and critically examining the intersectionality and influence of classism, sexism, gender and other systems of oppression.

Applications of CRT to the field of education have been expanding rapidly within the last 20 years (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005). In one of the first articles ever published on CRT in education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) critique the highly pervasive multicultural education approach and posit that race has been ignored as an explanation for educational inequality. CRT in education provides a method of analyzing oppressive practices and policies within education settings.

According to Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001), CRT in education has five main tenets specific to education. Those five themes are: (1) The centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (2) The challenge to

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dominant ideology, (3) The commitment to social justice, (4) The centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) The interdisciplinary perspective. These five principles assist researchers, educators, and activists in having a specific framework with which to analyze and approach experiences of all people. Looking at an absence of Theorists of Color in addition to the lack of critical pedagogy in the education of ECE educators, one can observe that there is little exploration of critical race studies in ECE (Cruz, 2009; Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 2001; Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997). CRT tools assist educators in shedding light on theoretical perspectives on race and historical inequities that have plagued our society for generations. Still, at an early age children form strong ideas about people based on race and ethnicity (Derman-Sparks & ABC Task Force, 2001; Goodman, 1952; Mac Naughton & Davis, 2009), and by not including topics of race and racism in our early childhood classrooms we send hidden messages to children about the importance of preserving structures that sustain institutionalized racism.

An integral component of CRT is understanding the role of whiteness and white supremacy as an ideology that supports and reinforces the racist actions in our society that are thought of as common sense ideas. White supremacy has complex meaning to many people. According to Ross and Mauney (1996), "white supremacy holds that the interests of people of European descent are superior to those of people who believe, act, or look differently than 'normal'" (p. 552). White supremacy, as I am using it, is the idea that being of European descent, or white, is most ideal. Therefore, all things relating to the ideals of being white, over time, in the United States, are best as well. This idealness is positioned in our society as normal and desired and sustains other ways of being and

existing as abnormal and objectionable. The poetic words of bell hooks (1989) assist in

truly understanding white supremacy and how it permeates all people's methods of

thinking and actions:

> …"white supremacy" is a much more useful term for understanding the
>
> complicity of people of color in upholding and maintaining racial hierarchies that
>
> do not involve force (i.e., slavery, apartheid) than the term "internalized racism"-
>
> a term most often used to suggest that black people have absorbed negative
>
> feelings and attitudes about blackness held by white people. The term "white
>
> supremacy" enables us to recognize not only that black people are socialized to
>
> embody the values and attitudes of white supremacy, but we can exercise "white
>
> supremacist control" over other black people. (p. 113)

hooks describes white supremacy as a force that becomes absorbed in a Person of Color's

psyche through social actions, political actions, and public policies. hooks's description

of white supremacy demonstrates that this construct, while deeply experienced, is

challenging to name in everyday lived experiences. Identifying white supremacy is

difficult when it has become part of our every day common sense, an act that is not part

of our conscious action taking, but instead part of what Joyce E. King (1997) names a

"dysconscious racism" which she defines as, "a form of racism that tacitly accepts

dominant white norms and privileges. It is not an absence of consciousness but an

impaired consciousness" (p.128). Utilizing King's definition, one can understand how

white supremacy has become common sense by positioning dominant white norms as

natural and neutral, and attempts to disrupt these white norms as disobedient and disloyal.

According to Wildman and Davis (1996), "racism can only occur where it is culturally,

socially, and legally supported" (p. 315). Additionally, Earick (2010) argues, "white children progress through school strengthening their identities from the preferred status identity, not a racial deficit model, whereas children of color must work through White preference. It is within this context that children construct individual and group identities" (p. 132). These arguments illustrate the concepts of white and whiteness as normal, desired, and preferred. This aspiration for whiteness allows white supremacy to become common sense, the dominant ideology of our society.

White supremacy is underscored as the dominant ideology in society in CRT literature. In this study, CRT is used as a lens to critically examine the field of ECE. Utilizing CRT enables us to understand that racism is the norm in our society. One of the hallmarks of employing CRT in educational research is the attempt to subjugate the dominance of racism in our society through naming the reality of racism one witnesses, partakes in, and experiences. In addition, using a CRT lens allows for an interdisciplinary approach where I brought the fields of CRT, Education, History, Sociology, and ECE together to make sense of the experiences of early childhood educators who are interested in approaching topics of race and racism with their students. I used this approach to develop the stories from my research participants into a written body of work that documents early childhood educators' experiences in the field regarding race and racism. To explore this topic, two research questions guided this study:

<u>Research Questions</u>

1. What academic, personal, and cultural experiences influence the manner in which early childhood educators teach about race and racism?

2. Which forces influence an early childhood educator's ability to teach, or not to teach, a racially conscious curriculum?

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

The significance of this research study is the new insights to be gained about experiences of EC educators who are interested in teaching their students about topics of race and racism. The potential for the knowledge gained in this study can work to inform policy and practice about the realities, possibilities, and limitations about teaching topics of race and racism with young children. Additionally, motivations and inspirations of educators that desire to teach about race and racism with their students can be studied. This study is beneficial to those in the early childhood community including but not limited to: practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and students. This study is beneficial to those that are interested in teaching about topics of race and racism, or those who understand its importance. The study is also significant to people who are involved with ECE but do not have a great deal of knowledge or experience with how to introduce topics of race and racism with students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review that follows focuses on three themes that emerged within

academic writings related to the topic of teaching young children about race and racism.

The first is the how racism in our society is ordinary, normative, and supported through

social structures and laws. In the second theme, research is presented that demonstrates

the importance of including race as a part of school curricula, especially in early

childhood education programs that set individuals on a path towards life-long success. In

the final theme, literature is introduced that explores current educational strategies and

discourses regarding race and racism that are used in early childhood education and other

fields. In the research reviewed there is strong evidence that young children are capable

of identifying and exploring constructs of race (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force,

2001; Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997; Hyland, 2010; Tenorio, 2008).

However, it is important to note that in this review of the literature regarding race and

racism and early childhood education (ECE) it was necessary to use literature regarding

race and racism from outside of the field of ECE. The literature on the role of race and

racism in ECE is limited and I was tasked with the responsibility of helping to build a

foundation from seemingly disconnected avenues of study.

The Omnipresent Role of Racism in Society

Most Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars would assert that racism is usual and familiar in our society. To examine the current presence of racism in United States society, I apply a CRT lens to underscore the all-pervading racism that occurs daily. As Delgado and Stefanic (2012) contend, "[racism is] the usual way society does business, the common, every day experience of most people of color in this country" (p. 7). A frequent way that this racism permeates through society is through the purported objective of taking a fair and neutral perspective, known as a colorblind positionality. A colorblind positionality is when one actively takes the stance of not acknowledging racial differences with the contention of being unbiased. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) refers to this position as "color-blind racism" (p. 25). When we reject any acknowledgement of racial differences, we also refuse to acknowledge differential treatment of people based on race. This position of colorblindness has become an ideology in our society, especially for much of white society.

A colorblind positionality contends that a person's perspective comes from a place where race, or color, is unnoticed and therefore, is not considered. Bonilla-Silva (2010), in his book, *Racism Without Racists*, identifies four frames that are used to enact and maintain color-blind racism in current discourse as being fair and neutral. The frame that I am engaging is *abstract liberalism,* which is connected to the discourses and policies regarding equal opportunities for all people regardless of race. Bonilla-Silva describes abstract liberalism as "using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., 'equal opportunity,' the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial

matters" (p. 28). The frame explains how issues of racism continue to persist today even though many in society argue that racism disappeared after the civil rights movement. Shedding the bonds of racism is a choice and the words in our current political and social discourse do not mandate that we make the choice to be anti-racist. This positionality or ideology is how our society supports a structure that values white skin, white values, and white ideals over all others in our society.

Abstract liberalism illuminates how People of Color are not able to approach purported equal opportunities from the same starting point as white persons. People of Color, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people, and other oppressed persons have been marginalized for years by unequal laws and discriminatory practices that make the idea of equality a fallacy. An analogy for this may to be to consider life opportunities as a marathon starting line. White heterosexual males, with the most privilege, start right behind the line while others start the race further and further down the starting line. This could understandably make the supposed equal opportunity to compete for a job, spot at a university, and so on not equal at all and instead provides preferential treatment to those who are privileged. Applying the frame of *abstract liberalism* to understand colorblind approaches to ECE allows for the development of an understanding that when curriculum does not address racial differences; stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination are allowed to persist. Additionally, when early childhood educators fail to see and acknowledge racial differences, it is difficult for them to recognize the unconscious biases they have in their teaching.

Neil Gotanda's (1991) investigation into colorblind constitutionalism leads to further awareness of the ways that racism structures United States society. Colorblind

constitutionalism is the claim made in the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1897) case. In this case, "separate but equal" was the ruling by the United States Supreme Court that protected racially segregated practices. The court stated that the U.S. Constitution represents a neutral position in regards to race or other socially imposed difference. This colorblind approach to the Constitution ignores that the constitution was written from a mono-cultural privileged perspective: white, upper class, and male (Gotanda, 1991). Furthermore, slave owners who had a vested interest maintaining domination over People of Color wrote the Constitution. Gotanda argues that by taking the position of colorblind constitutionalism, a person claims to take the standpoint of non-recognition of race. In order to use this technique, as Gotanda refers to it, there are three steps one must go through. First, there must be an identifiable race or racial characteristic; second, the race or characteristic is recognized; and third, this identification is subsequently ignored.[3] Oppressive structures and encounters are experienced daily by People of Color, including preschool-aged Children of Color. Gotanda argues that claims to be blind to color or race are active actions of ignoring and invalidating the lived experiences of People of Color.

Further proof that the U.S. Constitution does acknowledge the existence of race is through the examination of the historical Supreme Court Case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The *Brown* ruling made de jure racial segregation of schools illegal, taking the stance that separate was not equal. Often, these court decisions, as well as the strides of the civil rights movement, are used as evidence that racism is a condition of the

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[3] Gotanda (1991) shares a story from a colleague who had a manuscript edited to take the words "my brown face" out of an important telling of a personal, racist encounter. If this phrase had been omitted, the story would have not made sense and the racism experienced by the author would have seemed unfounded. This example illustrates how colorblind constitutionalism silences voices that attempt to disrupt the colorblind ideology of U.S. society.

past. Referred to as living in a post-racial society, a stance held by those who ascribe to this colorblind ideology, is that we should move forward without race being a part of our larger societal conversations (Cho, 2009; Fan, 2011). However, recent research demonstrates that, in fact, schools are just as racially segregated as they were before the *Brown* decision, if not more so (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012). Accordingly, the elimination of race from our dialogue prevents the discovery of racial inequities that currently exist. An illustration of those racial inequities is that whereas 60% of the total United States population receives some sort of early education (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005), of that 60%, "In 2000, only 23 percent of Hispanic three-year-olds were in preschool compared with 43 percent and 49 percent of their black and white peers, respectively" (p. 178). Additionally, Bainbridge, Meyers, Tanaka, and Waldfogel (2005) have found in regards to preschool, "enrollment rates differ most markedly for Hispanic children... Hispanics are enrolled at rates ranging from about 5 to over 20 percentage points lower than other children… The gap between Hispanic children and other children has widened in recent years" (p. 730). More recent data shows as recently as 2011, "more than half of African American children and 63 percent of Hispanic children ages 3 to 4 do not attend preschool" (Ahmad & Hamm, 2013). These examples of unequal enrollment are not examples of individual acts of racism, but an illustration of a larger problem of racial and social stratification and inequality.

Racism's Affect on Schooling Experience and Access

Further exploration of early childhood education access reveals additional educational inequalities. Much early childhood education is private, not public and therefore highly expensive. In fact, Brainbridge et al. (2005), share "the price of private

child care and preschool programs is so high that some have likened it to the burden of funding a college education" (p. 724). Therefore, those with economic capital exceedingly access ECE. The question must be asked, what are the possible consequences if a child does not attend preschool? Research demonstrates that students who receive a high quality early childhood education are more likely to find success in their K-12 schooling (Lee & Burkham, 2002) and are more likely to attend college (Reynolds, Temple, Ou, Arteaga, & White, 2011). Based on the evidence, Bainbridge et al. conclude that, "early inequality in education threatens to breed further inequality" (p. 725).

Access to a quality ECE leads to school success in both primary and secondary school settings (Bainbridge et al., 2005; Early Edge California, n.d.; Lee & Burkham, 2002) as well as higher education (Ramey & Campbell, 1991; Reynolds et al., 2011). Consequently, as less Children of Color access ECE than their white counterparts, one could make the link that this exclusion of Children of Color from ECE hinders them from having success in their K-12 education. Demonstrated in the above statistics, the access of Students of Color education has greater barriers than white students.

The Psychological Toll of Racism on Children

The effects of living in a society where racism is normative, supported through an ideology of colorblindness, along with the enormous barriers in accessing education, takes a psychological toll on the identity of Children of Color (Brown et al., 2010; Segura-Mora, 2008; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Additionally, children of all races are growing up in a society where they see People of Color marginalized on a regular basis. For example, one way that we can see the effects of this is through the Clark's doll

experiment of 1947 (Clark & Clark, 1947). In this experiment, children's self-perceptions as related to race were closely examined. Both white and African American children were shown a light skinned doll and a dark skinned doll and asked questions such as: which doll looks bad, which one would you like to play with, and similar types of questions. Overwhelmingly, both races of children chose the light skinned doll as desirable and the dark skinned doll as undesirable. In 2010, CNN employed child psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer to replicate similar research as the Clark doll study of 1947 ("Study: White and Black Children Biased Towards Lighter Skin," 2010). In this study, groups of children were asked about skin color, which they preferred and why. Instead of being shown dolls, the children were shown five illustrations of children, varying in skin color from lighter skin to darker skin. The results of this study produced similar results as the first experiment. Once again, children associated the dark skinned dolls with negative traits and the light skinned dolls with positive, desirable traits. Additionally, many of the dark skinned children expressed that they wished they could have lighter skin. Both of these studies illustrate how young children internalize the negative messages regarding being a Person of Color in the United States society.

Racism in our current society is pervasive, common, but yet difficult to name (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Rosenberg, 2004). The intersection of both racial and class stratification affects equal access to education (Burciaga, Pérez Huber, & Solórzano, 2010). In fact, when they enter school, "the gap between wealthiest children and the poorest children is already pronounced. Children from low-income families are a year or more behind their more advantaged peers" (Ahmad & Hamm, 2013, para. 3). Moreover, 9% of all white people in the United States live in poverty, while 25, 24, and 16% Black

or African Americans, Latinos, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders live below the poverty line, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). People of Color are consistently subjected to living below the poverty line. Young children are poised to internalize the racist messages that structure society and recreate those messages into words, actions, and messages that continue the cycle of the oppression of People of Color (Brown et al., 2010). To disrupt this pattern, researchers must further explore how children come to understand and adopt the socially oppressive messages of race and racism and how teachers can work to transform their teaching with young children to be more race, or color, conscious.

<u>The Importance of a Color Conscious Early Childhood Curriculum</u>

There is a small, yet growing body of research advocating for an ECE curriculum regarding race, racism, as well as other societal biases. The belief of many educators and parents is that curriculum which focuses on race and racism during the ECE years is not age-appropriate and should be delayed until later years when students are better equipped to discuss these issues (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 2001; Husband, 2010). Additionally, some teachers express a belief that we should teach from a meritocratic standpoint, thus believing all children start school on equal footing and need to be treated with a uniform teaching pedagogy (Nieto, 1998; O'Grady, 1998). However, in ECE, educators have the opportunity to individualize learning with smaller class sizes and more intimate relationships. Early childhood is a prime time to discuss issues of race and racism with young children.

Indeed, children as young as 3 years old begin to identify their race and the race of others with regularity (Mac Naughton & Davis, 2009). Mary Goodman (1952) was

one of the first researchers to create a timeline of the trajectory in which young children come to an understanding of race. She argues that in the first phase, children are two to three years old when they begin to notice and comment on differences and similarities. In the second phase, children are four to five years old when they begin to internalize external messages about racialized existences and express thoughts. The third and final stage is between seven and nine years of age when children begin to demonstrate an understanding of racial stereotypes and prejudice. In this last stage, Goodman notes that if adults demonstrate silence regarding race and racialized experiences, they teach children that there is a negativity that should be associated with these discourses. Therefore, it is possible to assert that there are implicit messages of affirmation received by young children in regards to the validity of societal prejudice and stereotypes when educators refuse to teach concerning topics of race and racism. Learning from Goodman's (1952) influential work, one can recognize the early childhood years as a critical and rapid period of development for a child's formation of ideas about race. If children are taught from a colorblind approach, on the contrary, it is possible for students to become passive learners of racist attitudes.

A modern take on research into children's understanding of race and racism is included in the work of Swindler Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, and Powers-Costello (2011). In this research, a strong case is made for including discussions on race and racism in early childhood classrooms. Swindler Boutte et al. (2011) argue, "silence in early childhood classrooms on issues of racism prevents preparation for active and informed participation in our democratic society which includes multiple (even dissenting) perspectives" (p. 339). Avoiding issues of race and racism in early childhood classrooms

teaches that being disengaged from race and racism is an aspiration for students.

Swindler Boutte et al. (2011) confirm that early childhood-aged children are indeed

aware of racism, evidenced in their research when they inquired to first and second grade

children, "what is racism?" and the children responded to them through imagery and

verbal responses. The perceptive response of one student was, "I think that racism is

people that want Mexicans to leave" (p. 338). This response is simply one example of

the young students included in this research that perceive racism through their everyday

experiences.

Making race and racism a part of the curriculum provided the students in

Swindler Boutte et al. (2011) research study with the opportunity to have a space to hear

their thoughts and get feedback from their peers as well as their teachers. An essential

part of this study is the learning component for teachers. Swindler Boutte et al. share a

table of suggestions that includes stimulating questions for teachers to use to start this

conversation with the children. However, they recognize the discomfort of most early

childhood educators in doing this type of anti-racist work. They emphasize the

importance of teachers continuing to do this work on regular basis so that it becomes the

norm rather than exception and in doing so these educators will grasp, "that the process

becomes easier with practice [and] will hopefully encourage and inspire educators to inch

out of their comfort zones on behalf of the children whose care is entrusted to them" (p.

335). Additionally, Swindler Boutte et al. connect the need for teachers to engage with

young children regarding race and racism as an ethical and moral issue, as part of a

teacher's sworn duty to do no harm. The researchers advise that when teacher's do not

creating time in their classroom curriculum for conversations about race and racism

"threatens the full humanity of all" (p. 341). There is harm involved in not allowing young students a place to discuss race and racism and the distress that it causes.

The need for early childhood educators to engage personally and professionally with race and racism in their daily practice is a theme woven through research included in this study. Schoorman (2011) discusses the importance of early childhood educators in understanding the politics of education. Once educators are engaged in the politics of education, they are able to engage in much needed critical analysis of education policy. Schoorman discusses the need for culturally relevant, social justice oriented ECE curricula that she terms *critical multiculturalism*. A scrutiny of policy encourages educators' ideological approaches to be explicit and encourages educators to explore their biases. Schoorman further illuminates the uniqueness of ECE as a critical time period where educators have the opportunity to make personal connections with students unrestrained by the standardized and often scripted curriculum of most K-12 public schools. In early childhood education, educators have the chance to make the curriculum culturally responsive. Some of these curricular themes could explore inequalities that plague the lives of many adults, and could potentially to lead to an emancipating education that would truly work towards the equal society that is echoed throughout United States rhetoric.

Husband (2011) defines another way for early childhood educators to engage with race and racism. Husband (2011) describes the four theoretical tenets essential of, uniquely situated to, and defining of an anti-racist educator. The tenets of anti-racist educators are: attacking oppressive power structures, encouraging students to think critically, consistent affirmation of the value of Students and Scholars of Color, and the

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value of praxis. Husband explains that these four tenets are what differentiate an anti-racist educator from a multicultural educator. First, anti-racist education supports a critical perspective that acknowledges that racism is normative and present in structures of society. Secondly, similar to Schoorman's critical multiculturalism, is the political nature of anti-racist education. Anti-racist educators and their students actively seek to expose and dismantle the racism in present society and schools by countering the dominant discourse. In contrast to multicultural education that strategizes to work within current educational structures, anti-racist education seeks to overtly dismantle the structures that exist. Thirdly, anti-racist education acknowledges and examines the intersectionality of racism with economic subjugation. Particular attention and focus is given to these two specific forms of oppression, emphasizing how class structures much of our society. The fourth and final tenet of anti-racist education is the emphasis on theory to practice based on Freire's (2000) construct of praxis. Young children are constantly constructing meaning of their understandings of race. Anti-racist education, as described by Husband, seeks to question commonly accepted messages about groups of people that children receive from their world. Anti-racist education underscores the presence of racism in the structures of society and seeks to challenge the messages students are learning about racism that invoke stereotypes and misinformation.

The different curricular approaches described earlier, although varied and distinctive, do have a common thread. These curricular methodologies and the educators who employ them advocate for early childhood curriculum to engage with race on a critical level. Educators must be willing to be knowledgeable and explicit about their pedagogy in order for race and racism to be critically explored.

Current Early Childhood and Educational Pedagogies and Strategies

In this section, I discuss the curricular strategies presently written about the ECE field and include strategies employed by other disciplines when attempting to educate with the goals of disrupting institutionalized systems of inequality. A tension exists between the colorblind curriculum that currently leads the early childhood field, and the color conscious curriculum advocated for by the small group of ECE scholars discussed earlier. With knowledge of the importance of color or racially conscious curriculum, exploring the construct of whiteness, and how it continues to be the dominant but yet seemingly invisible foundation of much colorblind education policy and practice, is helpful. Ullucci and Battey (2011), explore the social construction of whiteness as an ideology to develop three key components of whiteness. They are:

> an unwillingness to name the contours of racism (with a particular downplaying
> of white privilege); avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group
> (making whiteness "normal" and ethnically identified peoples "other"); and a
> minimization of racist legacy (seeking to place racism in a historical, rather than
> contemporary, context), (p. 1199)

The ideals of whiteness have become the norm of the dominant discourse in the education of our nation's youth (Brown et al., 2010; Picower, 2009). Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2011) urge educators that,

> it is not enough to teach them [students] to embrace racial and cultural diversity.
> We must also help children develop individual and group identities that recognize
> and resist false notions of racial superiority and racial entitlement and realize how
> they would benefit from a society free of systemic and individual racism (p. 3).

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Additionally, Peggy McIntosh (1988), in her well-known article on white privilege, makes note of 26 unearned privileges she gains just by being white. One of the privileges she lists is: maintaining ignorance about languages and customs of People of Color (p. 174). To understand what this means for young children and their teachers is that if educators identify as white, they do not have to learn about systematic racism to protect your privilege and power. Additionally, in their research on understanding how language hides and maintains systems of privilege, Wildman and Davis (1996) share their findings that, "the power to ignore race, when white is the race, is a privilege, a societal advantage" (pp. 317-318). As evidenced by this work, there are strong structures in place that keep colorblind-racism and colorblind ideologies a systemic problem. Beginning to expose these structures in ECE educator's practice and/or attitudes is a path towards changing whether they will continue to exist.

As university faculty, Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips (1997), taught for several years at a private university in Southern California. They co-taught a course to both undergraduate and graduate students in the ECE field regarding the impact of culture and racism on the field of ECE, teachers, and the students themselves. Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips contend that a colorblind approach to educating young children is generally what occurs in most early childhood settings. They claim that many college level early childhood teacher preparation courses use a colorblind approach as well. Within the university course they taught and developed over a number of years, they sought to work towards the collective goal of becoming anti-racist educators. Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips (1997) applied their experience teaching this course to assist

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in developing an outline of what is needed to become an anti-racist educator within four broad goals:

1) *Deepen self-knowledge* through the development of a deeper understanding of each student's racial, ethnic, and cultural identity. Each student will then be able to make connections between personal experiences and broader social implications.

2) *Acquire a new information base* through a more complex and rich understanding of institutional nature of racism and the ways that racism is evident through different parts of social structures.

3) *De-center and extend empathy* through the learning that takes places regarding the experiences and historical narratives from individuals outside of a student's specific racial and cultural background.

4) *Become activists* within each student's sphere of influence; they are willing to take their newfound knowledge and understanding in order to work for change (p. 4).

This description of the steps to take to become an anti racist educator explains the necessity of engagement with current racial discourses regarding race and racism to achieve this goal.

Hyland and Heuschkel (2009) have likewise written about their experience as university faculty teaching early childhood educators about social justice and culturally responsive teaching at a public U.S. university. The course that they co-teach was part of the university teacher preparation program and was the only required class in the program to focus on issues of diversity. Hyland and Heuschkel argue regarding the strong role of

educational institutions and structures in marginalizing students. The main goal in the course for their future educator students was to be able to identify the way these oppressive practices operate through two major assignments in the course. The first is entitled *cultural inquiry* where students are asked to, "cross a cultural border and attend an event 'owned' by a group that has been historically marginalized and of which they are not members" (p. 823). The goals of this assignment are for teachers to learn about different communities outside of a structured school setting and appreciate the capital that a diverse group contributes. The second assignment is entitled *institutional inquiry,* and asks students to take a critical stance in regards to an educational institution examining not only what groups or people are sidelined but also who benefits. After reviewing students' papers, the instructors found although completing these assignments assisted students in being able to name the different ways that students are oppressed by institutions, the students still seemed to struggle with understanding how the oppressive acts were being enacted. They found, for example, that students had difficulty differentiating individual prejudice from institutional bias. In both of these cases pertaining to teacher preparation courses, a missing voice is that of the future educator. What knowledge, strategies, and influence do potential educators gain from these courses and how has this affected their teaching practice and pedagogy?

Because scholarly works on critical race early childhood practices are limited, I draw from research done at public mid-west university. This university's student composition is predominately white, however two Women of Color educators, St. Clair and Kishimoto (2010), have written about the deliberate attempts made at this university to impart race throughout the curriculum, rather than as a special day or special session in

classes designated with the *racial issues model*. A racial issues designated course must

include the components of: understanding, education, awareness, and student growth. St.

Clair and Kishimoto share regarding what leads their teaching pedagogy,

> I resist the Eurocentric model of teaching where teaching is seen as objective by
>
> taking into account our subjectivities and making connections between the class
>
> content and the students' lives. I use my own vulnerability and self-disclosure as
>
> a way to invite students to open up and challenge their own privileged and
>
> marginalized identities (p. 20).

As a result of these courses being taught from different disciplines in the university, the

racial aspect of the courses are not taught from a homogenizing People of Color view;

unique experiences for different racial and ethnic groups are analyzed and explored. A

challenge expressed by St. Clair and Kishimoto is this unique focus taken by the racial

issues model designated course can lead to other professors feeling like race does not

need to be considered in their classes. Although at an institution of higher education,

this model could be applied to early childhood settings. Early childhood educators

should be vulnerable within their teaching, drawing from their own experiences with race

and racism. Early childhood educators can embrace a racially conscious perspective in

the classroom, but remember to be aware that this is not something to happen one day,

one week, or one holiday. This teaching must be woven throughout the curriculum.

An example of such curriculum is *equity pedagogy* which Hyland (2010)

describes as an early childhood teaching strategy that seeks to demonstrate "that injustice

is endemic and is sustained by the generally accepted structures, practices, relationships,

and discourses that make up the fabric of everyday life and function to privilege some

groups and marginalize others" (p. 82). Equity pedagogy seeks to build awareness of deep-rooted inequities and encourage change and conversation. Hyland postulates that most ECE curricula are led by a Eurocentric or white foundation of knowledge, which leads to that form of knowledge being the most significantly respected. Consequently, Hyland makes the case that if educators do not work at disrupting this dominating knowledge, they are therefore validating and supporting it. In an equity pedagogy approach, multiple perspectives are shared and time is included in the curriculum for dialogue regarding injustice. Hyland shares her frustration regarding the lack of empirical studies done in the ECE field that examine how teaching approaches work to dismantle prejudicial norms, practices, and beliefs. The question that should be asked, then, is if early childhood educators have a framework to work with such as equity pedagogy, why does the colorblindness approach still remain the main frame in the field?

Derman-Sparks (2001) posits that colorblindness is, "a soothing view for whites" (p. 6). Because most educators are indeed white (NCES, 2008), using a colorblind approach protects them from feeling uncomfortable. Derman-Sparks introduces an *anti-bias approach* to early education that "teaches children to understand and comfortably interact with differences… to recognize and confront ideas and behaviors that are biased" (p. 7). The anti-bias approach is a stance to education where everyone in the education environment is put in a place where their constructs about people and ideas are challenged and varied perspectives and experiences have a place to be heard. The teacher puts the anti-bias approach into practice in their classroom. The anti-bias approach seeks to urge early childhood educators to step up to the responsibility of educating young children with the agenda of "actively challeng[ing] the impact of bias on children's

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development" (p. 5). The anti-bias approach encourages the use of a bicultural education where one learns about their individual culture and the dominant culture as well. Adopting this binary view of education can be problematic in that many people, and children straddle the border between multiple, overlapping, and inseparable identities. Having the expectation that it is possible to separate but yet honor these unique parts of our self and society seems like a difficult and unbalanced task.

Several scholars have written about culturally responsive teaching (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009), which attempts to draw a link from the cultural disconnects amongst home culture and school culture. This approach to teaching mandates that educators inquire about students' cultural backgrounds, which may include race, language, ethnicity, general interests, and other areas. Once the teacher has learned important information about his or her students, the teacher can incorporate individual learning styles, cultures, prior knowledge, vocabularies, music, and sports into the curriculum. In culturally responsive teaching, the central focus is that teachers make an effort to gather discoveries about their students, puts him or herself in their shoes, and work to determine what makes learning more meaningful to the students. In early childhood education, this approach to teaching often looks like teachers who are inclusive of children's primary language, ask for family photos, include a child's family in school events, and makes an effort to recognize cultural traditions and holidays important to each child's family. This approach to teaching, although constructive, needs to be taken to a deeper level to include topics of race and racism in curricula. By taking teaching to this next level, educators can encourage children to recognize systems of power and privilege and hopefully inspire them to positively change the world.

Critical literacy is an attempt to make early childhood curriculum take that next step, as written about by Vivian Vasquez (2004). Critical literacies work to take children's interests in the world around them and use those interests as curriculum. With a critical literacy approach, children have the opportunities to analyze how they, their peers, and their teachers come into contact with aspects of the world with an individual positionality based on each individual's experiences. Once the children have analyzed the situation or text, the next step is action. Vasquez gives several samples of the ways she has engaged with critical literacies in her work with young children. One of those examples is, "our friend is a vegetarian" (p. 99). In this instance, an issue was raised in the classroom about a barbecue at the school. One of the students informed the class that he had not been able to eat at the barbecue because he was a vegetarian. The students spent a great deal of time talking about this issue, and relating it to fairness and treatment of others. Then, students took action by choosing to write a letter to the organizers of the barbecue and requesting them to include vegetarian food at the next barbecue. Vasquez explained how her students exposed structures of marginalization as a critical social concern when they began to seek out ways to solve this problem. How could an approach of critical literacy take on social issues and concerns of race and racism in an early childhood classroom?

The challenge of equity pedagogy, the anti-racist approach, an anti-bias curriculum, culturally relevant pedagogy, critical literacies, or the racial issues model is that with early childhood teacher education and preparation grounded in historically Eurocentric white thought (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; Vaught & Castagno, 2008), how can these important pedagogies be learned, understood,

discussed, and implemented? As I have shown, race and racism are implicit and explicit in all parts of education and every day life. Race needs to be considered in ECE, both in inclusion of race and racism as curriculum as well as considering how race affects unequal educational trajectories and access. Several scholars have written about attempts to implement race focused curriculum but more work needs to be done. Lastly, I have included current pedagogical approaches for color conscious or anti-racist early childhood education. The literature regarding current ECE strategies reinforces both the importance of teaching young children about race and racism and addressing one's own biases as an educator. When educators teach young children without the inclusion of race and racism as part of the curricula, they are accepting and replicating colorblind ideologies which is still informed by race, but a subjugated and ignored acknowledgment of race.

Missing from the literature currently present in academia is the voices of early childhood educators. These educators are in the trenches of early childhood classrooms everyday. Reflecting upon earlier evidence of the unequal racial makeup of both students and teachers in early education classrooms combined with the dominant presence of colorblind positioned teaching. A case can be made for a need for critical race based education of these teachers as well as an effort made through policy to have a more racially diverse teacher and student base.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

A qualitative research design was selected for this study. According to Plano

Clark and Creswell (2010),

> qualitative research is a type of research in which the researcher studies a problem
>
> that calls for an exploration; relies on the views of participants, asks broad general
>
> questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants;
>
> [and] describes and analyzes these words for themes (p. 66).

Qualitative research allows for the complexity and diversity of participants' narratives to

be captured. Thus, a qualitative research design was chosen from a desire to explore and

describe multiple perspectives from educators about their experiences teaching race and

racism with their students.

Description of Site and Participants

My research study participants were recruited from a California State University

(CSU), a public, comprehensive university in the greater Los Angeles area. The CSU

system has historically been the chief preparatory academy of educators in California

(Esch, Chang-Ross, Guha, Tiffany-Morales, & Shields, 2004). In fact, "the California

State University has, over the last decade, prepared more of California's teachers than all

other institutions combined, and roughly 8 percent of the nation's" (The California State

University, n.d. para. 1). In studying educators in California, a CSU campus provides a

robust sample. This site was intentionally selected because of the diverse racial

demographics of the Los Angeles metro area and the university (see Figure 2 and 3

below). Consequently, this site of research is preparing a racially diverse body of

educators to teach a racially diverse body of students.
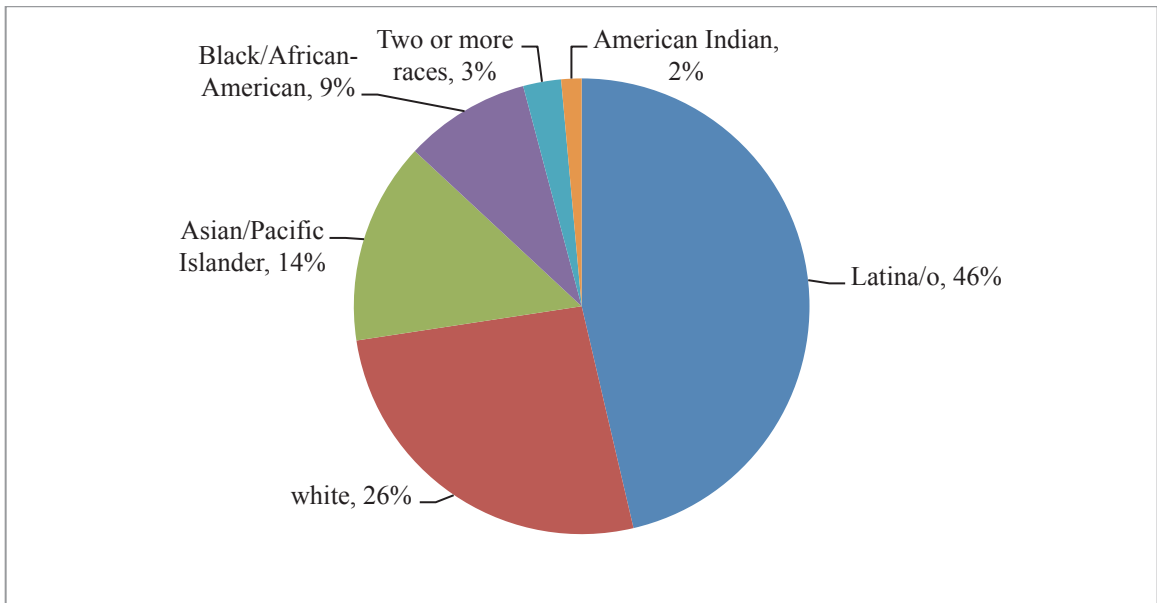
FIGURE 2. Greater Los Angeles county demographics, 2012. Source: US Census
Bureau (2012)

Included are race demographics of: the greater Los Angeles area (Figure 2), the

entire student body of the university (Figure 3), the College of Education in the university

where participants were recruited (Figure 4), and early childhood educators from across

the United States (Figure 5). These statistics are significant because they represent the

general, geographically larger trends of the sample recruited for the study.
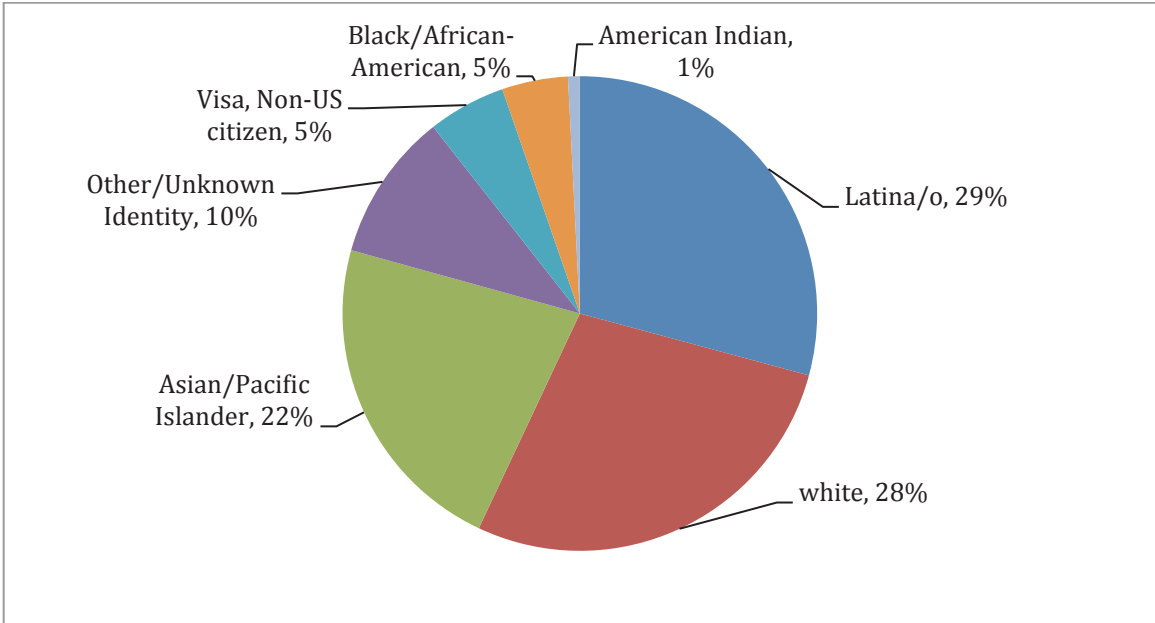
FIGURE 3. University research site fall semester 2010 total enrollment by race/ ethnicity.

FIGURE 4. University research site College of Education (Graduate and post baccalaureate Studies) fall semester 2010 total enrollment by race/ethnicity.
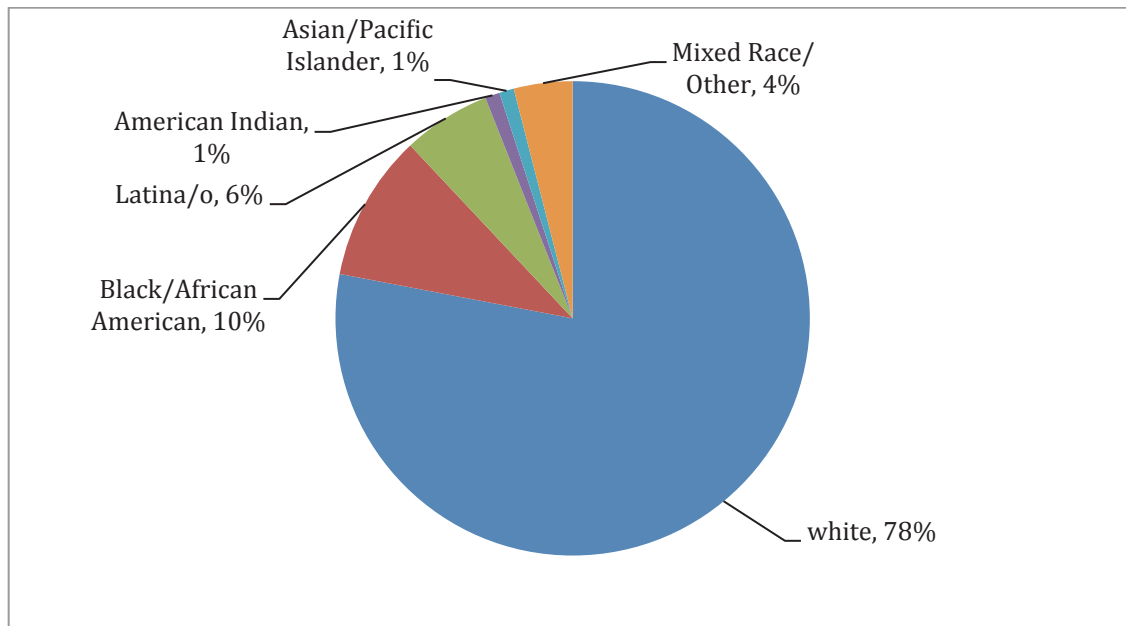
FIGURE 5. Race/ethnicity demographics for EC educators in the United States. Source: Saluja, Early, & Clifford (2002)

Participant Recruitment

In order to gain access to a potential participant recruitment pool, I applied to the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university and received approval. I used

purposive sampling to recruit participants from the College of Education at the university
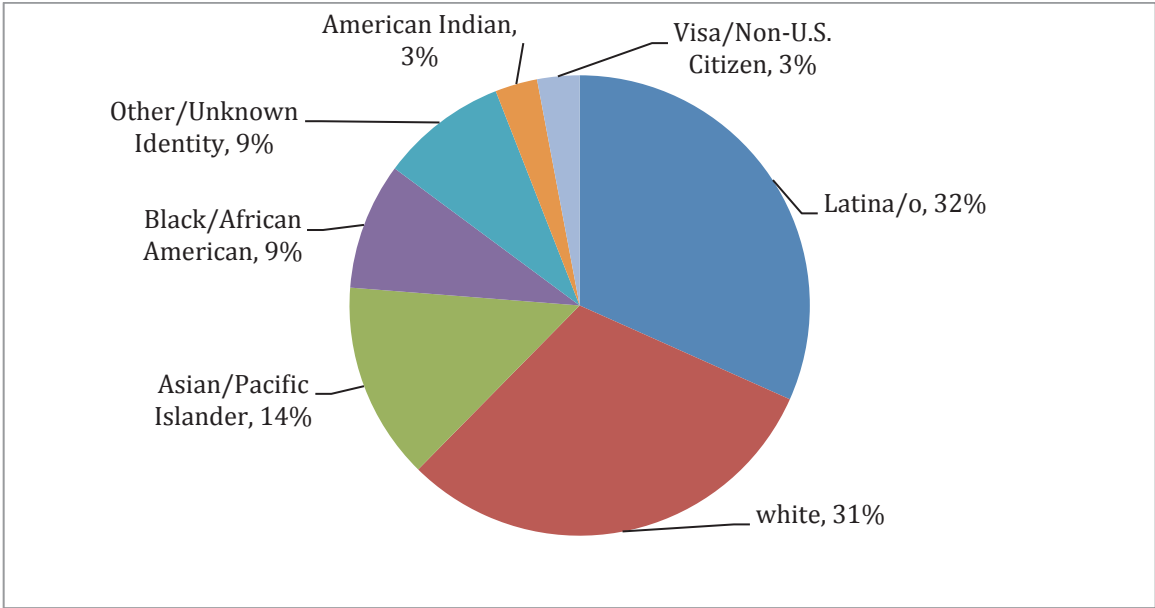
research site (Quartaroli, 2012). Purposive sampling allowed me to a gain a sampling of

participants using specific criteria. I asked that participants be current students at the

university, who were presently teaching in a classroom with early childhood age

children.[4] In order to gain a sampling of students across the College of Education, I

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[4]   In California, where this study takes place, the teacher preparation for preschool teachers and K-3 are very different. In private preschools, only 4 college courses are needed in order to begin teaching, while state licensed preschools often require a teaching permit, where education requirements vary from a some college courses to bachelor's degree, depending upon the level of permit. Educators of students in grades K-3 must obtain a bachelor's degree and multiple subject teaching credential which includes specific coursework, observation hours, and student teaching.

utilized liaisons within the college to assist in the recruitment of participants. I asked

staff and faculty in the college within the university to be liaisons. The liaisons

distributed a recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) to all students within their specific

programs. The recruitment flyer listed the necessary criteria to be a participant in this

research study.

Potential participants who were interested in being a part of the research study

contacted me via the e-mail address provided on the flyer. When potential participants

wrote to me, I responded back with an e-mail thanking them for their interest and

provided them a digital copy of the informed consent form for them to review (see

Appendix B). I asked them to read over the informed consent form and let me know if

they were interested. Additionally, I reminded participants as included on the flyer that a

twenty-dollar gift card was given to all participants who consented to an interview as an

incentive for participating in the research study. Participants who expressed interest in

the study then responded to this e-mail indicating their interest and we arranged a private

meeting location for the interview.

The specific criteria that I chose to use in the recruitment of participants produced

particular characteristics, which assisted my research study in having rich data. All study

participants are current early childhood educators who are working towards completing a

bachelor's degree with post-baccalaureate credential or graduate degree in education.

These educators have hands-on experiential knowledge of the field of ECE. Based upon

these characteristics, these participants have had a high level of experience, at least three

years, teaching in the early childhood field, as well as several semesters of teacher

preparation coursework completed. There were a total of 10 participants, seven females

and three males. These demographics of female and male participants reflect the current

demographics of early childhood educators in the U.S where men make up only 2% of

the teachers in preschool and Kindergarten classrooms (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).

The specific demographics and characteristics of each participant are listed in Table 1

below.

It is important to note that the pedagogical views concerning topics of race and

racism from educator participants in this study may not be representative of the typical

educators found in the ECE field. Most educators in the field of ECE tend to have a

colorblind pedagogical approach to their teaching (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task

Force, 2001). However, the consent form explicitly explained to potential participants

the subject matter of this study and consequently, participants expressed comfort with

talking about their pedagogical views concerning race and racism.

TABLE 1. Study Participant Demographics

		Participant Demographics		
Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Current Education Program	Self-identified Ethnicity*	Approximate Age
Jason	Male	Teaching Credential	Latino	Early 20s
Eden	Female	Graduate	Black	Early 30s
Maya	Female	Undergraduate	Latina & white	Early 20s
Travis	Male	Graduate	white & Irish, German, Swedish	Early 40s
Julie	Female	Graduate	Asian & white	Early 30s
Sabrina	Female	Graduate	Cambodian	Late 20s
Olivia	Female	Graduate	African-American	Early 20s
Randy	Male	Graduate	white	Early 30s
Brenda	Female	Graduate	Latina	Early 30s
Angela	Female	Graduate	Chicana	Late 20s

Note* I allowed participants to self-identify their ethnicity in the beginning of the interview (see Appendix C for specific interview questions). Several participants chose to self-identify with an ethnicity that would typically be considered a racial category. I have left all self-identified ethnicities as participants shared them with, as to respect their self-expression and identity.

Methodological Approach and Design

I utilized a critical race grounded theory methodology approach to my study (Malagón, Pérez Huber, & Vélez, 2009). This approach to research acknowledges that research and analysis are not neutral processes. This research study and data analysis process are uniquely situated to and grounded in my experiential knowledge with early childhood education as well as my Critical Race Theoretical lens. Charmaz (2011) argues, "theory means creating an interpretive understanding of the studied phenomenon and establishing relationships between abstract concepts constructed from this phenomenon" (p. 295). The tenets of CRT described in Chapter 1 guided all aspects of this research; including the formation of research questions, as well as the study design and analysis.

Methods and Data Collection Procedures

I held one semi-structured interview with each participant, for one hour at a private meeting space. When each participant arrived for the interview I went over the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and asked if they had any questions. I let each participant know the option of stopping the interview at any time was available. When ready, each participant signed the consent form and we began the interview. I interviewed each participant using a self-designed interview protocol (see Appendix C) that included twenty-six interpretive questions (Merriam, 2009; Quartaroli, 2012). One-on-one interviews with each participant provided me the opportunity to ask questions, listen to the participant's thoughts and stories, and then follow up with additional questions I had regarding participants' theoretical and experiential views on diverse topics. I was the sole interviewer of all participants and, with the participant's

permission, used a digital recorder to audio record the interview.

Immediately after each interview, I spent time reflecting on significant moments and wrote memos regarding each interview in a journal. This memo-writing process allowed for emerging ideas to be captured in written form and encouraged me to use my initial insights and intuition to note possible codes and themes (Charmaz, 2006). After interviewing and recording the participants, I transcribed the complete interviews creating verbatim transcripts. The transcripts were used in preparation of developing codes through a constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012). According to Charmaz (2006), the constant comparative method is a type of data analysis that has researchers compare pieces of raw data with other pieces of raw data to determine distinctions and/or likenesses. Constant comparative data analysis allows the researcher to explore issues, identify patterns, and notice links within the data.

The transcripts were analyzed iteratively, where the actual raw transcript data and analysis occurred simultaneously. Additionally, throughout the data analysis process, I revisited my research questions, which assisted me in focusing in on the questions I was working to answer. Furthermore, using a critical race theory grounded methodology allows for an abductive approach to data analysis. An abductive approach, "allows researchers to consider how larger structural phenomena shape the data itself" (Malagón et al., 2009, p. 262). The use of an abductive approach allows for the knowledge of larger systemic and structural forms of inequality that I have as a researcher and an educator to inform my analysis of the data.

I began my data analysis process by re-reading my memos for clues into initial codes and themes. Next, I began to look for initial codes in the data. I went back and

forth between different transcripts or sets of data, looking for similarities or differences. As I began to notice commonalities, I underlined the significant words or phrases with a particular color. In this method, the frequent initial codes in the transcripts were found and compared. I began to add other colors as new patterns began to develop. Utilizing the principles of grounded theory, after finding initial codes with the constant comparative method, I used the approach of focused coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012). Focused coding assisted me in going through lengthy interviews to select codes that were heavily prevalent in the data transcripts to find the most frequent codes. I found frequent codes by searching for colors that were prevalent through several transcripts. Once those colors or codes were identified, I reexamined the context of the words or phrases in the frequent codes. Focused codes were then used to conceptualize overarching themes and/or categories.

I took several steps to ascertain that my findings established trustworthiness. One way I did this was by transcribing all interviews and giving my participants the opportunity to examine them for accuracy. Another way that I worked towards trustworthiness in my study was by sharing these findings with my thesis chair, committee, and peers. I spent a great deal of time debriefing and reflecting on my findings to confirm that my theoretical analysis was supported and grounded. Furthermore, by studying the analysis methods of other researchers who have written about and applied grounded theory and critical race grounded theory methodologies, I was able to gain expertise in these research analysis practices and methods (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2011; Malagón et al., 2009; Merriam, 2009; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012).

Researcher Positionality

In my qualitative research study, I reject the notion of a researcher as un-biased or taking a neutral position in relation to the study. I believe that the idea of stripping oneself of personal experiences and views is not possible. Instead, I embrace the experiences that brought me to this research as important and valuable. I believe that objectivity is an impossible task, as we cannot separate who we are from what we do. Instead, I attempt to unmask my subjectivity and be explicit regarding my experiences and agenda.

The participants whom I interviewed shared their rich and personal stories of their personal and professional lives with me. I do not view my participants simply as sets of data; instead they are complex human beings who took a risk in sharing stories of their experiences, struggles, and lives. When I employ CRT as my theoretical framework, I contend that racism and other forms of oppression seek to subjugate Communities of Color; therefore my research contends to work towards an anti-racist, social justice oriented knowledge creation. When I interviewed participants about their experiences in regards to race and racism as curriculum for early childhood education, many of the questions focused on how their identity shaped their teaching approach or pedagogy. I would like to take the opportunity to share how my identity has shaped who I am as a researcher and as an educator.

I have been an early childhood educator for fifteen years. I give credit for my respect for early education to my mother. My mom is the person who encouraged me to explore teaching preschool children as a career. She reinforced that this was an important way to have a positive influence on the world. I also believe that my critical stance

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towards race and racism in society also came from my parents. My parents took opportunities to talk to me about inequality and racism, which seemed normal to me, but as I have continued to experience the world, I have found this to be unusual in white families. A prominent story from my childhood was the story of when my dad's best friend, Ron, came to his house with presents for my dad's whole family one Christmas. Unfortunately, his parents wouldn't answer the door to invite Ron in because he was Black. The image of Ron, who happened to be our family dentist, standing at the door with arms full of presents, ringing the doorbell but being denied acceptance into my dad's family home based solely on his race is an image that has never left me.

As I have grown older, I have continued to seek experiences that would help me understand social inequality. Over the years, as a white person, I have received much critique from other white people when I bring issues of racism to light. Being a white person, I have experienced how discussions of issues of race and racism are a privilege of having the choice of something we get to do or not to do. When I took an Anti-Bias seminar course at community college over ten years ago, I had the opportunity to learn how I enact racism in my daily life when race and racism was an integral part of the curriculum. I came to the realization that I wanted to make the choice to work against racism in my daily practice. As an early childhood educator, I believe that our teaching practice with young children shapes how they view and interact with the world. As such, we have a responsibility to educate for social justice. Nevertheless, although I viewed the work of race and racism as curriculum in ECE as important, I had difficulty finding other early childhood educators who wanted to do this work together. I felt isolated and lonely; how could I find other EC educators who felt the same sense of urgency?

My husband Josh, while in his graduate coursework, was introduced to Paulo Freire and would come home from classes ready to take on an education revolution. Consequently, when I sought out a graduate program of my own, I looked for a program that challenged conventional ideas regarding education and worked to expose systems of social and educational inequality. During my graduate studies, Dr. Lindsay Pérez Huber introduced me to Critical Race Theory. When I read CRT work, I felt like I was being given a language for something I had been longing to name. Being an early childhood educator, I was excited about how I would use this theoretical framework in my field. I searched for scholarly CRT in ECE theoretical work but found very little work done. My research seeks to learn about the experiences of other early childhood educators who want to teach about race and racism with their students.

Throughout my tenure as an ECE educator, I have found a lack of in-depth literature about early childhood specific pedagogical work and struggles. In my own experience as an educator and researcher, this absence of literature in early childhood education leads to a lack of critical pedagogical effort in the field by early childhood educators. It is not common to encounter ECE textbooks that critically analyze early childhood and educators practice within it. My own literature review is an example of the absence of literature; indeed, finding critical works on race and early childhood education required ordering books on the subject from other countries. I do believe this *criticalness* is something that ECE is missing.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few possible limitations to this research study. One limitation of this study is that I conducted one interview with each participant rather than a series of

interviews. Another limitation of this study is that there is just one source of data from participants. Having multiple sources of data, such as observations, or focus group interviews would have allowed for the triangulation of data to encourage validity and authenticity.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research study began with two research questions that focus on what is

needed in order for an individual to develop into a race conscious early childhood

educator. The first question was: What academic, personal, and cultural experiences

influence the manner in which early childhood educators teach about race and racism?

This question addressed the backgrounds that have shaped early childhood educators'

identities on their journeys working towards racial justice. The second question was:

What forces influence an early childhood educator's ability to teach, or not to teach a

racially conscious curriculum? This question explores the different factors that impact

these educators' abilities to address issues of race and racism with their students.

The findings from this study are organized by the four themes that emerged from

the data, which were found through data analysis of transcripts of interviews from

participants. The first theme, *devaluing children's ability*, highlights the experiences

participants have had where they saw children's' interests and abilities to discuss topics

of race and racism subjugated. The second theme, *ethnic identity and cultural belonging*,

discusses participants' experiences that led them to value their ethnic identities and their

positions and purposes within cultural groups that influence their teaching. The third

theme, *critical race turning points*, focuses on how specific moments along the

participants' formations of their identities brought issues of racism and social justice into

their professional work. The fourth theme, *challenges of teaching about race and racism*,

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centers on the disconnect many of the educators felt from others in the early childhood community when wanting to teach about race and racism. Within each section below, I will identify participants using pseudonyms. Participants will be further described using their approximate age ranges, self-identified ethnicities, geographic locations of where they grew up, levels of education at the time of the interviews, present occupations, and any future career goals.

<div align="center">Devaluing Children's Ability</div>

The participants that I interviewed described experiences both in preschool classrooms as well as early elementary classrooms where young children's abilities to discuss topics of race and racism were undervalued by other adults involved in early childhood education. The participants acknowledged the problematic nature of these negative assumptions regarding young children. Many of the educators discussed this deficit perception of young children as motivation for their desires to bring up topics of race and racism with their students and all children.

Maya, who identified as Latina, was in her early 20s. Maya grew up in the greater Los Angeles area. She was in the process of finishing her combined Bachelor's and Multiple Subject Teaching Credential program with the ultimate goal of being a kindergarten teacher. At the time of the interview, Maya was working at an afterschool program with children from age four- to seven-years old. Maya felt strongly that her credential courses and student teaching experiences were doing her and her peers a disservice, as she was advised that discussing topics of racial and social difference with young children was not something she should do. She shared in her interview that children's young age was always given as a reason to avoid these topics and she felt that

was inaccurate. Maya shared with me her belief in the competency of early childhood-aged students to discuss topics of race and racism.

> I feel it needs to be understood that just because our students are younger, we
> should not limit these students. I feel that a lot of kids are capable and they get
> underestimated… You can definitely explore racial topics with students, and
> scaffold their learning in order to go a bit deeper and really make them think
> about things.

Maya's comments highlight the devaluing of young children's cognitive abilities to discuss topics of race and racism. She points out the importance of early childhood educators in supporting young children's knowledge of racial topics. Additionally, Maya believes in expanding and exploring issues of race and racism through scaffolding to encourage deeper, higher level thinking and questioning.

Sabrina identified as Cambodian and was in her late 20s at the time of her interview. Sabrina was born in Cambodia but emigrated to the United States at an early age and grew up in the Long Beach area of Los Angeles. Sabrina was in the last year of her Master's program. She was working as a preschool teacher with three-year-old children and had over ten years of experience working in various preschools. Sabrina's long-term career goal was to become an instructor to early childhood educators, and she hoped to reach that goal one day at the local community college she attended several years prior. During Sabrina's interview, she highlighted how she experienced young children's abilities to discuss topics of race and racism being diminished.

> To be honest…it's not what you are encouraged to talk about [race and
> racism]…everyone wants to focus on 'kindergarten readiness' and sight words

and numbers. Those kind of matters [curriculum inclusive of topics of race and

racism] are given no priority and I might even say you as a teacher are

discouraged if you want to talk about them… And it is just so frustrating because

I know kids are learning about this stuff because they talk about it and say…

interesting stuff… and there is so much you can do as a teacher. But when I try,

then I have been told by different directors that kids won't understand and parents

might get upset or mad and it is just better to focus on academic stuff. But I feel

like I know the parents wouldn't feel like that and the kids do understand, so I

don't know where it's coming from.

Here, Sabrina voices her knowledge of children's abilities to discuss topics of race and

racism because she listens to and hears these topics in the children's conversations.

Sabrina shared her experiences of being told by supervisors that "kids won't understand"

topics of race and racism even though she knows that to be untrue. Sabrina questions the

source of the belief that young children do not have the cognitive ability to understand

topics of race and racism, as it is not a value she holds to be true.

Randy identified as white and was in his early 30s. Randy grew up in the

Southwest area of the U.S and moved to the Los Angeles area as an adult. He was in the

last semester of his Master's program with an emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction.

Randy had many years of experience as both an elementary and preschool teacher and

was working as a teacher in a transitional kindergarten in a local public school. Randy

discussed with me specific strategies that he uses in his classroom to discuss race and

racism with his students including talking about differences and similarities in skin color,

bringing in books that discuss segregation, and bringing up topics of prejudice and

segregation with his students. Randy shared me with me that although he does this work

with his students, he gets a lot of push back from other faculty at his school about the

ability of his young students to understand his curriculum.

> You know, I get so excited about what I am doing… but then I will hear teachers
>
> in the lounge talk about, "why do you bother with that stuff? They are so little,
>
> they barely even know their names." It's just so irritating. I mean, how can they
>
> be educators and not understand basic child development?

Randy's exasperation is evident here. Randy knows that his students are competent and

capable of discussing topics of race and racism, but other teachers demean his curriculum

solely based his students' young ages. Randy understands the importance of anti-racist

work and questions why his teaching colleagues fail to understand that early childhood-

aged students are capable of engaging with developmentally appropriate curriculum

about race and racism.

Ethnic Identity and Cultural Belonging

At the start of each interview I asked participants to tell me about themselves and

included questions regarding racial and ethnic identity (see Appendix C). Participants

who felt comfortable when discussing their ethnic and racial background tended to also

show interest and comfort with discussing topics of race and racism with me, the sole

interviewer. Participants who demonstrated understanding and appreciation of their

ethnic identities expressed a commitment to wanting their students to also value their

ethnic identities as well. Furthermore, participants who discussed the positive values

they place on their ethnic identities connected to a larger feeling of belonging to a

cultural group. Participants described a feeling of commitment and purpose in belonging

to a specific cultural group and that these experiences were building blocks towards becoming an educator that does ant-racist work. There were some participants, however, who showed less concern with their ethnic identities, and also indicated less desire to teach about race and racism with their students.

Eden, who identified as Black, was in her early 30s. She grew up in the Los Angeles area and was in the last semester of her Master's program. Eden was an early childhood educator who was making a transition from teacher to program director at the time of the interview. Her long-term goal was to obtain her doctorate and become a superintendent of a school district. When asked about the need for bringing up topics of race, ethnicity, and diversity in the early childhood classroom, Eden spoke regarding her belief in the need for a specific college level course requirement for all early childhood educators.

> I think it is so important but I think it should be a separate class for teachers to
> take. Only because I think that even though we talk about it [ethnic and cultural
> identity and knowledge] in each semester, there is not really a lot of time to talk
> about it as far as self-reflection for the teachers. And I was just talking about this
> today, because it is really easy to say, 'I am the most multicultural person there
> is.' I mean because that's very easy to say because none of us think we are bigots.
> But at the same time we have a lot of baggage that we carry around for our
> personal beliefs, our religion. All that plays into who we are and what we believe
> as teachers. And so I think that even now, when you work in a classroom and you
> talk about diversity, it is not necessarily cultural either. I mean, there's class,
> there's race, I mean, there's a lot when it comes to diversity. And I think you

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have to think in terms of there isn't a lot of diversity within [the teachers] of early

childhood. I mean there is a little more male teachers now, but it's still 95 percent

women. So even that isn't diverse, you know? I think it would just strengthen

our programs a lot if it would be another class.

Eden discussed the need for a course that encourages the students to dig deeper into their

beliefs about their identities as well as examining the lens they use to respond to and

interact with others. As the interview continued Eden connected her belief about the

importance of exploring ethnicity and cultural identity as she began to tell me about her

experience of attending a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in rural

Louisiana.

So I got there [the college] and it was like total culture shock 'cause I'm like in

the sticks and you know, I'm like from LA. So I was like, what have I gone to?

So it is a small college town and there is all these Black people. Because I grew

up in LA I was always around other cultures, you know? So now, I am in a space

where there is all these successful African Americans and I'm like wow, this is

really different. This is the south, but seriously. Seeing all these successful Black

people all the time made such an impact on me. It changed the way I thought

about myself… who I could be and what I could do… It made me think about

how important it is for the Black kids that I work with everyday.

Eden's experience at this HBCU allowed her to feel and develop a deeper connection

with what it means to be a Black person. She saw herself as a successful Black woman

amongst other Black scholars. Her self-knowledge led her to construct a strong

commitment to the success not only of Black children, but all Children of Color.

Additionally, Eden advocates for a required college course for early childhood educators that is devoted to exploring their ethnic identity based upon the empowering experience she had at the HBCU she attended.

Julie identified her ethnicity as Asian and white and was in her late 20s. Julie grew up in the greater Los Angeles area and was halfway through her Master's program. Julie was working as a preschool teacher with three-year-old children. Julie's long-term career goal was to teach at the community college level. During her interview, Julie discussed the importance she placed on addressing topics of race and racism. She explained how experiences of not having her home language valued in schools when she was growing up helped her understand the importance and value of her primary language. Additionally, this experience caused Julie to have a more heighted awareness of the damaging implications that result from making assumptions about the languages we value and should teach.

> In my teaching I want to be open, you know to every family, every child's culture... So, just because we're in America we are not just celebrating what is important to an American. We're not only celebrating holidays that are important to myself, or to you know the general population. It's not that we're just, you know, celebrating special days or when it's a certain month, but that all year long [we recognize] every culture and every celebration…I found a lot of the time when teachers are sharing another language it was almost always just Spanish… And sure, there is a lot of Spanish around and in my experience in classrooms, there are a lot of students that speak Spanish but I feel like there isn't really as big of an emphasis when you have a child that you know speaks Mandarin. Or you

know, Tagalog. That was my language and it was not talked about. And because

of that, I try to make an effort to include more languages and ask questions about

what is important to each set of parents and each family.

Julie discussed how the dismissal of her primary language as a child impacted the kind of

teacher she is today. Julie spoke about how important her first language and home

language, Tagalog, is to her. She recognized Tagalog as an important part of who she is

and used this self-knowledge to affirm the importance of her students' primary language.

She elaborated on this topic further to explain how she uses her experience with language

as a springboard to inquire about what languages are important for each family she

encounters in order to be culturally relevant and responsive.

Angela identified her ethnicity as Chicana and was in her late 20s. Angela grew

up in a city in north Orange County. She was in the first year of her Master's program.

Angela was working as the director of a non-profit community center, which had a

preschool, community garden, and parent education component. Angela emphasized the

importance of her identity as a Chicana and her connection to her local community. She

discussed her experiences in the city where she grew up, the same city where she lives

and works in, which is predominantly Latino/Chicano. Angela expressed frustration in

having less access to adequate school and community funding and resources compared to

neighboring mostly white communities.

I think it's interesting because like going from [city where she grew up] and the

public education system and then to a private school [college] and I started

making sense of a lot of stuff at the time, and the culture shock and… I started to

come to the realization of, 'why aren't more of my friends here?' 'why aren't my

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friends at schools?' Instead, my friends wound up getting caught up and dropped

out, doing time, or stuck in dead-end jobs. So, I started asking a lot of those

questions.

Angela went to a college that was in a smaller city on the East Coast. While at this

college, she noticed that there were little to no Latino/Chicano peers within her classes.

Angela realized that the Latinos/Chicanos underrepresentation at her college was not

unique to her specific university. Angela made the connection that Latinos/Chicanos not

attending college at the same rate as her other peers was a pattern. Angela spoke about

how this realization about Chicanos helped her identify a connection with the work she

does with Chicanos in her community.

> I had this one teacher, and I felt like he took an interest in me. He would always
>
> kid around with us and say, 'hey, you knuckleheads' and he was a history teacher
>
> and he would also say, 'no, do you want to know the real history? Like the one
>
> that is not in the books?" and I made a real connection with him because he was
>
> the only Chicano teacher I had. I had this other teacher and she took an interest in
>
> me and would say, 'keep up those readings.' She put me in honors classes the
>
> next year and that separated me from a lot of my friends and so I got this idea that
>
> I was somehow different, better, you know, meritocracy. So, when I went to
>
> school [college], I went to this semester abroad in Fiji. So I was coming to this
>
> realization and then I saw the way the Fijians were being educated and it made me
>
> think of the Chicanos and our families here in [city in north Orange County] and
>
> the way the teachers would talk about the students and their families was from
>
> this very deficit perspective, just the same…. I feel like this has so affected the

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way that I work with students and their families and how important I feel it is to

be a Chicana or Mexican American… and support other Chicanos.

From these experiences, Angela saw herself having cultural belonging to the Chicano

community rather than just being a solitary Chicana fighting her way through the

education system. Angela spoke about how this realization led to the strong feeling of

purpose she has to support the Chicano/Latino community through her work with young

children and their families.

Jason identified as Latino and was in his early 20s. Jason was in the last semester

of a post-baccalaureate teaching credential program. He was working with kindergarten

children in an afterschool program at the time of his interview. Jason's long-term goal

was to obtain a position as an early elementary school teacher after completion of his

credential program. When I asked about his racial and ethnic identity at the beginning of

the interview, Jason responded as follows.

Oona: What race do you identify as? Ethnicity? Do feel that they are the same or

different?

Jason: Oh, I don't know. I am not sure how to answer that question. Whatever

you think.

Oona: It's ok to think about it for a minute if you would like.

Jason: I would say Latino, but that is because I feel like I have been told that.

But I don't really care. Really I feel like I am American. And you know how

people say Mexican American or African American? I think instead we should be

American first. It is just so divisive when people use those terms.

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Jason declines ownership over the name he gives to his racial and ethnic identity. He

instead, allows me as the interviewer control over this term. Jason states that it is

"divisive" when people identify their racial or ethnic group, such as African American or

Asian American. Jason has come to the conclusion that by claiming the title of one's

ethnicity, they are sowing dissension. Later on in the interview when I asked Jason

questions about his interest in bringing up topics of race and racism with his current and

future students, these were the thoughts he shared with me.

> You know, I really think when you do that, it is really like you are pushing your
>
> own agenda. I really think that you need to wait until kids ask you about that… It
>
> really, you know, just gets into that touchy area and really I think, why do we
>
> need to go there? If kids are interested they will just ask and in my experience
>
> they rarely ask.

Jason emphasized within his response the idea of "pushing your own agenda" as a

negative aspect of teaching. He stressed his belief that students should be the ones to

provoke the teacher with questions about racially inclusive topics. His outlook

demonstrates a hesitancy to approach topics of race and racism with his students.

<div align="center">Critical Race Turning Points</div>

Critical Race Turning Points is a conceptual framework and model that I created

based on several participants' responses. Critical Race Turning Points are a series of

critical phases that propel educators to desire to bring issues of race and racism into their

teaching. During the interviews with early childhood educators, many participants

discussed the resistance they faced when attempting to discuss their belief in the

importance of topics of race and racism with professional peers. In the process of coding

and categorizing the experiences that brought the participants to this anti-racist work, I

named their experience a *Critical Race Turning Point*. A Critical Race Turning Point can

be understood more clearly through study of the four phases of a Critical Race Turning

Point I have named, created, and identified in the diagram below.
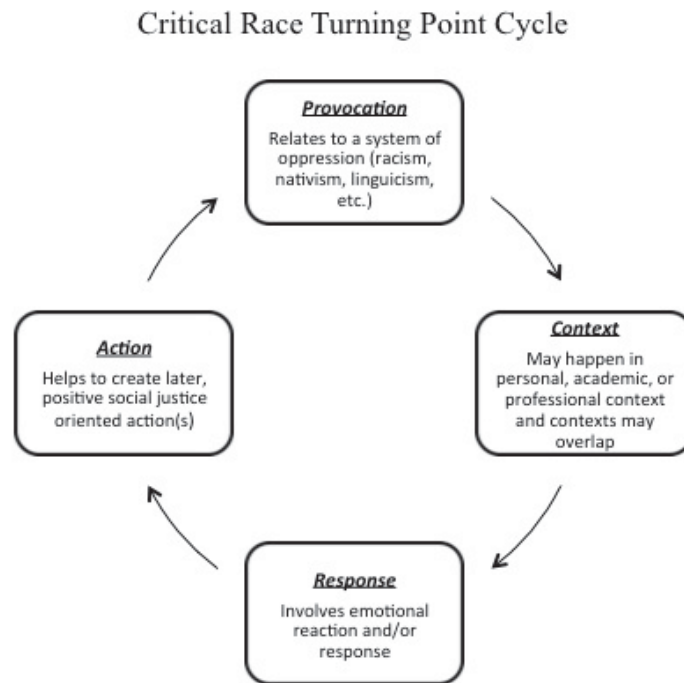

FIGURE 6. Critical Race Turning Points diagram.

The first phase, *provocation*, describes how the moment that created this turning

point must involve a system of oppression. This system of oppression must be

highlighted and clearly grasped by the person experiencing this turning point. The

second phase, *context*, explores where these turning points take place. Critical Race

Turning Points can take place in personal, academic, or professional contexts. Additionally, these contexts may overlap; for example individuals may have this moment happen while they are in the classroom, but it happens to be something that affects their personal identity. The third phase, *response*, is the emotional nature of these moments. Critical Race Turning Points engage emotive reactions and/or responses during the time this point is occurring and often times, afterwards. It is usually difficult, sometimes painful moments that have brought these educators to a consciousness of racial oppression within their lives and the lives of their students. Finally, the fourth phase, *action,* refers to how turning points foster realization or consciousness that have led these early childhood educators to take action against this injustice within their teaching. These actions have led these educators to have a positive, social justice, and anti-racist oriented approach within their teaching pedagogies.

Olivia identified as African-American and was in her early 20s. She grew up in a rural area of California and she was in the first year of her Master's program. Olivia was a preschool teacher of four-year-old children. She had more than five years of experience working in preschool settings, and additional years of experience working with young children in home, camp, and other settings. Olivia's long-term goal was to become program director of a preschool. In her interview, Olivia described several moments within her life where she felt like people had lowered expectations for her based upon on her race. She discussed her realization of these moments, as well as her conscious effort to work against others perceptions of her (in)ability.

I had this one person in my life where she just talked negatively with me and about me. And it was a time, a crucial time in my life where I was coming from

middle school to high school and I had lost my mom… that was the stressor for

me and I was trying to get through school and everything but …this particular

person... Her role was to be supportive for me but however, the way she talked

and the way she like, belittled me and everything, it was just like, for people who

didn't have a strong self identity or self-worth, they would just be defeated. But

with me, I was very strong headed and I was determined to finish whatever I

wanted to accomplish and not anyone get in my way. Even if at times I may have

felt down with the words she said but I wasn't down too long. She wasn't the

same ethnicity as me, she was white and she would talk down to me always. She

would say, 'you're never gonna be nothing in life and you're going to be a normal

Black statistic.' It was just horrible things that she was saying. But, however, I

persevered and overcame all of that. And I graduated honor roll in high school

and I was able to walk across that stage and get my diploma. Not only that, I

went ahead and went on to college, and then made the Dean's list and everything.

So, it's like my story is a real success story out of all of that dramatic trauma that

I went through. It has been a real success story.

In this experience described by Olivia, three of the four phases of a Critical Race Turning

Point are articulated. Olivia's experience was directly linked to her being African-

American, and she was told how this social classification would mark her incapable of

success. Additionally, this turning point took place in a personal setting and evoked the

emotion of making Olivia feel "horrible" about herself. Olivia had another experience,

this time in an academic setting, where she was once again treated as less competent than

her peers because of her race. She discussed an experience in a college classroom where

her capability was devalued because of her race. Olivia connected this experience to the work she currently does with young children regarding race and racism.

> [There was college assignment] group where we had four different people. And, one of the group members was the leader and the other group members had different assigned roles. But they treated me like if I was less worthy of being the leader just because of my skin color. So, I had a little difficulty within that group but I overcame it without teacher help. I just let them assign me what to do and at the end of it, I did over and beyond what they did. So, in the beginning they were telling me that I am less capable of doing this and that, but then, at the end, I outperformed all you guys. But I didn't like, blurt it in their face or did that or anything. But it was just an accomplishment for me. Like whenever anybody tells you that you can't do something, you can always turn around and show them that you are twice as better... Sometimes I may observe children just picking and choosing who they like to play with or socialize with and I encourage them to socialize with everyone and not just children with their color skin because I know how hurtful that can be.

In this moment, Olivia connected with the fourth phase of the Critical Race Turning Point framework when she is able to take a difficult experience and transform this into social justice oriented work. Olivia went on to describe not only the work she does with children to look beyond skin color, but to also teach young children about significant Leaders of Color. She hopes that this teaching will encourage children to have strong positive examples of People of Color when they may be exposed to these deficit oriented perspectives, as she was.

During Eden's interview, she described key moments in her life that encouraged her to value not only her own racial and ethnic identity, but also allowed her to see different ways that her own biases or prejudices affected her relationships with others. In the process of forming her identity, Eden was able to recognize how she could work as a change and empowerment agent for her students.

> I actually went to a camp when I was younger… and it turned out to be social justice camp. It was a program in LA and they would ship these kids for like a week to [a rural city in the mountains]. We had no contact with the outside world. And they would break you down, like, you would really talk about, like, racism, and sexism, and classism, and homophobia, and ableism. All these isms and things like that. I think that's where my introduction to like, thinking about social things like race and things like that came into play…. And then, it was [a class in Child Development] just talking about like all these different theories of how kids grow up so differently and why and how they process information and how culture plays into that. And it was almost like therapy for me and how I grew up. I started to understand why these things happened. I think that's when I was like, 'okay, I can do this. And I can totally reach those kids that are like me.' So I think it was that, like a personal connection.

In this quote, Eden talks through the provocation and contexts phases, the process of coming to a critical consciousness in the camp she attended. In this camp, goals were explicitly set to work to unveil and name systems of oppression. Eden next connects contexts when she links the consciousness raising within the camp alongside her experience as a student where she began to connect unfair and unequal societal structures

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for Children of Color. In the response phase, Eden identifies the emotive nature of her

experience at the camp when she shared that "they would break you down" as a way to

delve deeper to connect you with feelings. Eden explained how these turning points led

to her understand the importance of teaching about race and racism with her students.

Travis identified as white as well as Irish, German, and Swedish and was in his

late 40s. Travis lived in several different locations during his formative years. His

childhood was spent in the Southeastern United States, summers in the Midwest, and then

his teenage and young adult years were in the Orange County area. Travis had just

finished his first semester of his Master's program. He was employed as director of a

multi-site preschool program and worked to design early childhood programs, train early

childhood educators, and teach at various early childhood school sites. Travis' long-term

career goal was to hopefully be a Dean at a university.

Travis explained that his experience growing up in these different locations

throughout the United States had allowed him to see the racial segregation and racism

that exists. Travis also spoke about his family and shared that his wife was African

American and that they had a son. Travis described that having a mixed race child had

allowed him to see how racialized practices continue to be enacted in our society.

> Having my son… has given me a new perspective. I have heard whispers, or seen
>
> looks and when my son, who doesn't look white, and me, who is definitely white,
>
> do things together. It really has given me a new way of looking at this, an
>
> empathy if you will. To see him, who I love so much, he is a part of me, treated
>
> differently.

Travis' experiences growing up and his experiences as a father represent the first three

phases of a Critical Race Turning Point. First, in the provocation phase, he recognizes

the issues of racism in the United States; second, context, these issues affect Travis'

personal life; and third, response, he describes feeling empathy, an emotional response to

the first two phases. Travis spoke to me about an experience he had upon entering his

master's degree program. When he entered his program a group activity took place

where all students had to discuss systems of power and privilege. After this activity a

discussion followed where an African American student spoke to Travis about what his

power and privilege provides him as a white male. This turning point provided Travis the

opportunity to look at teaching, learning, and the world with a new action oriented

approach.

> And so I was in class and this other student who was African American, she said
>
> to me, 'you are white, so by definition that makes you racist.' … At first I was
>
> taken aback I, that floored me... For me, the experience of that has made me
>
> grow…it's a learning opportunity… Thirty years ago, I wouldn't have been able
>
> to hear that. But now, I can realize, hey, she's right, the white race always has
>
> been the one that benefits… and so it made me realize I have to do something
>
> about this… I have to move forward and learn from this. So, I have to be an ally.
>
> I have to talk about this and it is something I try to do.

Travis' moment of being told that being a white male means he enacts racism is an

emotional moment for him. Travis saw his personal growth as a race conscious male

through this exchange. Travis found that although he does not actively seek this

privilege, he must actively work to eliminate its power, as it is an advantage he passively

receives. Travis recognized that the powerful advantage of white privilege is used to oppress People of Color. As a result of this turning point, Travis has shifted his approach in not only teaching young children, but also in his training of early childhood educators, where he specifically discusses topics of race, identity, and systems of privilege and power. This fourth phase, action, of Travis' Critical Race Turning point, has him to teach and learn differently with others in the world around him, fostering a social justice oriented focus in his work.

<center>Challenges of Teaching About Race and Racism</center>

Several of the educators shared during their interviews that they wanted to connect with other educators about strategies for bringing up topics of race and racism with young children. However, some of the participants expressed that they were not able to connect with other early childhood educators. Participants discussed resistance from their fellow educators to acknowledge the importance of this work, which often led them to develop a lack of trust and support in sharing ideas and processes. Furthermore, many of the participants said that they found very few early childhood educators who were also attempting to approach topics of race and racism so it was difficult to connect because of incongruous pedagogies.

Brenda identified as Latina and was in her early 30s. Brenda was born in Mexico and emigrated to the United States as a young child. She grew up in a city in the greater Los Angeles area. Brenda was in the first year of her Master's program with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education. Brenda was working as a preschool teacher of two- and three-year-old children. Her long-term goal was to teach early childhood education courses at a community college. Brenda discussed with me her belief in the importance

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of teaching young children about race and racism but she shared that this was something that she rarely saw in early childhood classrooms or seldom felt she could discuss with her colleagues.

> I haven't really seen any great examples. Actually implemented in a classroom? No, I haven't…. I think it is important, especially as we live in this global economy. I have tried to talk about it with various coworkers, but it is always just tolerance. And I think it is more about acceptance. We don't just want children to tolerate, not simply accept… really know and care… And so I feel really uncomfortable bringing up this topic unless I am like really, really comfortable with that teacher. I know I am open minded, but most people that I have tried this with are really conservative so it's like I need to be careful and so in many ways that shuts the door.

Brenda shared her discomfort with bringing up topics of race and racism with her colleagues. At the same time, she emphasized the importance of including topics of race and racism within teaching with young children. Brenda appeared to be stuck in a place where she sees the importance of anti-racist work but is struggling with finding external support.

Angela discussed her frustration when trying to connect with other early childhood educators, early childhood centers, or professional development seminars outside of the community center where she works. Angela described her desire to learn strategies for discussing topics of race and racism with young children, but she has been unable to get her needs met.

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So many times, we go to these workshops and conferences, you know? And I

wait for them to start talking about this stuff and they never do. I really want to

know, how do you talk about this with the little ones? How do you help them

value themselves, and how beautiful their skin is, and to value the differences in

us all? … Every time I ask, I get the same kind of answers, that they don't know

how to do it either. Because I really wish, you know, that I could find other folks

that were excited about doing this work too.

Angela discussed her strong desire and repeated attempts to connect with other early

childhood educators who try to incorporate topics of race and racism with young

children. She expressed an interest in learning strategies to do anti-racist work and get

support from others in the early childhood field.

Julie discussed the struggles she has faced when trying to teach students about

topics of race. Julie shared that she has found that these topics are less valued than

others, and therefore given less time and attention than needed by others in the early

childhood community.

We're not getting the time we used to as teachers. When [the school] first opened

we used to get time... You kind of did a dialogue and [discovered] what's

important for [each] child… Now it is different. Because of time constraints and

other school things taking priority, day-to-day we are not touching base with truly

understanding the culture each of our families, our children, and our communities.

The important stuff in the family and what they value… How can we teach about

race if we don't take the time to get to know each family and what matters to

them? It's not just at my school. I have heard other teachers talk about this at

their schools too.

Julie explained the frustration she felt when attempting to bring up topics of race with her

students. She described how she has experienced curriculum that involves topics of race

and culture not being made a priority. She connected her individual experience as a

teacher at the school where she works to the larger early childhood community. Julie

shared that her colleagues working at other schools experience their attempts at

curriculum inclusive of race and racism similarly treated as less important.

Within this chapter, I have described participants' experiences and illustrated the

four themes that emerged from the data. The first theme, *devaluing children's ability*,

underscores experiences participants have had where they saw children's interests and

aptitudes to discuss topics of race and racism discredited. The second theme, *ethnic

identity and cultural belonging*, presents participants' experiences that led them to value

their ethnic identities and their positions and purposes within cultural groups that

influence their teaching. *Critical Race Turning Points*, the third theme, has developed

into a conceptual tool and framework. The *Critical Race Turning Points* framework

focuses on the characteristics of specific moments throughout participants' lives that

brought issues of racism and racial justice into their professional work. The fourth

theme, *challenges of teaching about race and racism*, brings into focus the lack of

support many study participants had from others in the early childhood community when

wanting to teach about race and racism.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this research study was to explore EC educators' experiences, which influence their teaching young children about topics of race and racism as well as forces that impact educator's ability to teach or not to teach a racially conscious curriculum. There were two research questions that drove this research study. The first research question was: What academic, personal, and cultural experiences influence the manner in which early childhood educators teach about race and racism? The second research question was: What forces influence an early childhood educator's ability to teach, or not to teach a racially conscious curriculum? As discussed in Chapter 3, an abductive, constant comparative method of analysis was used in this study to examine participants' responses and to categorize the research findings based on the themes that emerged. I grouped shared experiences of participants into four broad categories or themes: devaluing children's ability, ethnic identity and cultural belonging, critical race turning points, and challenges of teaching about race and racism.

The first research question, what academic, personal, and cultural experiences influence the manner in which early childhood educators teach about race and racism, was answered in the themes of both ethnic identity and cultural belonging and critical race turning points. In the theme of ethnic identity and cultural belonging, many

participants shared that their impassioned ethnic identities were motivation for them to

teach about race and racism. Participants' strong ethnic identities were coupled with

feelings of connection and purpose within cultural groups. The feelings of connection

and purpose drove participants to both aspire to assist their students' to develop positive

ethnic identities and seek to reject racist norms of ethnic groups within their teaching.

Participants spoke about academic, personal, and cultural experiences when describing

Critical Race Turning Points in their lives. Critical Race Turning Points highlight critical

phases within an educator's life that encourage social justice oriented work.

The second research question, what forces influence an early childhood

educator's ability to teach, or not to teach a racially conscious curriculum, was answered

in the themes of devaluing children's ability and challenges of teaching about race and

racism. There were many forces and factors that participants discussed influencing their

ability to teach or not to teach a racially conscious curriculum. One of those factors was

the ways in which young children's abilities to discuss topics of race and racism are

devalued because of their young ages. Participants described their experiences with

others, often administrators, obstructing topics of race and racism from being brought up

in early childhood classrooms. In the theme of, challenges of teaching about race and

racism, a new set of challenges that educators experienced was introduced. Participants

described a lack of support from peers, colleagues, and professional organizations and

structures when trying to teach about race and racism with their students.

Several of the themes, as well as narratives within, connect to the literature

reviewed within chapter 2. The themes of devaluing children's ability and challenges of

teaching about race and racism align with literature discussed in chapter 2. In these

themes, several participants spoke about how they experienced race and racism being

treated as unnecessary and unwarranted topics in early childhood classrooms. This

treatment of race conscious topics in early childhood classrooms aligns very closely with

the colorblind ideologies described in chapter 2. In the theme of Critical Race Turning

Points, the importance of knowledge of structures of oppression, such as racism, is

emphasized. This importance of in-depth, personal knowledge of racism is emphasized

in work of Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips (1997), Hyland and Heuschkel (2009),

as well as other literature reviewed in chapter2. The personal connection to structures of

oppression provided participants in this study particular motivation, as well as empathy in

their work.

<u>Implications</u>

In the early stages of this research study, I was at a local cafe with a colleague

talking about my work. We were discussing the need for this research, as well as the

need for a race conscious approach in early childhood settings. After the colleague had

left, three ladies, who were white, in their late 50s, and whom I noticed had been eyeing

me throughout my earlier conversation, approached me. They began to ask me some

questions.

First woman: What are you working on?

Oona: I am working on a master's thesis.

Second woman: What is it about?

Oona: I am interviewing early childhood educators and asking them about how

they teach about race with their students.

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After I said this, the women had looks of shock on their faces as they glanced at each

other. They turned toward each other and then began to talk to me again.

> Second woman: Race?! Why, I've never talked about *that* with my students.

> Oona: Oh, do you teach early childhood?

> Second woman: Well, I teach K-5th and I've *never* taught about race. *It just isn't*
> *done.*

The second woman who was doing most of the talking rubbed her face in frustration

while the other women nodded in agreement and added an "Mm-hm" in confirmation.

The second woman glanced around the café and then looked at the other two women, and

then shared this with me,

> Second woman: You know, in fact, my granddaughter's babysitter wears one of
>
> those *things* on her head [Hijab]. You know, some sort of (she whispers) *Muslim*.
>
> And you know she [her granddaughter] never says anything bad and she is four.
>
> First woman: Yes, yes. Talking about race just leads to people to start being
>
> prejudiced. It just *shouldn't be done.*

They all shook their heads and looked at me with a sense of disapproval.

> Oona: Well, the structural racism in our society is supported through the current
>
> dominant discourse. I think we need to change the way we talk about issues of
>
> race. At what age do you think it's appropriate to talk to students about this?
>
> First woman: I just think that talking about differences leads to hate.

This comment caused an uncomfortable silence to emerge in the conversation and to

encourage closure to our brief chat.

> Third woman: We have lots of different opinions here.

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Oona: Well, that's what makes the world go 'round.

Reflecting on my exchange with these women affirms both the importance and controversial nature of this work. I believe that this conversation highlights the importance of this study. So often, as evidenced in this example, I have found myself in places where the idea of discussing race and social difference with young children is treated as an act of moral corruption. The argument made by these women, that attempting conversations about race and racism with young children leads to intolerance, is false. Truly, it was Critical Race Turning Points that illuminated structures of oppression for educators. For many of these participants, the knowledge of the domination of racism propelled them to want to teach about race and racism with their students.

Moreover, the findings from this study have assisted me with providing new insights on how I might now respond differently to this conversation. Grounded in knowledge of the importance of ethnic identity and cultural belonging, I now recognize the value in each individual exploring ethnic identity and how this exploration encourages a sense of belonging and connection to a cultural group. The educators in this study shared that personal and cultural experiences shaped their understanding of race and racism. The participants indicated that they needed to be self-reliant in order to explore and understand race aware pedagogical approaches to early childhood education. Several questions arose after being equipped with new insights into the importance of ethnic identity and cultural belonging related to teaching about race and racism. Do these women have a strong sense of ethnic identity? Do they have a specific cultural group that they value and feel connection with? Working to foster a solid ethnic identity encourages

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work towards discussing why racism is unfair, and racist ideas need to be challenged, rather than ignored.

A statement made by Jason, a participant discussed in Chapter 4, is helpful in illustrating a possible argument made by educators that are not as concerned with bringing up topics of race and racism with their students. Jason was in his early 20s and was finishing his teaching credential program. Jason shared that he felt using and identifying with ethnic terms and titles was "divisive" and he believed we should solely use the term "American." I believe connecting the statement made by Jason with the conversation with these women is important. In the interview with Jason, participant, and the conversation with the women, bringing up topics of race and racism with young children is seen as "divisive" and can lead to intolerance, rather than understanding and compassion. Both of these cases demonstrate colorblind ideologies as discussed in Chapter 2. Colorblind ideologies purport to be fair and neutral, but in truth, these ideologies ignore and dismiss racial and social inequalities. The statements made by Jason and the women demonstrate how colorblindness translates into the belief that racial inequalities should go unchallenged which denies the challenges that racial and social inequities oppress upon of Communities of Color.

This research study has illuminated the importance of being exposed to knowledge about systems of oppression with the creation of the Critical Race Turning Points conceptual framework. Looking at Critical Race Turning Points as a conceptual tool underscores the importance of the provocation phase. In this phase, an individual begins to recognize how different systems of oppression work. When educators are exposed to this provocation and there is an emotive response, they are encouraged to

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work towards positive social justice oriented change within their teaching. This knowledge is significant because it has the ability to assist those in education who are interested in bringing up topics of race and racism to know the elements that encourage interest in racism and other social justice issues.

<center>Contributions</center>

This research provides contributions that are empirical, conceptual, and pedagogical for the field of early childhood education. The empirical contribution of this research is the voice of EC educators added to the existing academic literature. The field of ECE now has research that explores EC educators' experiences when teaching about race and racism in their classrooms. The participants in this study assisted in filling a gap in the academic literature on experiences and challenges EC educators face when attempting to transform their pedagogy into a more race or color conscious approach.

The Critical Race Turning Points framework contributes an important conceptual tool for education research and literature. With this conceptual tool, academics and practitioners can see how taking action based on a Critical Race Turning Point can lead educators to work towards racial justice in their teaching practice, and possibly beyond the walls of their classroom and into their community or other spaces of influence. The Critical Race Turning Points framework offers opportunities for further development and exploration. Considering what factors brought educators to their realizations of the importance of teaching about race and racism with their students became a focus in this study. Noting that anti-racist work was so important, participants were willing to struggle professionally in order to advocate for the importance of this work. Critical Race Turning Points explored specific life experiences that had served as pivot points and

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mobilized participants towards working for social justice. Reexamining this conceptual tool, academics and practitioners alike can begin to visualize what experiencing a Critical Race Turning Point or not means for your teaching with young children.

With the Critical Race Turning Points framework clearly outlined, I more deeply examined the interview transcripts to identify the Critical Race Turning Points in these educators' lives that encouraged them to resist dominant ideologies that keep systems of racial oppression in place. Many of the educators who emphasized the importance of teaching about race and racism with their students were able to describe the moments that were critical to their questioning of the larger societal ideologies of white supremacy. Many of the educators were not able to articulate specific terms like white supremacy or ideology, as well as how these specific Critical Race Turning Points assisted them in resisting these ideologies; however, as a researcher, I was able to categorize and code the interview transcript data in order to discover and name the findings as Critical Race Turning Points.

Lastly, the pedagogical contribution of this research study is the emphasis of the importance of topics of race and racism in early childhood classrooms. The importance of what I have termed, a race conscious approach to early childhood education, has been articulated in the review of literature as well as in the findings of this research study. Additionally, in Appendix D of this study, I have included suggestions for educators. In this appendix, I have included a list of books for educators who are interested in this pedagogical approach. The list includes books educators to read with their students in order to start classroom conversations and pedagogical books for educators to read who have greater questions about how to transform their teaching pedagogy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, I make three recommendations for practitioners, policymakers, and ECE curriculum designers. The first recommendation is for ECE practitioners. My recommendation is for the formation of an early childhood educator professional organization that is specifically for ECE educators who are teaching for racial and social justice. Many participants shared with me that they had difficulty connecting with other educators who were also interested in teaching about race and racism with their students. Participants also shared that they wished they could learn race or color conscious classroom strategies. I envision this organization as one that would serve to connect educators with each other, even from long distances. The organization would provide regular meetings and/or conferences to bring educators together to share frustrations, experiences, and ideas. This organization could also serve as a central information source where educators and practitioners could access a wealth of resources regarding teaching about race and racism, including articles, books, journals, blogs, and videos and films. In addition, I believe such an organization would benefit from eventually creating their own avenue for academic publication where these practitioners could publish their work in order to share it with the broader ECE and education community.

The second recommendation is for policymakers advocating for early childhood education. I recommend that policymakers mandate higher, more consistent levels of coursework for EC educators throughout the United States. As discussed in Chapter 1, educators of young children have varying degrees of education, some with only a few college courses while others have master degrees. Specifically in California, where this

research study takes place, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) offers Child Development Permits of varying ranges from Associate Teacher to Program Director. However, not all preschools and early childhood centers require teachers to have a Child Development Permit. Creating a policy where all persons working with young children were required to obtain a teaching permit like this would be beneficial. This policy would be beneficial because as observed in this study, higher levels of teacher education exposed educators to more complex ideas regarding pedagogy, structures of oppression, and the need for culturally relevant and responsive teaching. Educators in this research study spoke about their college educations as an influence in how they teach young children. Because of their higher levels of education, participants were able to explain their motivation for teaching and understand the role of race and racism in their lives.

The third recommendation is for groups who influence curricular standards. I recommend that ECE curricular goals have the inclusion of topics of skin color, cultural differences and similarities, fairness, justice, and discrimination. When introducing these topics, educators should be encouraged to share from personal experiences, or if they do not feel comfortable, use first person narratives from literature. This method of introducing topics will encourage children to see these matters from multiple perspectives. This is a prime time to influence ECE curriculum, as early education is a topic in high demand. In October 2014, President Barack Obama recommended that the United States have six million children enrolled in high quality public preschool programs by the year 2020 (Mongeau, 2014). Currently, the U.S. Census puts the total preschool population at approximately eight million. If the President's plan comes to fruition, there will be increased funding, attention, and new policies implemented for

early childhood programs. Research studies such as this one have the opportunity to inform designers of ECE curriculum about the importance of early childhood curriculum that is inclusive of topics of race, racism, and social difference. In California, ECE curricular goals or standards are very inconsistent throughout different early childhood settings. For example, community care licensing, which regulates privately run preschools, has almost no curricular goals within the regulations. However, transitional kindergarten programs, Head Start, and public preschool follow a more established curriculum. I recommend requiring curriculum in all early childhood classrooms that discusses topics of race and racism in productive ways that lead to a more critical and holistic understanding of human difference.

Future Research

From this research study, there are many opportunities for future research. One of the potential strands of future research is exploring strategies employed by early childhood educators who teach about topics of race and racism in their classroom. How do they begin these conversations? What pedagogical tools do they employ? Research that explores successful classroom strategies that delve into social justice issues could be helpful to other educators in the early childhood field who have an interest in bringing topics of race and racism into their classrooms. The knowledge gained through this research study will work towards defining what a critical race ECE could look like.

A second strand of future research is exploring how EC educators reproduce colorblind ideologies within their classrooms. Since colorblind ideologies are prevalent not only in United States society but also in early childhood classrooms and teachings, exploring the ways in which this occurs in classrooms can be beneficial. This new

knowledge can assist educators and practitioners with methods of disrupting this hegemony of colorblindness. Colorblindness has a sense of routine normality in our everyday lives; exploration of how this lens is enacted in EC classrooms could work to change to more racially mindful approaches.

A third strand of future research is exploration into how children conceptualize race and social difference. This research would provide further knowledge of the developmental stages that children go through, as they make sense of race and racism. A study such as this one would assist EC educators in understanding developmentally appropriate ways to talk to young children about race and racism. In this study, I found that children's ability to discuss topics of race and social difference was devalued. Therefore, having further, asset based literature out there about the specific stages that children go through to make sense of constructs of race, would be helpful in making an argument for the need to have these conversations with young children.

Lastly, a fourth strand of future research is to replicate a study similar to this one, with the added component of participant observations. In a future study, the researcher would do one-on-one interviews with participants such as I did, but then observe this educator teaching in their classroom with their students. Then a follow up one-on-one interview would occur where the researcher would have the opportunity to ask follow-up questions about what they observed in the classroom. Replicating the current research study and adding the observations would be valuable because it would provide a more in-depth exploration of participants and would be able to draw connections from theory to practice.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Study Participants Needed!

ARE YOU...

- A student at ▮▮▮▮▮?
- Working with young children? (Infancy thru age 8)
- Have 1 hour for an interview?

If you answered yes to all questions, you are eligible to participate in an exciting study focusing on issues of diversity and early childhood educators.

All participants will receive a **$20 gift card** for participating in an interview!!

More questions? Interested in participating? Contact:
oona.ece@gmail.com

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

Exploring Teacher Attitudes and Practices Regarding Raising Issues of Race and Racism
in Early Childhood Education

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Oona Fontanella-Nothom, a student from the Social and Cultural Analysis of Education program at California State University, Long Beach.

The results of this study will be contributed to a master's thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your enrollment at [university name retracted] and because of your work with young children.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this interview is to develop an understanding of how your attitude/outlook on race and ethnicity influences your teaching practice and vice a versa. In this interview, you will be asked questions about both your outlook on race and ethnicity as well as about your teaching practice/pedagogy.

PROCEDURES

Interviews will take place in a private meeting space at [location retracted]. Each interview will take approximately one-hour and will be audio recorded. If you wish at any time to not be audio recorded, the recording will be turned off and written notes will be taken of your answers to interview questions.

The interview will include approximately 24-26 questions.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

  a. Discomfort with discussing topics of race and racism
  b. Breach of confidentiality

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in the study. However, the results may provide information on strategies that early childhood educators use when attempting to teach about race and racism with their students and any struggles and barriers these educators may face when trying to do this work.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

A $20 gift card will be given to you after each interview (individual and focus group). If at any time you want to stop to the interview or not answer a question, you will still receive your gift card. The gift card will be given to you immediately concluding the interview process.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Be assured that *all* responses will be held in the strictest professional confidence. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

You will have the opportunity to review the audiotape of the interview if you wish and edit or delete any portions of the interview.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation or non-participation will not affect your status at the university or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which in the opinion of the researcher warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Principal Investigator: Oona Fontanella-Nothom, oona.ece@gmail.com, (714) XXX-XXXX

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Lindsay Pérez Huber, lindsay.perezhuber@csulb.edu, (562) XXX-XXXX

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office of University Research, CSU Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840; Telephone: (562) 985-5314 or email to irb@csulb.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the individual interview portion of this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

If you consent to the use of your responses for this research project, please sign below. I thank you for your participation and assistance.

Print name:_____

Signature of
consent:_____

E-mail address:_____

Date: _____/_____/_____

AUDIO RECORDING OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

I agree to allow my interview to be audio recorded.

Signature of consent: _____

Date: _____/_____/_____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Section 1:

Current level of education completion:

Where did you grow up?

What is your current occupation and title?

What are your future career goals?

What race do you identify as? Ethnicity?

Section 2:

Can you tell me about your experiences working with young children?

Have you had the opportunity in your recent educational experiences to do work in or learn about race? Racism? Culturally relevant pedagogy? Anti-bias approach?

(If necessary, probe- in regards to early childhood education or general education?)

(If yes), What are your thoughts regarding what you learned?

What are your thoughts about method or approach in which you were taught?

What are your thoughts regarding anti-bias approach/culturally relevant pedagogical approaches in ECE specifically?

Have you had experience with a particular person or group that has been treated differently in a classroom?

Have you ever observed cultural components and traditions (such as certain languages, practices, customs, holidays, etc.) that you have perceived to have more significance than others? (probe regarding experiences of race and racism as a student)

Section 3:

How have you seen issues of race, ethnicity, or diversity brought into the early childhood classroom?

(If yes), have you ever had the opportunity to participate? Facilitate?

What did this look like?

If no, what could you imagine this to look like?

How comfortable do you feel having discussions with peers and coworkers about race and racism?

How interested are you in having these discussions?

What do you believe has contributed to your (comfort or discomfort)?

How do you define race? (if needed, prompt, How do you define it, biologically or socially constructed?)

What race categories do you believe exist in the US?

How do you define racism?

How comfortable do you feel having discussions with your students about race and racism?

How interested are you in having these discussions?

What do you believe has contributed to your comfort or discomfort?

Have you ever seen evidence of racism or prejudice at your current or any other preschool/early childhood setting? If yes, would you like to share?

Have you ever witnessed an effort in any preschool/early childhood setting use an anti-racist/anti-bias/culturally relevant pedagogical approach? (I will define anti-bias, anti-racist, if necessary)

If no, why do you believe that did not/is not taking place?

If yes, can you describe the approach?

Did you believe it was effective? What was your role?

If no, do you have knowledge and/or experience with anti-racist/anti-bias approaches?

Section 4:

Based on your experiences, are there any recommendations for the field of ECE that you wish you could make? In what way would you engage your colleagues?

If you could give advice to a future EC educator, what would it be?

Any other thoughts you would like to share regarding race, racism, and early childhood education and your personal experiences and journey?

APPENDIX D

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Suggestions for Educators
Books to assist one in the journey to becoming a "race conscious" EC educator

Below are suggestions of books for educators to use who are interested in teaching about topics of race and racism with their students:

Books to read with children:

Anzaldúa, G. & Castillo, C. (1993). *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

Bridges, R. (1999). *Through my eyes*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

Bunting, E. & Lewin, T. (2006). *One green apple*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

Choi, Y. (2003). *The name jar*. New York, NY: Dragonfly Books.

Hoffman, M. & Binch, C. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Levine, E. & Nelson, K. (2007). *Henry's freedom box*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

Morrison, T. (2004). *Remember : the journey to school integration*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Ortiz, S. & Graves, S. (1994). *The people shall continue*. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press.

Ramsey, C., Strauss, G. & Cooper, F. (2010). *Ruth and the Green Book*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.

Sensoy, O. & DiAngelo, R. (2012). *Is everyone really equal? : an introduction to key concepts in social justice education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Woodson, J. & Lewis, E. (2001). *The other side*. New York, NY: Putnam.

Books for educators:

Ausdale, D. & Feagin, J. (2001). *The first R : how children learn race and racism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers : successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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Derman-Sparks, L. & Ramsey, P. (2011). *What if all the kids are white? : anti-bias multiculture education with young children and families*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Kuby, C. (2013). *Critical literacy in the early childhood classroom : unpacking histories, unlearning privilege*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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