THE STORIES OF EIGHT BLACK MALES PURSUING DOCTORAL DEGREES

EXAMINED THROUGH THE LENSES OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY:

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE; DON'T LIVE THE HYPE

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of
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Doctor of PHILOSOPHY

by

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San Marcos, Texas
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FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

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DEDICATION

God knew I would complete this journey before I started.

Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

Yon Armstrong, had he not been taken so early in life,
he would have been the first Ph.D. in the family instead of me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would also like to express my appreciation to the other members of my committee, Dr. Miguel A. Guajardo, Dr. Jovita M. Ross-Gordon, and Dr. John A. Oliver, for their wisdom sharing and support.

To my *brothers* who participated in this study, thank you for your support and trust in sharing your life stories.

A mi esposa, Dee, gracias! Juntos completamos otra tarea.

A mi familia, my daughters and grandchildren, Boo, my sisters and sisters in law, and my mother, thank you so much for your support and encouragement.

To the 'hood, yes! I really was studying for a doctorate.

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SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: CLARENA LARROTTA

Building upon the tenets of critical race theory (CRT) this qualitative study examines the life histories of eight Black males in their journey to obtain a doctoral degree. The research questions guiding the study include: What are the life histories of eight Black males pursuing doctoral studies? How can we make sense of their life experiences through the lenses of critical race theory? What can be learned from their life histories that can inspire other Black males and inform the policies and practices of institutions of higher education? Data collection sources consist of ethnographic interviews, documents, artifacts, and the researcher's journal. Narrative analysis techniques coupled with CRT as the study framework serve as the focus for the analysis

of the data. Study findings are presented mainly in two chapters; Chapter Four focuses on the three participating Black males who were over the age of fifty and takes a closer look at their life histories through the themes of overt racism, internalized oppression silenced voices, and the intersection of racism with other forms of oppression. Chapter Five presents the life histories of the remaining four study participants through the themes of covert racism and affirmative action as a manifestation of interest convergence. Chapter Six, *Hype* to Hope as a Path Toward Change, highlights the essence of the participants' life histories; provides implications and suggestions for taking action toward the possibility for change; and presents ideas for future research.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Herman, I do not believe Negroes should be in our school. I certainly do not want your kind in my classroom. However, the law says you can attend this school. While I don't think you people are capable of learning science, if you do your work I'll give you the grade you earn (M.A. Grim, personal communication, September 1967).

This vignette speaks to my first day in the Biology class at Airline High School in Shreveport, LA, in 1967. I received a "B" for the course but probably earned an "A". I was the only Negro in class[1]. Raised during the transition from segregation to integration of all facilities including schools in the late 1950s and 1960s (Mondale & Patton, 2001), I was often the only Negro. Three years after my experience at Airline High, I graduated from Marion-Franklin High School in Columbus, OH, and ranked number 3 in a senior class of 274 with a GPA of 3.86. The incident described above is just one of a series of events that have impacted my education and life journeys. My education journey included Cum Laude graduate degree in Business Administration, a Masters in Public Administration, and my current enrollment in a doctoral program. My

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[1] Although I would later prefer to be referred to as Black, in 1967, Negro was less derogatory than Black or colored than what it is nowadays.

life journey includes serving in the military where I received honors working from an Army private (E-1) to an Air Force major (0-4), a rank I held upon my retirement. Outside of the military, I have worked almost exclusively in public service; more specifically, helping others to be treated fairly and equitably for which I have been recognized and even called upon as an expert in the civil rights arena. Many would consider my career "successful" with the achievements and accolades that I have received. However, I never felt I was the best or that I was accepted as being the best, beyond the superficial congratulations rendered. I am very proud of what I have accomplished; I did what I had to do to provide for my family; I am aware that I am part of the system. Above and beyond the race-based comments symbolized in the opening vignette, I always felt that race was a factor in every decision made about me academically and professionally. For instance, I believe race was a factor for my disqualification from attending a military academy on the basis of a medical condition that I am sure I did not have.

In the military, I did not receive some honors due to the color of my skin. For example, upon completion of main courses in the military, I would have been automatically placed in the top percentile for promotion consideration if I was not Black. Also, in state government I was denied upper management positions when I was clearly the top candidate. Throughout it all I tried to compartmentalize my frustration regarding racism, not allow it to consume me and be able to move on. The years went by and I lived my life as best as I could; I always tried to stay positive but as my big brown afro turned into a white TWA (teeny weeny afro) each encounter of what I believed was a race-based behavior or discrimination reminded me of the truth.

Racial discrimination encounters varied, sometimes I was followed in stores when I went in to buy something or I was ignored as if I was not there. Other times I was told, "Oh, I didn't mean "you", Herman. You're not like them," followed by a derogatory comment about people of color. A salesperson would not accept the fact that I was preapproved to purchase furniture, a car, or a house. I also got into the habit of wearing a suit when traveling the airlines with the hope of not being profiled.   Nearly everyday and everywhere I was aware of receiving race-based treatment—I was vigilant for the next racist insult. Based on these life experiences and the fact that the stories of Black males, like myself, enrolled in doctoral studies have not been told served as motivation to implement the present qualitative research study.

Research Questions

Building upon the tenets of critical race theory (CRT), this qualitative research examined the life histories of eight Black males up to the time when they obtained or were in the process of obtaining a doctoral degree. The research questions guiding the study included: What are the life histories of eight Black males pursuing doctoral studies? How can we make sense of their life experiences through the lenses of critical race theory? What can be learned from their life histories that can inspire other Black males and inform the policies and practices of institutions of higher education?

The study aimed to provide voice to the stories of eight Black males who have not lived the *hype* and have risen above the challenges. These life histories have the potential to inspire other Black males and inform institutions of higher education about the challenges Black males face while pursuing graduate studies. Study findings can also be

helpful for suggesting approaches to policy and institution change in the quest for equity

and access.

Critical race theory (CRT) serves as the framework for the study as it proved

helpful in making sense of the life experiences of the study participants regarding race

and racism.   CRT became a lens for examining my life history providing clarity and to a

great extent confirmation of what I believed—race matters in this country. According to

CRT the race-based treatment or racism[2] is part of daily life in our country-- that

certainly has been my experience. CRT helped me understand how I and other people of

color are ignored or discounted despite our professional and academic experience, skill or

knowledge. CRT placed into context racism against Blacks coupled with other forms of

unequal treatment towards people of color, and taking into account other aspects such as

gender, sexual orientation, and class and poverty.

The Hype

The minute they see me, fear me
I'm the epitome-a public enemy
Used, abused, without clues
I refused to blow a fuse
They even had it on the news
Don't believe the hype
Don't believe he hype[3]

The *hype* is explained by existent literature and the statistics describing social

factors including Black male population in prisons and the military, poverty, and health

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[2] Racism is defined as the belief that racial groups have superior and inferior
characteristics resulting in different treatment because of that belief (Baez, 2000), but will
be addressed in detail.

[3] Excerpt of the song "Don't Believe the Hype" from the album: *It Takes a Nation of a
Million to Hold Us Back* by Public Enemy (1988).

disparities as contributors to their underrepresentation in education.   Black males are overrepresented in the prison system where 27.4% of the 2.1 million incarcerated males are Black males ranging in age 20 to 39 (Coley & Barton, 2006).   Black males from the age of 45 to 54 are incarcerated six times the rate of White males (Coley & Barton, 2006).   With Black males making up 12.2% of the U.S. population but comprising 14.54% of recruits, we are overrepresented in the military (Watkins & Sherk, 2008). Kaiser Family Foundation (2006) in their study on Black men between 18 and 29 reported that in 2004 the unemployment rate for Black men was over twice that of young White, Latino, and Asian men. Also, over 20% lived in poverty compared to 10% White[4].

Today, as was stated by Parham and McDavis (1987), health disparities continue to be used to describe the at-risk-of-extinction status of Black males.   With a life expectancy of 70.2 compared to 75.8 for White males, 77.0 for Black females and 80.6 for White females, Black males have a shorter life span than any other group (Xu, Kochanek, & Tejada-Vera, 2009).   Contributing to the shorter life span are disparities in access to health care resulting in higher rates of prostate cancer, heart disease, and diabetes among Black males (Office of Minority Health, 2005). Additionally, there are studies that have linked racism and discrimination as contributing to health disparities and health outcomes among Black males (Bennett, Merritt, Edwards, & Sollers III, 2004).   These factors are so dire that Black males are referred to as an endangered species (Parham & McDavis, 1987).

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[4] 18% of Latino, 12% Asian.

According to the statistics, my Black male peers and I are more apt to be incarcerated, on welfare, or serving on the front lines in the military instead of being enrolled in higher education, let alone pursuing a doctorate. The literature reinforces such perceptions by placing more emphasis on documenting problems of Black males than on developing viable solutions (McGuire, 2005). It is no surprise when people clutch their valuables or move to avoid crossing the path of "unintelligible, uneducatable, and dangerous" Black males (Jackson & Moore, 2008, p. 848). While it may not be a surprise it is no less offensive to those of us who manage to be law-abiding, tax-paying, hard-working (Feagin & McKinney, 2003) family-raising members of this great country. We are rarely provided an opportunity to be part of the solution, to offer insight or perspective in spite of having managed to rise above racism and break through the barriers (McGuire, 2005)[5].

Perhaps as Harris (1996) suggested, in order to become part of the discourse we must reframe the issue of Blacks in higher education by moving beyond the deficit labels such as endangered species. At the micro level, we must draw upon those who have overcome racism and other bigotry (Harris, 1996), as well as structural incongruence, by documenting and reporting on the life stories of Black males who refused to be defined by the *hype*, demographics, statistics, and negative discourse. As a case in point, the stanzas that appear next are part of a poem I wrote recalling memories of racism; this poem is relevant to this study as I avoided the *hype*.

> I wanted to relate a story about me—a young Black man's life
> I'll speak of the past experiences as seen through my eyes

---

[5] Any mention of Black male academic success or value to society is rarely illustrated through the mass media (Jackson & Moore, 2006).

I lived many years on Chicago's Southside
Despite poverty, drug, and violence I was taught to keep my pride

But what I saw stuck in my mind
For what I saw was quite common during that time
I saw poorly equipped schools I would state
They were ill equipped to educate
Instead of learning math, science, English and history
These kids had to learn how to survive in the street

But down to Georgia the family had to go
There in the south to an evil society I was exposed
For in Georgia I was demanded to stay in my place
Violating that rule was dangerous for those of my race

I would excel in school—against the stereotype
And from every front fight for civil rights
I read and listened to those espousing Black freedom
Names like H. Rap, Malcolm, Eldridge, and Huey P. Newton.
I watched as Blacks were belittled and denied jobs
Though not held up at gun point-they felt just as robbed.

In every endeavor I strived to be the best
I felt I couldn't be average; I had to do it and did it better than the rest.
Even with all the negative things I saw over the years
I maintained pride in myself, my people, and my country that I hold so dear.
My head is held high and regarding my patriotism there can be no doubt
Despite its problems if you don't like the country work to change or get the hell out.

Remember many folks sacrificed to pave the way
So we could be stationed where we at today
I know that for me to have gotten where I am tonight
It took the help of many, Red, Black, Brown, Yellow, and White.

But allow me to express—if you will.
The anger, the shame, disappointment, fear, and frustrations I felt as well.
And today those feelings also include happiness, hope, inspiration and strengthened pride
Due the achievements made for the cause of civil rights.
And to the brothers who, persevere and fight the good fight.

Thank you for being like me by not living the *hype*.

My Journey

At the end of the day, race matters!
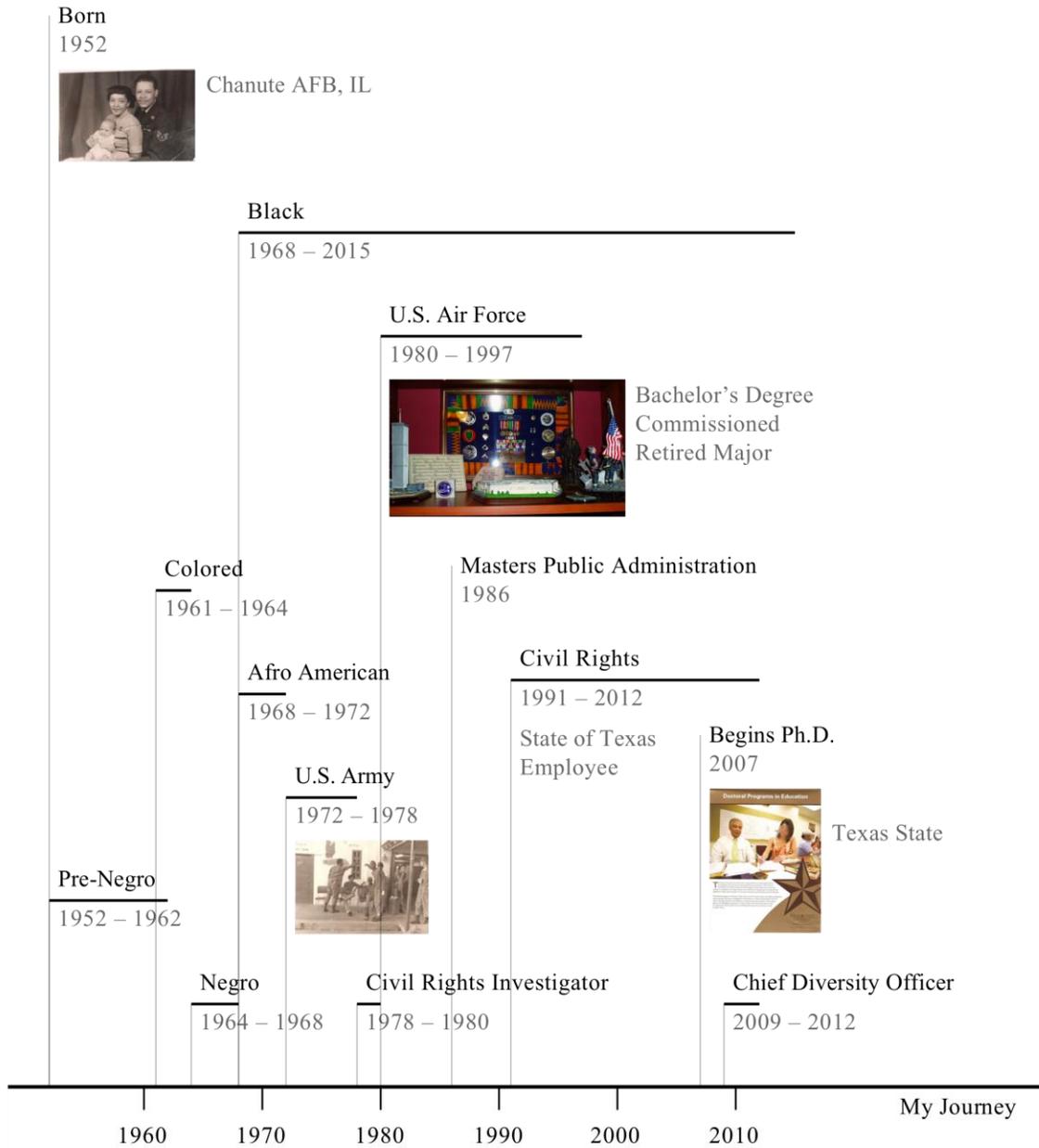
Figure 1.1 Timeline of My Journey

As illustrated in my timeline (Figure 1.1), many labels have been used to describe people of African descent in the United States: Negro, Colored, Afro American, Black, African American, and the infamous word "nigger", are among the most common. My life history illustrates most of them, from the time when I did not have awareness of color, to the time when I was referred to as a Negro for the first time; to encountering colored only facilities in the South; to joining Afro American demands for liberation from the oppressor in the North; and to raised fists of Black pride, beginning in my early school years and throughout my service in the military.

Pre Negro

I was born on a military installation in the early 1950s. My dad was a staff sergeant in the Air Force and hailed from Alabama. He was skilled at preparing quality meals for large groups and was a gifted singer. My mother grew up on a farm in Mississippi until she moved to Chicago where she met my dad. I was the oldest of six children with four sisters and one brother who is the youngest.

Most of us were born on military installations; after two of my sisters and I were born in Illinois we moved to Nebraska where I remember living in a basement until we returned to Illinois where we lived in several projects in Chicago. We travelled to Mississippi a couple of times but wound up back in Chicago. Demands of the military kept us on the move and my dad away from home for periods up to a year. Even when he was home he worked a second job to help make ends meet. Mom stayed home—she never worked, well except for trying to sell encyclopedias. Despite dad's second job, we never seemed to have enough money; we did not have a car, ever, but we always had food, either from the dining facilities my dad supervised in the military or from

government assistance. In my early life, from birth to third grade, race had no meaning

to me. Whether it was my cousins in Chicago's projects or at my grandfather's farm with

cousins in Brookhaven, MS, all meaningful contact, all associations were with people of

color.   Prejudice, racism, and segregation were not discussed around me, even in

Mississippi and the term Negro never entered my thoughts.

Negro

Figure 1.2 My Brother and I with Evann

It was not until I was nine that I had a friend who was not Black. He is in the

picture with my brother and I (Figure 1.2). I really had no concept of any other color or

race until the third grade when we moved to a military base in upstate New York. There,

all my immediate neighbors were White. There were one or two Black families but we

really did not associate with each other.

My first recollection of color as an "issue" took place in elementary school, on

base. I was laughed at during the gym period in square dance class because there were no

Black girls in my class. So, who was going to be my dancing partner? Ruth was selected

to be my partner and was teased for having to hold hands with a *Negro*.   I was

embarrassed and surprised; it made my heart hurt. My parents said *children can be cruel,*

but they learn prejudice from their parents. Needless to say, New York was my racial awakening.

Colored

It was sad leaving the nicest home we had lived in, but there was the excitement of the unknown in heading to Turner Air Force Base, Albany, Georgia (Figure 1.3). However, my mother warned us that White people in Georgia were very prejudiced and had no problem with killing Black people for the most minor infractions. Whites had ways they wanted to be addressed and they had separate bathrooms, restaurants, theaters, and schools. I did not forget mom's warning.

Figure 1.3 Main Gate to Turner AFB, GA
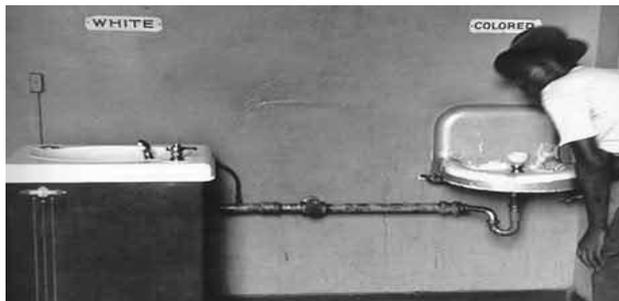
Figure 1.4 White and Colored Drinking Fountains[6]

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[6] This image of the White and Colored fountains was downloaded from https://www.google.com/search?q=colored+sign&hl=en&prmd=imvns&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=sZeNT4iFFMTm2AWQ2e3xCw&ved=0CEsQsAQ&biw=1639&bih=800

On the train ride to Georgia, all Blacks had to move to an overcrowded car with no air conditioning. Albany, GA drove the effects of segregation and discrimination deep into me as depicted in Figure 1.4 above.   Even after 44 years, I remember clearly how I caused a riot in Sylvester, Georgia, after hitting a White adult with a basketball for yelling racial epithets and escaped being dragged down Cromartie Beach Road by the Ku Klux Klan (see Figure 1.5) when I integrated a formerly all White teen club.

Figure 1.5 Ku Klux Klan[7]

Sadly, I distinctly remember looking at my reflection and being ashamed of my lips, hair, and skin color. From attending segregated schools with inadequate infrastructure, outdated texts, and underpaid teachers to integrating facilities and activities with insults, threats, and physical abuse, Georgia was my racial nightmare.

Throughout all the moving and even during my changing self-awareness, the one constant was academic achievement, a never-ending point of emphasis for the Horn children. Even though my mom never finished high school and my dad went to college

[7] Downloaded from www.canphoto.com

for a short period of time, both emphasized education. Once I brought home a C in math and was put on restriction. I always knew I was going to go to college or to a military academy.

Growing up from seventh grade until graduation I attended seven different schools. For seventh and eighth grades, I attended all Black schools. Seventh grade was on the campus of a historically Black college and eighth grade an all Black junior high school. The first half of ninth grade, I integrated a formerly all White school and was subjected to racial taunts, had food thrown at me and was even knocked out by a senior high student who came on campus. The second half of the ninth grade was completed on a military base in Puerto Rico—warm weather, beautiful beaches, a nice people-paradise. It was also the first time I was exposed to Hispanic culture with many of my friends coming from the local community. However, we stayed there for only four months when dad received orders for Barksdale AFB, in Shreveport, Louisiana.

At Airline High School in Shreveport, LA., having a White kid with multiple disabilities calling me "nigger" still rings loud in my head. In his mind no matter how severe his impairments might have been, he was still better off than me. At the time frankly, I did not totally disagree. That is also where I encountered my tenth grade Biology teacher introduced in the opening vignette at the beginning of Chapter One. I learned that lingering segregation impacted the interests of Whites to be inclusive also. The Airline High School track coach with aspirations of championships wanted me to join the team. He soon found out in no uncertain terms that even though Blacks could now attend the school, athletics remained segregated for the city. Fortunately, we left Shreveport after 10 months heading to Ohio.

Afro American

When we moved to Lockbourne Air Force Base, Columbus, Ohio I was immediately surrounded by teens protesting the war, racism, and the education system. Malcolm X, H. Rap Brown, Eldridge Cleaver, Angela Davis, Stokely Carmichael, and Mohammed Ali became my heroes. The Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron were the messengers. No more would Negro or Colored be acceptable references. We were proud of our African heritage. We wanted to learn everything about Afro Americans' contributions to this country. The real McCoy, refrigeration, blood transfusion, and shoe lasts were but a few of the missing links in this nation's history we felt compelled to bring forward--pride in our history.

Black

Afro American remained popular but the real change came with "Say it Loud- I'm Black and I'm Proud" by the late Godfather of Soul, James Brown (1968). Black pride was at its highest and remains my preferred reference today. We discarded all acknowledgement of White culture. Everything black was beautiful and anything white was undesirable. Espousing revolutionary rhetoric, in the middle of Eastland Mall, or patrolling High Street with a sawed off shotgun dressed in my riot suit (blue jean pants and jacket with black turtleneck shirt, black beret, and combat boots) described my actions. Intolerance of whiteness and extreme love of blackness characterized my being. This new Black consciousness replaced all previous self-loathing and desires to assimilate. The shame of my Black features, nose, lips, skin color[8], hair was replaced with extreme pride in those same characteristics. Even over the years while I continue to

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[8] There were times I was teased by Blacks for being too light—not Black enough. Sometimes I was called red or green-eyed.

prefer being called Black and embrace my Black heritage, my intolerance of whiteness and unquestioned support of blackness has been tempered by reality and experience; but during that time of pride in Blackness and being Black was wonderful!

For this period of time, I spent my junior and senior years at two different schools, both were integrated. At both schools, I continued to encounter the racial taunts, being accosted by Whites and having items thrown at me. However, I never let my grades falter, graduating third out of a senior class of over 270 and attending The Ohio State University (OSU) on academic scholarship. As my radical activities continued, my grades began to suffer. I eventually dropped out of college and would not obtain my Bachelors in Business Administration for another eight years. I earned my Masters in Public Administration six years later—taking only eleven months to complete and began my doctoral program twenty-two years later. All of my post secondary education has been obtained while working full-time.

I left undergraduate studies at OSU and entered the U.S. Army completing basic training in Kentucky as the Outstanding Basic Trainee—my mom still has the trophy. Such achievement characterized my military career both in the Army and later in the Air Force. Recalling my mother telling me "you're always going to have to be twice as good as White people to be successful," I adopted that as my mantra. In nearly every military school, I attended I was among the distinguished graduates or the honor graduate. On those occasions where I did not receive the recognition, I knew it had nothing to do with my grades, but everything to do with race. I know this because the persons selected were always White and their selection was always based on additional subjective criteria like leadership demonstration.

While in the military, I realized I had a knack for figuring out how to get things done in organizations and soon became a resource for helping others, especially people of color. When stationed in Panama, I would hold open meetings in the bleachers in front of brigade headquarters to explain the involuntary discharge regulations and to outline soldiers' rights. These were primarily Black and Brown soldiers being separated from the military without understanding the consequences of these actions when they returned home. The brigade's senior non commissioned officer, also Black, officially warned me about such activities, but unofficially opened the door for assistance. While I helped others in the Army, I could not figure out how to obtain a commission as an officer. That is until the personnel officer would not accept my application for officer candidate school stating the school was closed, despite an official message I had stating otherwise. I knew my path for a commission lied elsewhere. So, I separated from the military, returning to Ohio where I continued helping people as a civil rights investigator for the Ohio Civil Rights Office.   I was soon made a supervisor in charge of staff with more education and experience than I had. One of my staff felt she should have been given the position instead of me, so I helped her write her complaint to the personnel board, who dismissed the case after reviewing both of our work products.

I had been working there for about two years, when I applied and was accepted into the Air Force where I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant scheduled to become a communication electronics officer. When I reported for duty, my job assignment was changed on the spot. I later found out it was because the previous Black officer had not worked out. However, I made the best of my maintenance assignment, raising the standard of maintenance to such a level that the commander made me his

executive officer with the idea that I do for the entire unit what I did for the maintenance

complex.   I did not disappoint him because the unit received so much praise for

performance that my commander did not want me to leave.

Figure 1.6 Air Force Military Personnel Center

During my service in the Air Force, I had various assignments including working

at the Air Force Military Personnel Center in different career fields (Figure 1.6). I also

had my share of racial acts such as being called racist names, having liquids thrown at

me, and being threatened as a Black officer. I also experienced institutional racism when

I was denied early promotion to major. Even my wing commander, who selected me first

to be recommended for early promotion could not quite understand why I was not

selected. I would eventually make major and retired at that rank after 20 plus years

working mostly in the military equivalent of civil rights and equal opportunity. My work

in civil rights continued when I returned to state government, in Texas. It was my

passion and continues to be today in my current role at the university. All in all, I found

that having a record of achievement that was literally twice as good as my White peers,

gave me opportunities that I might have otherwise been denied had my record been any less than outstanding. I do not know that for sure, but I believed my mom.

In summary, I have been a professional whose journey is filled with struggle and encounters related to race issues. I have shared growing up by discussing my acquisition of color consciousness from pre-Negro to Black, which is my preferred name. I experienced overt racism at school; however I did not quit school because my parents taught me to value education. Later, in the workplace, I witnessed and was directly affected by institutional racism. This type of racism manifested due to the lack of policies to address racist behavior. As stated on several occasions, and as reflected on my timeline, I also took agency and participated in several sociopolitical activities that furthered the rights of Blacks in the U.S. Early on, the participation was outside of mainstream organizations; but later I found that I could have an impact working within institutions for equity and fairness.

Mapping the Journey

The present Chapter sets the stage for the research by presenting the statement of the problem and the research questions.   I briefly explained CRT and the "hype" as important concepts in the study. I also provided my timeline, life history, and journey as connected to my account of color consciousness. The next Chapter discusses relevant literature on important topics such as the history of Blacks in higher education, racism, White privilege, deficit thinking, critical race theory, and strategies for surviving racism. Chapter Three, the methodology, informs details on data collection and analysis and the overall study design. Chapters Four and Five present study findings. Finally, Chapter Six, *Hype to Hope as a Path Toward Change*, aims to provide closure to the reader.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

Sweatt v. Painter
1950
UT Law School Integrates

Brown v. Board of Educaton
1954
Desegregates Schools

Thelma White v. Texas Western University
1955
UT System ordered to integrate

FELA
1958
Born
Southern Africa

Dana Smith v. Southwest Texas College
1963
Texas State University admits Blacks

Civil Rights Act Passes
1964

Civil Order 5281
1971
Integrates Texas Public Schools

HERMAN
1952
Born, Illinois

Regents of the U of Calif. v. Bakke
1978
Affirmative Action
Race allowed
No set asides

Hopwood v. Texas
1996
Banned race
as a factor

ROBERTO
1960
Born
Central America

CHARLES
1962
Born
North Texas

JAMES
1976
Born
Eastern TX

Grutter v. Bollinger
2003
Narrow use of race permitted

EARL
1955
Born
East TX

WILLIAM
1965
Born
East TX

MICHAEL
1986
Born
South Carolina

First Black Awarded Doctorate
2006
Texas State University

Civil Rights and Texas Education

1960   1970   1980   1990   2000

Figure 2.1 Historical Context of the Participants' Journey

Since the study setting is Texas, the historical timeline depicted in Figure 2.1

illustrates events related to education and racial issues in the State of Texas. The timeline

starts in 1950 because three of the study participants were born between 1952 and 1958.

The timeline also maps out major national historical events such as the *Brown v. Board of*

Education (1954) decision (*Brown*) reversing the separate but equal doctrine of legal

segregation in schools; the Civil Rights Act (1964) that ended segregation in

employment, transportation education, public accommodations, and the provision of

services. Other national events include the *Regents of the University of California v.*

Bakke (1978) decision that addressed affirmative action in institutions of higher

education as well as the *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) decision; both provided for

consideration of race as a factor for college admission as long as race is not the only

factor being considered. In this Chapter I review main socio-political events as they

relate to the history of Blacks in education. I also discuss important concepts and

literature relevant to the study.

History of Blacks in Education

Education in the African American community has been viewed by many as the

key to living the American Dream (Hefner, 2004); however, as stated by Tate (1997)

there is a long history in America of the courts addressing racial injustice in education.

It was the U.S. Supreme Courts' decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that established

the separate but equal doctrine in our country. Coupled with the prevailing social view

by many Whites of the inherent inferiority of African Americans, racial segregation was

almost a natural outgrowth. Allport (1954) in his seminal work on prejudice notes that

segregation has no root purpose except to stamp one group of Americans as inferior to

another. In the North and the South, the system of Jim Crow segregation was a legally

enforced system that set aside certain places and venues exclusively for Whites (Feagin,

Vera, & Imani, 1996). That stamp permeated nearly all aspects of society, not only

where Blacks could work but also where they were not accepted like hotels, restaurants,

and other public facilities; and how they traveled via public transportation including

buses and trains.

The Nation's education system was also segregated with individuals risking their

lives and futures for equal educational opportunities.   Mondale and Patton (2001)

recount Joseph Albert Delaine filing a lawsuit against local White school officials in

South Carolina for not providing bus service for his children to attend school. As a

consequence, the White authorities of Clarendon County fired him from his teaching job

along with his wife, sisters and niece. They burned down his house and the church where

he served as pastor and ultimately ran him out of town. Clarendon County, South

Carolina was home to one of the five consolidated cases that became *Brown*. From that

landmark decision, which reversed the separate but equal doctrine established under

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), we began to see the end of the legal basis for segregation but

not without resistance by those in power, such as state governors who sought to nullify,

evade and violate the law (Gay, 2004). For example, Arkansas Governor Faubus had the

State National Guard stop Black students from integrating Central High School in Little

Rock, Arkansas (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004). To counter such resistance and uphold

the law in 1957 President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division, the Screaming

Eagles, to Central High School in Little Rock to ensure the safety of nine Black teenagers

seeking a better education (Mondale & Patton, 2001).

Initial reactions to *Brown* were just the beginning of a chain of events that would bring to the forefront the issues regarding unequal educational opportunity; *Brown* did not solve the problem of educational discrimination against Blacks. Instead, *Brown* set a foundation for a broader civil rights movement involving other minorities and women (Gay, 2004). Mondale and Patton (2001) share the story of Black students at Northern High in Detroit who called for a general strike in demand for better education opportunities. Mexican Americans high school students in Crystal City, TX went on strike demanding more humane treatment by White teachers, bilingual education, and curricular reform. However, Detroit and Crystal City walkouts were not unique as Guajardo and Guajardo (2004) recall that 10,000 Mexican American students in East Los Angeles organized walkouts to protest segregationist practices in various high schools. And in their review of the impact of *Brown* in South Texas, they studied the Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout in Hidalgo County, TX involving over 150 students protesting an unjust educational system.

Such actions were repeated across the United States. According to Mondale and Patton (2001), approximately 30,000 African and Mexican American students boycotted schools in protest for quality education. These protests, most occurring years after *Brown*, were emboldened by the states' failure to implement policy changes. Even with the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964), that provided broad prohibitions against discrimination, state and local governments and schools were slow to make changes. In Texas there was no significant policy change regarding segregation in public schools until Federal Judge William Wayne Justice issued Civil Order 5281 that required Texas

Education Agency to enforce school integration in all Texas public schools (Kemerer, 1991).

Higher education in Texas path toward integration also involved the courts with the Supreme Court decision of *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) requiring the University of Texas Law School to integrate by allowing Heman Marion Sweatt and other Black students admittance (Keeton, 2010). Yet, Blacks desiring to attend undergraduate schools in Texas remained limited to Black universities such as Prairie View. However, in 1955 as a result of a lawsuit filed by Thelma White against Texas Western University (University of Texas at El Paso), Judge R.E. Thomason ruled that the entire University of Texas System had to admit Blacks to its undergraduate programs (Herrera & Johnson, 1996). And eight years later in 1963, Texas A&M admitted its first Black students with Rice following in 1965 (Herrera & Johnson, 1996). Also, in 1963 Dana Smith, a Black female, won a landmark case against Southwest Texas State College (Texas State University), when Judge Rice signed the court order ending segregation at the institution (Charles, Holt, & Mayo, 2003).   Blacks and others through their protests and legal challenges to educational institutions sought equal access to education. Whether it was a father in South Carolina or students across the nation, ordinary citizens demonstrated extraordinary courage, grit, endurance to challenge legal and other forms of racial and ethnic discrimination (Mondale & Patton, 2001).   As Hefner (2004) states education ". . . was not only worth dying for, but was the Golden Fleece that best combated the vestiges of enslavement" (p. 1). More specifically, the injustice manifested in the denial of equal education for Blacks was part of a larger problem in the U.S. and that problem was and continues to be racism.

Racism

Racism is the belief that racial groups have superior or inferior characteristics resulting in different treatment because of that belief (Baez, 2000). Racism is not passive; it implies power and acting upon the belief of the superiority of one group over another (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). Racism is a lived experience of the mistreatment of Black Americans by Whites that have a great affect on a Black person's conduct and understanding of life and the social world (Feagin & Sikes, 1994). Different authors discuss the many forms of racism (Bell, 2005a; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, Vera, & Batur, 2001; Hacker, 1995; Hampton, 2010; Harris, 1999; Healey, 2009; Omi & Winant, 1994; Scheurich & Young, 1997); however, here I will discuss only three of them: individual racism, institutional racism, and social racism occurring both overtly and covertly.

Individual racism occurs by individual actions against racial minorities and represents the traditional perspective of racism and racial discrimination that results from prejudice of the dominant group and occurs in a variety of settings (Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Hacker, 1995; Helms, 1995; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Examples include using racial slurs, avoiding mixing with different races, or denying access/service to a person because of race. Hacker (1995) provides a specific example in the following scenario:

> Taxicab drivers who refuse to stop for Black riders base that decision on the only information they have: the race of the person raising his or her hand. Even if the driver has had some bad experiences, he understands that most Black men are law-abiding citizens. At the same time, he knows that some have been known to pull a gun on taxicab drivers. And that "some" is enough to make him wary about

every Black man. …His decision to not stop is patently racist, especially since he

then proceeds to pick up the first White passenger he sees farther down the block

(p. 23).

The example above illustrates individual racism and exemplifies how a person has the

ability to discriminate against another person on the basis of skin color. On the other

hand, "institutional racism" moves beyond the acts of individuals to the embedded

systems of organizations.

Institutional racism takes place through the implementation of policies,

procedures, practices, rules, and regulations that harm one or more races due to the fact

that these groups are different from the dominant group (Helms, 1995; Scheurich &

Young, 1997). Feagin and Sikes (1994) describe institutional racism as "the daily

experiences of racial hostility and discrimination encountered by middle-class and other

African Americans are the constituent elements of interlocking societal structures and

processes" (p. 17). In other words, the repeated acts of racism experienced by Blacks

serve as the building blocks for institutional racism. This form of racism is also defined

by the informal or unwritten rules in organizations that govern how people interact with

each other and what is tacitly or implicitly condoned in terms of those interactions

(Feagin & McKinney, 2003). This type of racism may be intentional or unintentional

actually appearing neutral and unnoticed by minorities, yet they have a harmful effect

(Feagin & McKinney, 2003).

Societal racism exists when the cultural norms, beliefs, habits, practices and

assumptions give preference to one race over another (Feagin & McKinney, 2003;

Feagin, Vera, & Batura, 2001; 1995; Hacker, 1995). This occurs when the dominant

group's view is favored over other groups' perspective regarding defining social structures such as families or the interpretation of historical events (Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Healey (2009) adds that cultural/social ideologies and beliefs of the dominant group, the group in power, are used to legitimize or rationalize the inferiority status of minority groups and are incorporated into the culture of a society and passed from one generation to another. Feagin et al. (2001) add that as a result of societal racism the value, resources, and talents of the marginalized group are underused or lost.

As explained by the different types of racism, acts of racism can be covert and overt. *Overt racism* consists of specific observable, public acts of unequal treatment of a person or person based on group membership (Healey, 2009; Scheurich & Young, 1997). For example, Healey (2009) states that in the South, during the 1960s, elections and elected officials were confined to Whites only in order to disenfranchise Blacks and keep Whites in power. Overt racism can originate from actions by individuals or as the result of practices by institutions. Examples include racial epithets, gestures, or physical acts of violence. Additionally, overt racism can be institutional policies that openly exclude certain marginalized groups.

Covert racism consists of subtle, subversive, not explicitly public, by individuals and institutions that restrict or deny opportunities available to minorities (Coates, 2008; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Examples of covert racism include deceiving certain individuals, lying, omitting information, or by applying stricter standards to one group versus another.

Racism is central to the plight of Blacks and exists in nearly all aspects of society including employment, entertainment, schooling, and communities taking its toll on Blacks and their families who face it each day (Feagin & Sikes, 1994). Feagin and McKinney (2003) state these acts occur repeatedly and routinely and characterize them as "little murders every day" (p. 20). These "little murders" take a toll costing all of us as Feagin and McKinney (2003) identify racism's economic and social costs associated with the overrepresentation of Black rates of poverty, unemployment, and incarceration. Racism impacts productivity because it is difficult to do your best work when faced with unequal treatment (Feagin & McKinney, 2003). Indeed, Carter (2007) suggests that the cumulative affect of racism builds over the years where the stress, above and beyond everyday stress experienced by others, particularly Whites, creates negative health outcomes such as increased rates of heart disease.

In summary, racism refers to a dominant group possessing and using power to subordinate or exclude other groups (Feagin, et al., 2001; Harris, 1999; Healey, 2009). Racism exists in all aspects of U.S. society occurring overtly and covertly with individuals and institutions and the preferences of societal racism (Bell, 2005a; Coates, 2008; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Feagin et al., 2001; Hampton, 2010; Harris, 1999; Healey, 2009; Omi & Winant, 1994). Racism is the essence of the treatment of Blacks having a negative impact on their families, work, communities and their own health.

White Privilege

This refers to the notion that Whites accrue advantages by virtue of being White (Leonardo, 2004; Rocco, 1998). Kendall (2001) further explains that: "White privilege is an institutional, rather than personal set of benefits granted those of us who, by race,

resemble the people who hold the power positions in our institutions" (p. 63). As such, White privilege is not earned; indeed, Whites often do not realize they are benefitting from being white (Leonardo, 2004). Whites have these advantages simply based on the color of their skin; doors that are open for them are not open to other people. Kendall (2001) goes on to explain that White people cannot not get White privilege nor can they give it away. In other words, this is a characteristic innate of Whites. White people are raised knowing they are in a position of advantage over others. This is a benefit they take for granted, it surrounds them and often goes unnoticed, but if they were in an environment where this "right" is violated, they will notice it.

Furthermore, the benefits derived from being White are described by McIntosh (1998) as an invisible package of unearned assets that Whites can count on each day: "like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks." (p. 1). McIntosh also describes over forty unearned privileges that Whites posses; for example she explains that:

When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am sure that people of my color made it what it is…

If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area, which I can afford and in an area in which I would want to live…

I can be fairly sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race…

I can swear, dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or illiteracy of my race…

I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and

behavior without being seen as a cultural outside…

If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I

haven't been singled out because of my race… (p. 2).

There are systems in place that allow for maintaining White privilege, with the

power and identity that accompanies it (Kendall, 2001; Lopez, 2006; Manglitz, 2003).

Such systems exist culturally, socially, legally, and organizationally enabling White

people to hold on to that power and authority in society and to also unilaterally make

decisions that affect all people including people of color with or without input from those

impacted (Kendall, 2001; Tatum, 1997).   Kendall (2001) provides examples of historical

events when Whites exercised their power over other groups such as when Native

Americans were removed from their land and their children were removed from their

homes. Blacks were treated as property by holding them as slaves and their families were

separated. Laws were passed to maintain inequality between Whites and Blacks after

slavery ended. And during World War II Americans of Japanese origin were removed

from their homes with their land and businesses confiscated. As Kendall (2001) reveals,

through these examples, the exercising of power could be malicious and brutal.

White privilege is a system that provides benefits to individuals because of their

whiteness. Whites are entitled to behaviors of assertiveness, entitlement and power, have

expectations, benefits, concessions, etc., just for being White.

Deficit Thinking

In the literature deficit thinking is also referred to as "deficiency approach",

"deficit theories", "deficit model", "deficiency model", and "deficit thinking model"

(Olivos, 2006; Valencia, 1997). Deficit thinking is "tantamount to the process of 'blaming the victim' (Valencia, 1997, p. x)," for the problems they experience in society. Whites use this concept to explain the alleged inferiority of people of color by attributing failure to this group due to "internal deficits or deficiencies" (Valencia, 1997).

Three models are used to describe deficit thinking: genetic pathology; culture of poverty; and cultural and accumulated environment deficits (Foley, 1997; Olivos, 2006; Valencia, 1997). First, the genetic pathology model contends that inferiority is transmitted by genetic code (Olivos, 2006; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). Used especially in the discussion of racial differences in intelligence, this model holds the notion that intellectual differences favoring Whites over certain minority groups such as Blacks and Mexican Americans are largely innate (Valencia, 1997). Next is the culture of poverty model that contends that poverty creates unique self sustaining ways of life that host negative values, norms, and social practices such as lazy, fatalistic, hedonistic, violent and is passed on from generation to generation (Foley, 1997). Third are the cultural and accumulated environmental deficits models described by Pearl (1997) as the existence of cultures that repudiate any meaningful involvement in the dominant culture's social, economic, or political life. Additionally, these models theorize that the culture of the lower class was organized around a life absent of intellectual stimulation such as the absence of books or limited exposure to adequate language.

Valencia and Solórzano (1997) suggests that deficit thinking regardless of the model provides a means to avoid the real problems facing disadvantaged groups. With the focus placed on the person-centered attributes of failure, little attention is paid to how formal structures including educational institutions serve to marginalize individuals. By

continuing to blame the victim even less attention is placed on what these institutions can do to better serve these groups.

Ryan (1971) gets to the core of this issue by suggesting a four-step model on how deficit thinking is translated into action:

First, those in power identify a social problem. Second, study those affected by the problem and discover what ways they are different from the rest of us as a consequence of deprivation or injustice. Third, define the difference as the cause of the social problem itself. Finally, of course, assign a government bureaucrat to invent a humanitarian action program to correct the differences. (p. 8).

Ryan continues to explain that the implementation process of the four steps happens so effortlessly that it seems completely normal. This author also suggests that deficit thinking occurs in all social programs serving as a form of oppression where cruel and unjust authority and power are used to keep a group of people in their place. Power and authority are exercised through legislation, court decisions, local agency policies, and institutional practices.

As a matter of fact, education provides a clear example of how deficit thinking as a means of oppression is used to keep the disadvantaged in their place. According to Valencia (1997) with school segregation Black and Brown students were viewed as being less intelligent than Whites, possessing limited English proficiency, being unmotivated and lacking in moral character. These were characteristics that would impede the progress of White students if racial or ethnic mixing was permitted. The reality is that maintaining separation was an oppressive act leading to inferior schooling, with rundown facilities, insufficient supplies, dated teaching materials, and poor curricula.

Another example, more modern, is high stakes testing where test scores are almost exclusively used to base decisions about students, teachers and schools with both desirable and undesirable consequences (Valencia & Guadarama, 1996). With test scores used to determine graduation, hiring/retention, school funding/existence, people of color, are presented with yet another obstacle in an already barrier laden field they must traverse in order to obtain an education (Valencia, 1997).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a legal theory designed to uncover how race and racism operate in law and society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). CRT originates from the effort of scholars of color working in the legal field who were discontent with the mainstream ideology as related to passing laws, the application of the law, with the tendency to omit racism from the critique of U.S. society (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT studies the relationship between race, racism and power by viewing civil rights in broad perspectives that include history, economics, context, group and self-interests and even emotions and the unconscious thoughts and actions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Further, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2012) in challenging the dominant discourse regarding the traditional civil rights movement that stresses incremental progress, CRT questions the foundation of liberalism, "equality theory, legal reasoning… and neutral principles of constitutional law." In doing so, CRT contests civil rights law by examining how legal doctrine is used to continue the subordination of minorities (Solórzano, 1997).

Although CRT originated in the legal field, it has spread to other disciplines including education, where it is used as a tool to define, expose, and address educational

problems (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Parker & Lynn, 2002).

Those problems include understanding school structure, discipline, curriculum, history, funding, assessing achievement, and testing (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Parker & Lynn, 2002).

Solórzano (1997) identifies at least five elements of CRT; first, the *Centrality and Intersectionality of Race and Racism*: Racism is endemic, pervasive, and permanent in the U.S. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano, 1997). Race and racism are central not marginal factors in understanding individuals' experiences with the law (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Russell, 1992). As presented by Bowman, Rocco, and Peterson (2009), "Race and racism are a part of the American social fabric. They have been woven into its fabric through a unique history that has included slavery and the eugenics movement. As such, race and racism are ordinary to everyday life in America; they are always present in our society." (p. 1). Race and racism are the foci of CRT analysis; however, CRT also examines the intersection with other forms of subordination such as class and gender discrimination (Crenshaw, 1993; Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Second, *The Challenge to Dominant Ideology:* CRT challenges the legal system's claims regarding objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity as advancing civil rights arguing instead that these claims actually perpetuate self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant group (Calmore, 1992; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). A critical race theory perspective suggests that court decisions perpetuate racism in formal social structures (Crenshaw et al., 1995). For example, laws were passed requiring schools to integrate but these same laws failed to ensure that people of color receive good quality of education beyond limited access to

better funded previously predominantly White schools. As a case in point, Freeman (1995) argues that *Brown* aimed to eliminate segregation but failed to enforce equality in education for all.

Third, *Commitment to Social Justice*: Succinctly according to Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) CRT is committed to social justice by eliminating racism or racial subordination as part of a broader goal of eliminating all forms of subordination such as gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Fourth, *Centrality of Experiential Knowledge*: CRT recognizes the importance, legitimacy, and appropriateness of the knowledge obtained from the experiences of people of color in understanding, analyzing, practicing, and teaching law as it relates to racial subordination (Calmore, 1992). Additionally, to draw upon that knowledge various methods including storytelling, family history, parables, and narratives can be used (Bell, 1987; Delgado, 1984, 1992, 2000; Olivas, 1990).

Fifth, *Interdisciplinary Perspective*: CRT uses interdisciplinary methods to analyze race and racism by placing them in both historical and contemporary context instead of a non-historical and unidisciplinary approach (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia, 1995; Harris, 1994; Olivas, 1990).

In summary, CRT starts out with the premise that racism is pervasive and permanent. Further, CRT challenges the dominant ideology regarding the traditional claim that the legal system works to the benefit of people of color. CRT is committed to ending racism, recognizes that the experiential/professional knowledge of people of color is legitimate and has value; CRT uses interdisciplinary methods to analyze race and racism.

Strategies for Surviving Racism

The literature reflects the pervasiveness of racism that people of color including Black males are likely to experience throughout their lives. As Feagin and Sikes (1994) suggest, the constant exposure to racism has led Blacks to different and resourceful ways for surviving racial mistreatment. While certainly not all-inclusive, the following strategies for surviving racism emerged from the literature: Internalization; psychological disengagement; the Mask, and acting White.

Internalization as a strategy for surviving racism manifest through racial identity and racial acts (Cross, 1991; Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Helms; 1995). Cross (1991) and Helm (1995) describe internalization as part of developing a healthy racial identity, More specifically, Cross (1991) explains internalization as a process through which Blacks have gained maturity and self-control and developed flexible ways of functioning and responding to racist and discriminatory behaviors. This author also further explains that internalization is an integral component of five possible stages in the process of developing a healthy racial identity: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, Internalization/Commitment.

In addition, Feagin and McKinney (2003), in examining the cost of racism, studied middle-class Black Americans who explained that they internalize their response to racist incidents by being prepared at all times to deal with racism. Knowing that racist acts repeatedly occur, middle-class Black Americans learn to become desensitized to most racist behaviors. Furthermore, Cross (1991) in describing internalization identifies withdrawal—turning inward, passivity—not responding, and avoidance, attempting to

stay clear of potential racial encounters as well-developed defensive strategies Black Americans may use in response to racism.

Expanding upon avoidance is the strategy of creating social "counter spaces," which Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) describe as sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged. In place of the negative attitudes, a positive racial environment is established and maintained. Such places may take the form of race specific organizations and offices, peer groups, and social groups. Solórzano et al. (2000) continue to explain that counter spaces provide a supportive environment for people of color where there is validation of their experiences, knowledge and perspectives, and provide a safe place to vent frustrations over the racism experienced.

Another strategy for surviving racism described by Schmader, Major and Gramzow (2001) is *psychological disengagement*. This is the defensive detachment of self-esteem from one's outcomes in a particular area so that self-esteem is not contingent upon success or failure in that area. With such disengagement a person can maintain previous levels of self-esteem despite information that implies one's inferiority in that particular area or domain. For example a Black student does not let negative feedback about ability impact confidence in completing an assignment or course.

Johnson (2003) describes *The Mask* as a survival tool that she used in her journey to obtaining a doctoral degree. By using the many faces of *The Mask*: Happy, conforming, grateful, unaffected, at peace, satisfied and the list continues infinitely, the individual gains access to a community that has traditionally excluded Blacks. Although *The Mask* is worn to hide the sting of society's oppression, she cautions that Blacks

should not let *The Mask* become their real face[9]. Also, Dinerstein (2009) provides a word

of caution to avoid, especially, the Uncle Tom mask of Black man acting all to eager to

please Whites.

A similar phenomenon is addressed by Ogbu (2008) with his study on acting

White; noting that some members of the Black community will place that label on Blacks

who display certain behaviors with Whites, such as efforts to talking proper English.

Ogbu found a conflict among Blacks exhibiting or switching between certain behaviors

like speaking based on their social setting. Even though the community understood what

was transpiring in terms of dealing with racism, there was still a label attached.

Additionally he noted that the demands of making such transitions were true not only for

students and Black adults in the community.

Overall, Blacks understand that they must be prepared because racial

discriminatory acts can occur at any time. Most strategies to respond to such acts revolve

around maintaining control and not overtly reacting to discrimination[10]. Regardless of

the strategy or strategies[11] are employed, Blacks manage such restraint either cognitively

or affectively, in order to maintain control in responding to racism.

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[9] To do so will result in the Black voice blending with those for whom we wear *The Mask* and we add nothing new to the discourse.

[10] Feagin and McKinney (2003) note Blacks in general understand that an overt response to a discriminating White person is most likely counterproductive with Blacks suffering the consequences.

[11] They are not mutually exclusive.

Summary

Racism is a pervasive and permanent aspect of U.S. society and is one head of the two-headed Hydra the literature calls the race system in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The other head is White privilege, the unearned, sometimes unknown societal benefits Whites receive solely for being White (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Kendall, 2001); but nonetheless perpetuate the power and control over those deemed inferior. The perception of inferiority of other groups is displayed through deficit thinking theories used to blame the marginalized for their social problems. In addressing the treatment of marginalized groups especially Blacks, the elements of Critical Race Theory provide a framework for such examination. In order to survive the prevalent racism, Blacks have developed several survival strategies, internalization, disengagement, masking and acting White. The next chapter, the methodology, presents details on data collection and analysis and the overall study design.

CHAPTER III

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Building upon the tenets of critical race theory (CRT) this qualitative study examined the life histories of eight Black males in their journey to obtain a doctoral degree. The research questions guiding the study included: What are the life histories of eight Black males pursuing doctoral studies? How can we make sense of their life experiences through the lenses of critical race theory? What can be learned from their life histories that can inspire other Black males and inform the policies and practices of institutions of higher education?

As Creswell (2003) explains, qualitative research is an inquiry process based on strategies that explore a phenomenon through the perspective of an individual or a group. Traditionally, qualitative research does not attempt to draw generalizations, but it offers an opportunity to explore and learn about a phenomenon in depth since the goal is gaining understanding and creating new knowledge (Patton, 2002). Telling the stories of the study participants required a qualitative research design. More specifically, I needed to draw on the principles of ethnographic inquiry in the process of conducting interviews, reviewing documents, and collecting artifacts in order to capture the essence of participants' life histories (Fetterman, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). In addition, CRT was at the center of the study design and added focus to the study, the data collection and analysis, and the report of the study findings.

Researcher's Perspective

As a 59-year-old Black male doctoral candidate, I bring my perspective as a human being, professional, learner, participant observer, and researcher. I am fully invested in this study as it deeply connects to my own life history and educational journey, which I share throughout the dissertation document. Professionally, I expect study findings to assist me as I continue my work promoting diversity and equity at all levels in higher education institutions.

In this study I am what Patton (2002) calls a "participant observer". This author describes the investigator as having "direct personal contact with and observation of a setting" (p. 263) to conduct qualitative research. I was in direct contact with all the study participants and I am also a participant in the study. I performed the role of a researcher and a participant; I present my life history along with those of the other seven study participants. Concomitant with these roles is my understanding that caution and awareness are necessary in order to address and monitor possible biases and to establish credibility to this research (Merriam, 2009).

As I shared in Chapter One, I have a long trajectory working for equal access and justice as a civil rights practitioner. By reporting on the study findings, I aim to inform higher education institutions and policy makers in drawing implications to combat the underrepresentation of Black males in graduate studies. I also desire that the study findings renew hope that individually and collectively we can bring about change regarding race and racism by moving past rhetoric to engage in new conversations for actions that are inclusive focused and effective.

Study Framework

Race and racism permeate our society and their significance is often downplayed or ignored (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theory proposes a critical examination of society and culture and how they intersect with race, law, and power. CRT brings these issues to light and focuses on the centrality of race and racism and their connections with other forms of subordination and seeks to challenge the status quo as related to race and racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Bell, 1995; Bowman, et al., 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano et al., 2000). Briefly, based on the work of authors such as Delgado and Stefancic (2012); Taylor (2009); Abrams and Moio (2009); and Matsuda et al. (1993); the tenets of CRT informing the present study include: 1. Racism is endemic; 2. Race is a social construct; 3. Those in power "racialize" others at their convenience; 4. Any effort to end oppression must also benefit those in power: Interest convergence; 5. Those in power exclude the racial perspective of others in order to justify and legitimize power; and 6. Racism intersects with other forms of oppression. As the framework for the study, CRT informs my beliefs that: 1. Race matters in all aspects of my life; 2. Progress toward civil rights has occurred when it is beneficial to those in power; 3. Blacks as a group continue to be excluded from or discounted in important conversations about solutions to racial issues; and 4. The racial problem is the U.S. is not just about Blacks.

Setting and Participants

This study took place at a large university in Texas striving to become more inclusive and diverse in terms of its students, faculty, and staff population. At this

institution, there is a genuine preoccupation to increasing recruitment and retention of African American students and other minorities.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling served as the technique to identify study participants; Patton (2002) emphasizes that purposeful sampling is used to "learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 230). In other words, the use of this sampling technique allows the researcher to be specific in identifying participants who can provide rich information about the focus of the study. Merriam (2009) states that determining the "…selection *criteria* are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied. The criteria established for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and the identification of information-rich cases" (p. 77-78). Thus, for the present study, the main requirements to become a participant can be summarized as being a Black male who was enrolled, had completed, or had been accepted into a doctoral program. Therefore, this dissertation documents the life histories of eight Black males who have not bought into the *hype*, and who have persisted in pursuing advanced education degrees. Table 3.1 presents the study participants: Earle, Roberto, Fela, Charles, William, James, Michael and me.

Table 3.1 Participants' Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Self-Identify As	Doctoral Status	Employment
Herman	50+	Black	Student	Public Sector
Earle	50+	Black	Student	Public Sector
Roberto	50+	Black Hispanic	ABD	Public Sector
Fela	50+	Black	Already a Ph.D.	Public Sector
Charles	40+	Black	Student	Public Sector
William	40+	Black	Already a Ph.D.	Private Sector
James	30+	African American	Student	Public Sector
Michael	20+	African American	Accepted into a doctoral program	Public Sector

As illustrated in Table 3.1, four of the study participants are in their 50's, two in their 40's, one in his 30's and the youngest one in his 20's. Also, two participants, Fela and William, already obtained a Ph.D. All but William work in the public sector. Two participants, James and Michael, identified themselves as African American, one as Black Hispanic and the rest as Black.

Data Collection Procedures

Central to ethnographic inquiry is culture; the study participants' cultural perspectives were obtained by conducting in-depth prolonged interviews with the participants so they could tell their stories and share their life experiences (Fetterman, 2010; Weiss, 1994). Ethnographic interviews allowed participants to elaborate and yield

detailed narratives capturing the essence of how they make sense of the world (Creswell, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). These data were supported by other data sources including documents, artifacts, and the researcher's journal. According to Hodder (2002), documents and artifacts possess special relevance for studying people who have historically been denied voice. This author also explains that compared to other data, documents and artifacts endure. The study participants identified documents and artifacts that had potential to "trigger memories of important times, people and events" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 114) and brought them to the interviews.

Ethnographic Interviews

Ethnographic interviews (Fetterman, 2010) served as the main data collection source for the study. These interviews made possible to collect verbatim quotes from the study participants and portray the emotions and complexity of the experiences they shared. Fetterman (2010) explains that using direct quotes help to "convey the fear, anger, frustration, exhilaration and joy of a human being and contain surface and deep embedded meanings about the person's life" (p. 127). These narratives made possible for me to convey how they have negotiated life's challenges, made meaning of their experiences, and how the study participants have chosen not to live the *hype* and persisted in their pursuit of higher education.

Narrative inquiry, sometimes referred to as life story, oral history, biography or life history (Glesne, 2011; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Worth, 2008) consists of a series of in depth interviews conducted by the researcher in order to create a narrative of a life or lives (Glesne, 2011). Moreover, narrative is the primary way human beings use to order their experiences and make sense out of seemingly unrelated events

(Worth, 2008). Further a good narrative illustrates the uniqueness, dilemmas, and complexities of an individual in such a way that it causes the reader to reflect upon themselves, their situations and questions.

I interviewed study participants twice and the duration of these interviews varied from two hours to two and a half hours. In addition, I conducted short follow up interviews on the phone in order to ask for clarification on certain events. Other times, I communicated with the participants through email. The data provided during the first round of interviews were used to develop the questions for the second round of interviews. In fact, the first interview revealed the need to develop questions focused specifically on the participants' experiences regarding racism.

The second interview served two purposes for data collection: provided stories and experiences to specifically examine through the tenets of CRT; provided dates of significant events in their stories.   This information was used to provide a context for the participants' journeys in relation to significant socio-political and historical events regarding race and racism. These events included but are not limited to: The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision ending the separate but equal doctrine; the Civil Rights Act (1964) prohibiting discrimination and other legal actions affecting school integration in the State of Texas.

Interviewing the study participants assisted me in developing rapport with them and gain understanding of different perspectives of other Black males regarding race and racism. In fact, study participants self-identified as Black, Black Hispanic, and African American respectively. Through our interaction they made sure that I understood the distinction. Such candor enhanced my study and enriched me as a researcher.

Documents

These refer to "a wide range of written, visual, and digital material relevant to the study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). As stated by Merriam (2009) "common documents include official records, letters, newspaper accounts, songs, poems, government records, or diaries" (p. 140). The documents that the participants brought to the interviews included: undergraduate and graduate diplomas, military training certificates, passports, visas, school transcripts, and publications authored by the participants. I made copies of these documents and the participants used them in different ways to evoke memories such as to convey the path taken on their educational journey and sparking emotional responses when sharing their significance. For example, several participants expressed pride and joy in obtaining their graduate degrees, while others reflected on the barriers encountered to achieve that milestone. Another example was the sadness spoken by one participant sharing his visa and passport when recalling the long separation from his family as he pursued his education.

Artifacts

These are the "physical objects, which include tools, implements, utensils, and instruments of everyday living" (Merriam, 2009, p. 146). Artifacts help "trigger memories of important times, people and events" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 114). The artifacts that the participants brought to the interviews included: photographs, trophies, hats, books, and sheet music. I took photographs of the artifacts provided by the study participants. When I visited them in their home or office, I was also able to observe the context and manner in which the artifacts were displayed.

Each of the participants' artifacts was shared with a story. Photographs of family and friends reflected kinship and friendships with fond memories for most participants; however photos also sparked candor about relationships that were not well as one participant was frank and honest about his relationship with his mom versus his grandmother, both in the same photo. Another participant using his hats expressed his frustration about conflicts with maintaining his culture. In Chapter Three, the artifacts played an important role in describing and enhancing their meaning and connection to the life histories of the study participants.

All in all the documents and artifacts enhanced the participants sharing of their stories with me as the researcher. Additionally, these same documents, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, will improve the researchers' efforts to convey their stories to the reader.

Researcher's Journal

This journal is commonly referred to as the researcher's log. It is used to record ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging from the data collection process (Glesne, 2011). Using a reflective writing approach, this log served as a tool for helping me make sense of the information provided by the participants, formulate follow up questions, and remind myself of the need to be flexible and receptive towards the data as they "spoke" to me, the researcher (Borg, 2001; Emerson, Fritz & Shaw, 1995; Glesne, 2011). I kept a notebook and recorded ideas, reflections, inquiries, hunches, and patterns that seemed to be emerging from the data provided by the study participants (Borg, 2001; Glesne, 2011).

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of the research, narrative analysis guided the overall data

analysis process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative analysis oral text is recorded

and analyzed for how the stories are told keeping in mind the study participants' social

life and culture (Merriam, 2009). During the study data analysis was a continual process

(Merriam, 1998) and occurred "simultaneously with data collection" (Creswell, 1994, p.

153). Ongoing analysis helped me to keep focused in order to make sense of the data as

they came (Merriam, 2009). For example, as I conducted the interviews and as a means to

enhance the narratives provided by the participants, I built a timeline for each of them.

These timelines provided a connection to their life histories against the larger socio-

political and historical events related to issues regarding race, particularly in education.

Another strategy was to include direct quotes and descriptive examples provided by the

study participants in an effort to *bring the data to life* (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

For the initial analysis, assembling and dissembling the data, I followed the steps

described by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) when conducting narrative analysis.

These steps are: 1. Get to know the data (get immersed in the data and start selecting

crucial pieces of data); 2. Focus the analysis (keeping in mind the study research

questions and the theoretical framework); 3. Categorize information (coding data and

looking for emergent categories); 4. Identify connections between and within categories

(revise codes and categories to make sure they are accurate); and 5. Interpret or bring it

all together. Implementing these steps involved getting to know the data through

repeatedly listening to the interview recordings in concert with reviewing the

transcriptions for accuracy. I also received input from the study participants through the

process of member check (Patton, 2002). This was helpful in making sure they agreed with the information that was going to be reported in the dissertation document.

For the conceptual analysis of the data, I used CRT as the study framework in order to identify themes regarding the participants' experiences with race and racism. I examined the narratives in order to place them in a theoretical context through the tenets of CRT. Thus, in Chapter Four I describe the life histories of the three participating Black males who were over the age of fifty. In Chapter Four I also took a closer look at the life histories of the participants through the themes of overt racism, internalized oppression silenced voices, and the intersection of racism with other forms of oppression. Next, in Chapter Five, I present the life histories of the remaining four study participants through the themes of covert racism and affirmative action as a manifestation of interest convergence.

Building Trustworthiness

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), trustworthiness is established by looking after significant features of research design and implementation such as the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the findings. Credibility of research findings is accomplished by prolonged engagement with the participants that is "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). In this study, the duration of the interviews and the richness of the stories obtained through those ethnographic interviews were essential in building credibility. Another strategy for developing credibility is triangulation, which is using several kinds of data for analysis (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also say that triangulation improves the "probability that findings and interpretations will be credible" (p. 305). In

this study data collected from ethnographic interviews, documents and artifacts, and the researcher's journal assisted in the process of triangulation.

Further, Creswell (2003) and Patton (2002) explain that in "building credibility" it is also important to pay attention to negative or discrepant information and disconfirming cases; in other words, the researcher needs to be open to avoid preconception formed by the researcher's perspective, experiences, or biases. In the present study, I have done my best to depict the whole picture of the participants' stories as they relate to the research questions. Through reflective notes contained in my researcher's journal and the sharing of my own story, I was able to identify and avoid any preconceptions influencing the depiction of the other participants' life histories. I also provide complete accounts and verbatim quotes from the participants allowing the reader to recreate the stories and read meaning from the participants more than from my personal interpretation.

In addition, credibility was further established by member check, which allows the study participants to provide input on the reporting of the data collected (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). In this study participants were given that opportunity with one participant making sure the names of places and persons were accurate. However that participant was reminded that pseudonyms would be used in reporting the findings in an effort to protect the identity of people and institutions.

Finally, dependability and confirmability are the measure of efforts made to ensure the study findings are supported by the data collected and the results depict the participants' reality, not the researcher's predisposition (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Participants' realities are portrayed through verbatim quotations. For the present

study verbatim quotes from the participants were used to bring life to their stories and assist in illustrating the complexity of their life histories. However, conversational spacers and false starts like *you know* or *uh* used in order to cover a pause while the participant was searching for a word or gathering his thoughts to continue were omitted (Weiss, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning the research. I also followed the guidelines established by IRB during the implementation of the research. For example, I explained in detail to each participant the scope and purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, data collection methods and what was expected from them if they decided to participate. I also requested them to complete a written consent form, which I also explained to their satisfaction before starting participation in the study. In order to protect study participants I did my best to disguise their identity by providing pseudonyms for their names, places, positions, and institutions linked to their life histories.

Delimitations of the Study

As explained before, the study was implemented within the boundaries of one large university in Texas. I did not include doctoral students from different universities. Also, the participant sample was made of eight participants and I was one of them. While all the study participants were Black males, ages ranged from the late twenties to the late fifties.   As this was a study of Black males there were no females participants. Therefore, by design, the perspectives of Black females regarding racism were not part of the study.

Summary

The study aims to provide voice to the life histories of eight Black males, who have not lived the *hype* and have risen above the challenges. Hopefully, study findings will inspire other Black males and promote change by unveiling these stories, proposing important questions to ponder and suggesting feasible approaches to adjusting and creating policy and institution change in the quest for equity and access.

The present Chapter provides a detailed description of the research design. Specifically, I have mapped out the process of data collection and analysis. Also, I have presented the steps I followed in building trustworthiness and the considerations for implementing ethical research. The next two chapters of the dissertation will present study findings followed by a conclusion chapter that will hopefully provide closure to the reader.

CHAPTER IV

OVERT RACISM: FROM SEGREGATION TO INTEGRATION

This Chapter presents the life histories of three of the study participants who were in their fifties at the time the study was implemented; Earle, Roberto, and Fela (see Table 4.1). Regardless of where they reside, their educational background, socioeconomic status or physical appearance, study findings suggest they have experienced racism (Ogbu, 2008).

Table 4.1 Study Participants in there 50s

Pseudonym	Age	Self-Identify as	Doctoral Status	Employment
Earle	50+	Black	Enrolled in a Ph.D. Program	Public Sector
Roberto	50+	Black Hispanic	ABD	Public Sector
Fela	50+	Black	Already a Ph.D.	Public Sector

These three study participants' life histories inform a larger socio-political and historical connection to events related to the topic of race over the last half century in the U.S., and add perspective to the scope of the study. For example, they lived through the time when

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision ended the separate but equal doctrine (legal segregation) and the Civil Rights Act (1964) passed and aimed to end discrimination based on a person's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Civil Rights Act (1964) made it illegal to discriminate on the bases of race in public accommodations, employment, services, transportation, and education in the U.S.

In sharing the life histories of Earle, Fela, and Roberto, I introduce each of them using a timeline illustrating significant dates in their educational journey. I use the artifacts they provided during the interviews along with symbols gathered to highlight specific events. The life journeys on these three study participants begin during a time when race legally and openly divided this country. However, in the discussion portion of this Chapter, I focus on Earle because he was in the U.S. during segregation and the early stages of integration. Roberto and Fela were born in different countries, Central America and Southern Africa, and provide a unique perspective of race as Black males coming from different cultures. In fact, Roberto migrated to the U.S. at age five and kept a strong connection to the Hispanic culture due to traveling back and forth with his family. Fela arrived in the U.S. from Africa by way of Costa Rica as an adult in pursue of a doctoral degree.

Earle

You walked a couple of steps behind those who were White.
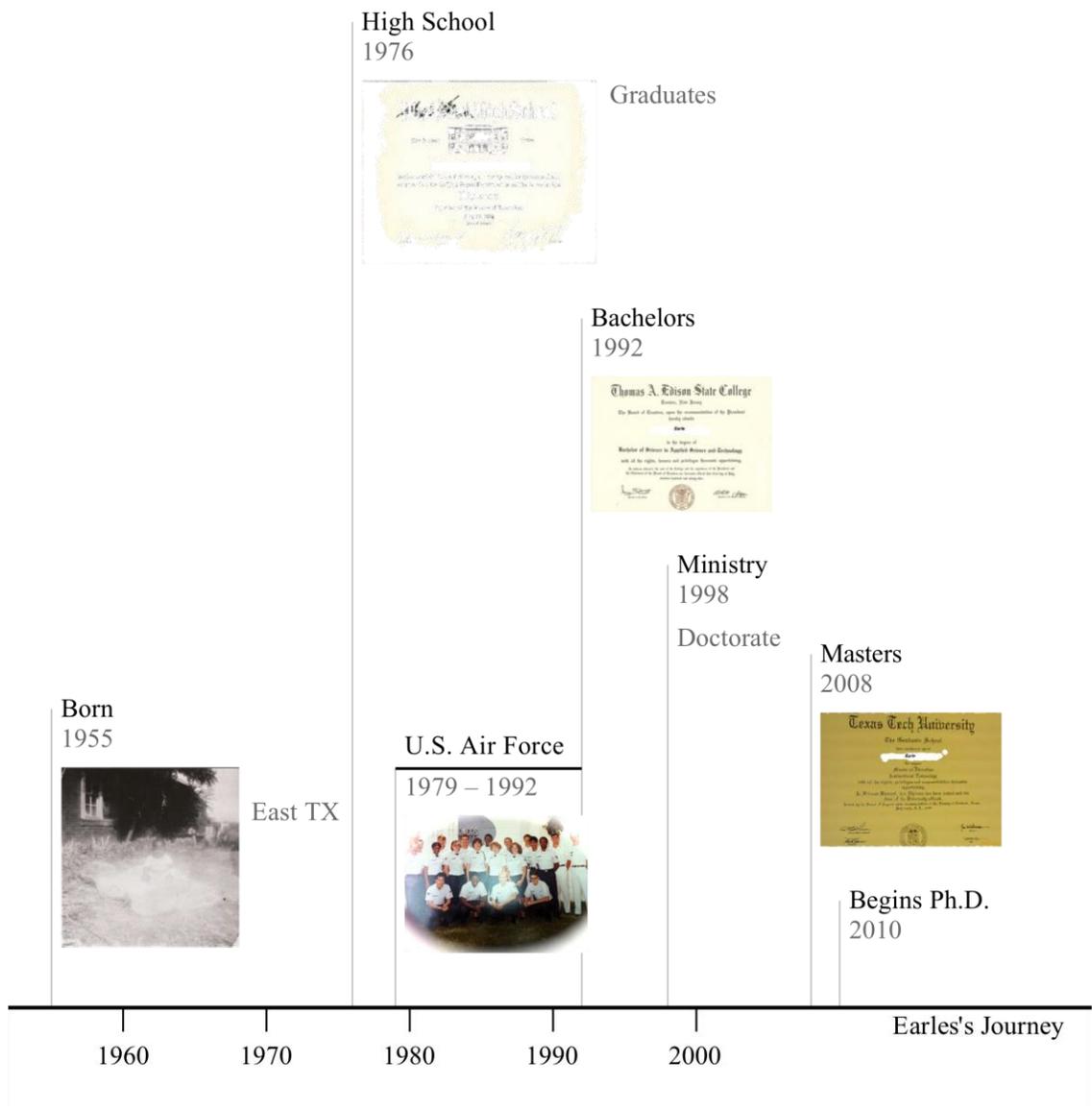

Figure 4.1 Timeline of Earle's Journey

Earle's two interviews took place in his office, which decoration reflects pride in his educational training and educational accomplishments. Earle was born in East Texas during the time of segregation. His father was over 60 years old when he was born in the mid 50s and his dad had seventeen children from three wives. Earle was one of three children from his father's third wife. As illustrated in his timeline (see Figure 3.2), Earle served in the military, specifically, the Air Force. He holds a degree in ministry and was enrolled in a Ph.D. in Education at the time I implemented this study.

Earle's Account

I was raised in the country, out in the sticks, no lights, no nothing, but I enjoyed it. The one word that captured the way I was raised from my perspective is intuitiveness. You basically learned by intuition. I think in a way for me, intuition is how I get along in life. We didn't say so many things in words but you learned how to adjust to situations by intuition, by reading people and just studying them, and, you know, looking at impressions and stuff. I preface that because where I grew up they didn't talk about a lot of things. You just had to know them, if you're going to survive; you didn't create waves.
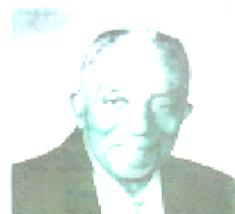
Figure 4.2 Earle's Father

It was common to see the "colored only" sign (Figure 3.3) in the South during the 50s and 60s. I remember Richard Pryor's comedy routine where he says "you go to the courthouse for justice and that's what you find—just us." [12]

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[12] Richard Pryor was a Black comedian known for his social commentary. "Just us" is taken from his album, *Is it something I said*, released July 25, 1975.

Figure 4.3 Colored Only Sign[13]

If you're White you're all right. If you're Black you better get back. And in the South—East Texas—it was a way of life. Definitely, back then, there was an invisible boundary that Blacks did not cross over in that part of Texas. Basically, you walked a couple of steps behind Whites. It was the safest place to be. You didn't try to get in front; otherwise you got punished in some kind of way. We just lived with that! Some people broke those rules and paid for that! That's just the way it was! So, you just learned ways of maneuvering around those situations. But it was a hard thing for me to get through, psychologically. So, my expectations were always low for myself in terms of education and work--walking a couple of steps behind White people. That kind of mentality carries over into everything and especially into education. I always took the low road because I felt like I was behind everybody.

As I said before, I started out from the countryside and didn't have the basic education foundations needed. I didn't go to kindergarten like all my peers did. I started in first grade, so I always thought I was behind. Some of it is probably my fault, but still

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[13] The image of the "Colored" sign was downloaded from https://www.google.com/search?q=colored+sign&hl=en&prmd=imvns&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=sZeNT4iFFMTm2AWQ2e3xCw&ved=0CEsQsAQ&biw=1639&bih=800

there was nothing to encourage me to have a positive mentality in East Texas. We were

segregated while I was in second grade, and I didn't go to school with Whites until third

grade. I didn't feel any oppression during first and second grade. I think when it comes

to status, you had a little bit more status because everybody was the same color and if

you just worked harder, you had more status . . .

When schools integrated, again, that dualism of Black and White was so

prevalent; it was almost assumed, like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you were lighter-

skinned, to be honest, you got a better shake on things. If you were like me, or darker,

you just got what was left.   It's almost a mentality that "White is right."   Dealing with

that and your own "isms" and lack of resources, lack of ability. Again, I don't blame

myself for a lot of it because if it wasn't given to you, if you didn't get the instruction, you

just couldn't do it.

After integration, you found out, if you went in the first wave, you were going

to get flunked; they didn't really want you there.   However, I was shocked because

they showed me 'favor' and I was promoted to the next grade at this all-White—well

it was integrated now—but predominantly White school. And, then… from there on

to high school.

Figure 4.4 Mr. George

Mr. George (Figure 4.4), a teacher, provided the key that turned the switch on for me by saying, "Look, you're going to have to go after it for yourself. This is not something that is going to be given to you. If you want it, you're going to have to go get it, in spite of everything else and obstacles, and the biggest obstacle is yourself." I started really applying myself and taking more of the academic courses. Amazingly, I excelled enough that I graduated in the top 20% of my class. I went through schooling, but, as far as race relationships, there was always that barrier. Basically the expectation was lower for you as a Black; and the darker you were, the less they expected of you.

I did get a scholarship but dropped out of school in 1973. When I dropped out, I started working for a wood processing plant in a mill that cut logs into planks used for process wood. The workforce was predominantly Black, and so here again, you were really on the low-class side. If the workforce was all Black, right or wrong, the perception was they were not skilled. I wasn't there very long but they did like my work and when I was going to be leaving to join the military, they told me, "If you come back, you will have a job here. We appreciate the work you've done."

I did eventually get my first bachelor's degree through a state college by taking courses that they required to patch together a degree. I was poor, so they paid for my tuition a little bit. I just took a course here and there as they would pay for my tuition. I have about seven degrees: two bachelors, four associates, and then a master's; at least seven degrees that I can count right off-hand…

When I went into the military I saw something different, and it was not so oppressive. That was me breaking free! I was in the medical laboratory science field, the most freedom that I ever experienced. I saw more Blacks excel as laboratory scientists,

and I was among them (Figure 4.5). I could have kept on excelling, but I didn't because I did not have my bachelor's degree; so, that became my goal.

Figure 4.5 Earle with Class at AF Tech School

I applied to a university for Medical Technology but they told me that my military courses were not going to be accepted and I would have to retake the core courses. I refused to do that and chose to cross-train into another military career field. I was still trying to become an officer.

I don't know if it was reverse discrimination, but I had a Black officer in charge of me. He said that he was going to try to help me out. His way of doing so was to make sure I worked harder, before I could even apply for the program! Needless to say, I wasn't able to meet his demands and I missed out on that prime opportunity.

My work was always superior. That wasn't a problem. My goal was to get my bachelor's degree to become an officer. I applied for officers' school and at this time, this was the late '80s and my[immediate] supervisor[who was White] had retired, but on his way out, he gave me a lower evaluation rating. It was bad in the eyes of those who were trying to recommend me to a higher rank. He rated me, first of all, unfair, using the words that he used for another Black person that was in our shop. I said, "This is not even me. This is another person." So, he just threw us in to the same pile! My

commander who was White —that Black one had long been gone—said: "I will give you

a letter of recommendation[14], but you should go back to your supervisor and ask him to

have that rating rescinded, so that when I send your package up, that won't be in there."

Well, I just thought that it was awful demeaning to me, to go beg someone that had

admitted that he was prejudiced to me to throw out a record that he put in there. My

answer was: "Well, that's the end of it. I'm just not going to go back and beg this guy."

So, that's basically my career and so I took the early out!

Discussion

Earl from east Texas throughout his life
knew about racism and how it can cause much strife.
He tried to keep it low key and not raise a fuss!
Cause he recalled when it came to justice—in jail it was just us.
Earl was taught: "If you're White, you're all right! If you're Black, you better get back!
For him on his journey this perception was fact;
but, he chose to battle being considered less than in this Nation
by obtaining and documenting achievements in education.
To visit with him it's amazing to see
the array of diplomas reflecting his degrees.

Earle's account illustrates how the voices of Blacks are kept silent; their voices

and perspectives are excluded in order to justify and legitimize power (Abrams & Moio,

2009). CRT seeks to bring to light the interplay of power and oppression across time and

place through the experiences of racial minorities and other marginalized groups, that

otherwise get silenced (Abrams & Moio, 2009). CRT proposes to rewrite history using

the viewpoint and experiences of oppressed groups placing race in a more prominent

perspective in both historical and contemporary contexts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

As Delgado and Stefancic (2012) explain, members of the dominant group cannot easily

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[14] Typically an application for officer's candidate school or training requires high performance evaluations and recommendations from the service member's commander.

grasp what it is like to be non-White; or are unable to recognize race as an issue. In telling Earle's story the silence is broken; his perspective is shared and his experiences with racism are revealed. Earle's description of the unwritten rules of survival include keeping quiet and accepting the status quo without questioning it outwardly. His story of silence speaks loudly of the insidious nature and the deep impact of racism on his community.

Earle also describes that, over time, he adapted and passively came to terms with feeling inferior to Whites because of his race. This internalized racial oppression (Pyke, 2010) refers to a process by which racist beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies are instilled in people of color. Racism received from Whites is directed inward toward the self or the group. For Earle internalized oppression impacted his sense of self worth and fueled his desire to overcompensate by acquiring seven education degrees.

In addition, Earle' story exposes meritocracy as a system used by those in power to exclude others under the disguise of being fair and objective. CRT points out that meritocracy does not advance equality (Bell, 2005b), but serves as what Farber and Sherry (2009) call a "phony pennant of colorblindness" that denies people of color access to opportunities. As a matter of fact, Earle describes how the system of promotion and other opportunities based on merit served as a barrier for his advancement. The example that he presented is related to the selection for military officer's training school; this required a letter of recommendation from the commander, which in turn would be based on the high evaluation rating from the supervisor. Once Earle raised the issue of the supervisor's bias in giving two Black airmen the same low rating, the commander could have easily determined the veracity of the claim. Instead, going by the low evaluation

score, the commander used that *objective* criterion to not recommend Earle for officer school. Indeed, meritocracy assumes that the playing field is level, ignoring the history of unequal treatment of people of color, and that by focusing on the individual and merit, institutional practices that foster inequalities go unchallenged (Zamudio et al., 2011).

In sum, Earle's story reveals experiences of racism faced on his educational journey and in the military. He witnessed school segregation and desegregation and lived through the perils of what that entailed. He also faced the challenges of being raised in a rural setting and being told "you are less than," which affected the decisions he made in life. His life history illustrates internalized racial oppression and the belief that he was less than Whites. Earle's journey describes that old adage that Blacks had to be twice as good to compete with Whites. The next two participants provide their perspectives as Black males arriving to the U.S. from other countries with different cultures.

Roberto

I do not consider myself African-American.

*I am dark-skinned, but my culture and my background is Hispanic*
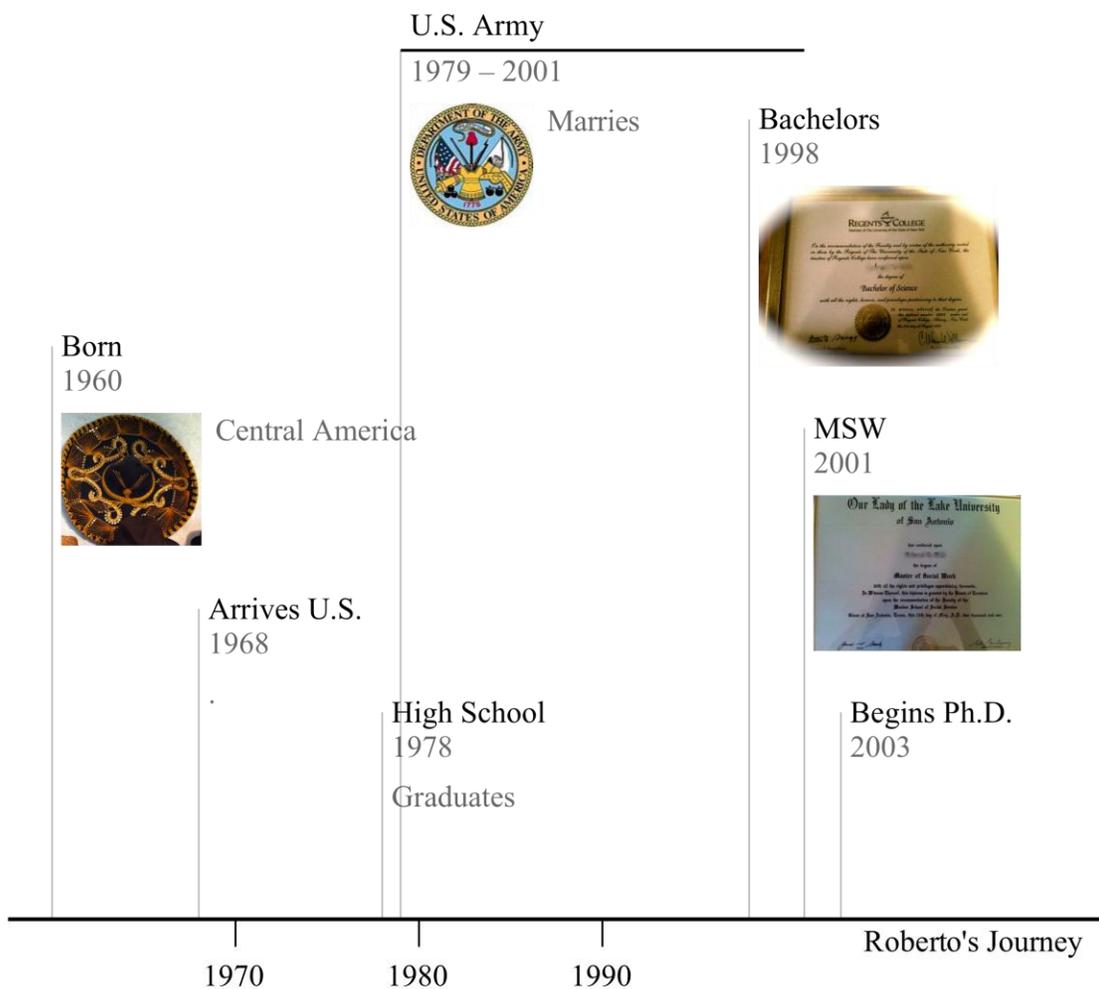
Figure 4.6 Timeline of Roberto's Journey

Roberto's interview took place in his home where there were numerous photos of his sons as well as artifacts reflecting his Hispanic culture. He was born in Central America where he spent his early years. In his country his family was considered lower to middle income. They owned property that Roberto recalls being full of fruit trees. As reflected in the Figure 4.6, Roberto served in the Army; he possesses two masters, one in social work and another in education; and in 2003, he enrolled in a doctoral program and reaching all but dissertation (ABD) status.

Roberto's Account

I grew up as a Black-Hispanic. My parents were born in Central America. My grandparents came from the islands of Barbados and Jamaica, but I don't know very much about them because they had already passed on, so I didn't know much history from that side of the family.

In 1968, my father moved the family to the United States. I did not like leaving my home country and I recall crying and asking my father if we could return. He explained that he had lost his job with the military and coming to the U.S. was an opportunity for employment. We lived in New York for a year and it was horrific… not being able to be with my friends… and that particular winter was memorable and not in a good way. We returned to Central America, but after a brief stay, the family came back to the U.S., and we settled in the northeast where my father started working at a local university.

In the United States we were definitely poor, lived in projects, and lived in the same house with other family members. Because of my father's income at the time, we just did not have the luxury and benefits of money to do a lot of different things. We

ended up moving quite often, trying to find places that would be suitable for raising a child, and I was the only child here in the United States. My older brothers, I'm the youngest, were gone from home by the time we moved here.

It was a cultural experience for me in that I was being lumped in with all African-Americans, and when I spoke Spanish it was like, "Where are you from?" …and I didn't feel as though the African-Americans were accepting me, and neither was I being accepted by Whites… there were very, very few Hispanics around. I wasn't the color of what would "normally" be known as Hispanic because I wasn't light-skinned, and for me, it just didn't seem appropriate to try to fit in with anyone or identify with anyone. I just simply answered, and later on I really became adamant about it, when I was asked: "I am Roberto! Okay?" Even to the point that it felt as though Rob was taking away from my identity… because, as Rob, I was seen as more English, as more American, you know? and not necessarily Roberto, Hispanic. I would probably venture to say that not many individuals who are dark-skinned in the United States are called Roberto. Soon I noticed that there was a lot of racial tension in the area, both in the community and at school. We were very few in number, individuals who were dark-skinned, but it seemed as though you were either White or you're Black.

We had racial fights in school. I avoided that like the plague. I just wasn't into the fighting. I didn't identify with any of the issues. I didn't know about the Black struggle in America. I was oblivious to a lot of what was going on. Martin Luther King, who? Rosa Parks, who? That was not part of my history. Of course it became a part of history for me as I lived longer in the United States and associated myself more with individuals that were Black. As they recounted their stories and their struggles and so on

and so forth, I began to see some of that. However, I was hoping and wishing all the time that I would not be included, but that was a struggle, because, for the African-Americans, they would say, "Well, you are denying who you are!" and I would say: "No. I'm not denying who I am. I know exactly who I am. I was not born here. I do not consider myself African-American. I am dark-skinned, but my culture [Figure 4.7 illustrates a collection of Hispanic hats displayed in Roberto's living room at home] and my background is Hispanic."

Figure 4.7 Roberto's Many Hats

Even though I was behind in knowing about the history of the U.S. and I was behind in language, when I started school in the U.S. I was ahead in certain areas such as math. In world history I felt I was ahead as well. As a third grader in Central America, I was quite aware of most of the countries that existed, what they offered, their capitals, where they were located, etc. We spent quite a bit of time on that. That was good education for me as I was attending a private elementary school in my home country.

Also, when I came back to the U.S. after a short return to my home country, I came back in the middle of a school year. As a result, I did not fully complete fourth grade, I was close to completion, and when I arrived here, instead of them giving me

credit at school for what I had already completed, I had to repeat fourth grade. That was

not fun for me! Later, in middle school I became an athlete and I thought that was part

of who I was because my father was an athlete too (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8 Roberto's and His Sons' Trophies

After going through three or four different high schools, I decided to go ahead and get

my diploma by attending night school. I believe I got a good education. I don't believe

that my skin color or my background impeded my pursuit for education, in middle school

or high school. What did cause some problems for me educationally was the fact that we

were poor.

It was the summer of '78 when I graduated from high school, I was working

several jobs, and these were at restaurants mostly, but I saw that there was no end in

sight—there was no light at the end of the tunnel. So, I joined the military, and after

joining the military, I got married. A year after that, we had our first child. Then as

years went on, we ended up having five children all together until the last one was born

in '97 (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9 Roberto's Children

I went to the Gulf War and participated in that. I became a naturalized citizen in '83. It was not because I no longer cared for my country of origin, but more so because I was wearing a uniform, being an American, and the level of clearance that I needed also required that I become a citizen.

I eventually got a bachelors degree from a university in New York in 1998. I started a master's program in social work because I strongly believed, at that particular point, that I needed to do something that was more in line with who I stood for as a Christian, as a family man, as a parent! As a culturally diverse person, social work was a good fit for me. I love people. I love diversity and interacting with people, and so that's the degree I wanted to pursue. At the university, while I was attending and finishing that particular degree, I was recruited by the College of Education and asked if I would be interested in pursuing a Master in Education. The university offered me a scholarship, so I could also pursue the Master in Education. I was able to transfer some of my credits that I used for the Masters in Social Work. I ended up graduating with a Master in Social Work (Figure 4.10) and also a Master in Education.
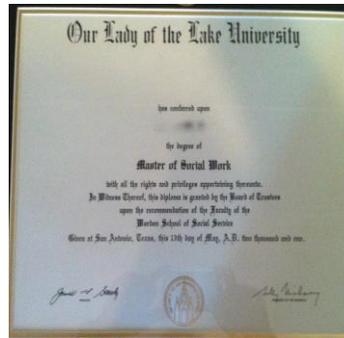
Figure 4.10 Roberto's MSW

In 2003, I decided that I wanted to pursue a doctoral degree, and part of that had to do with my father's encouragement to go on, to continue to pursue higher education. I know that he was not able to. He passed in '99, and due to the talks that we had over the years, I realized that if our life condition had been different, he would have been an educated man. I finished all of my course requirements, and I needed to do the proposal and the dissertation... I believe in 2006, I finished all my course requirements and 2009 was the last year that I was enrolled. I was working on my dissertation proposal, but I just did not feel as though I was making any headway. ...so I was allowed, in some respect I would say, to just spin the wheels. I am an adult, and I realize that a lot of it does fall upon me, but if I were to go back I just wanted more hands-on with my chair and the rest of the committee to help me through that process. I don't feel I received enough support. I felt lost and quit working on completion of the program.

I did some independent social work for a little while, and I noticed that really what I wanted to do was to be in the school system. I applied and I went to a school district in Texas. I noticed that this district was perhaps one of the better school districts, and did get a job with them in 2001, and I've been with them ever since.

Work right now is good; I work in two major subjects... I teach health and Spanish, and I'm passionate about both. I say to people, "I'm actually getting paid to do something that I would do for free." I talk about Spanish and the culture; I embrace it. Also, health is a topic for me that I embrace because it's complex, physical health, emotional health, mental health, spiritual health, environmental health; I am very passionate about those topics.

Discussion

Roberto my Black Hispanic brother from Central America
provides an interesting perspective on the racism he saw,
again because of the color of his skin!
He was grouped with African Americans and frankly didn't always fit in.
He was proud of his culture, which went beyond race.
A real challenge in this country where people are instantly judged on the color of
their face.

Roberto, as a Black Hispanic, provides a different perspective on racism in the U.S. He resisted but was often grouped with African Americans. He refused to give up his Hispanic cultural heritage. The collection of hats in his living room (Figure 3.7) represents, literally and figuratively, the many hats Roberto wears as he moves back and forth and in between different cultures and ethnicities. His experiences speak to the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism as explained by CRT, in which racism intersects with other forms of discrimination, inequality, and oppression (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Crenshaw, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Taylor, Gibson, & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Zamudio, et al., 2011). Roberto was not defined by race alone; his culture, language and ethnicity are important to who he is. This complexity was not acknowledged by those who grouped him with African Americans because he was Black or when he was discriminated against by African

Americans who could not accept him as a Black Hispanic. In failing to realize the multidimensional aspects of Roberto as an individual, African Americans continue to reinforce the patterns of exclusion by not joining with other marginalized groups to combat inequality and oppression (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Roberto's story also speaks to the ineffectiveness of a higher education institution not providing support mechanisms that assist Black males to complete their doctoral program. Roberto clearly states that he did not receive sufficient support. In this respect, CRT would challenge institutions to review their policies and practices in order to change the processes that perpetuate inequality (Zamudio et al., 2011).

Fela

Getting married to a White person was changing class. Even if you didn't have anything

financial or economic to show for it, it changed your social status.
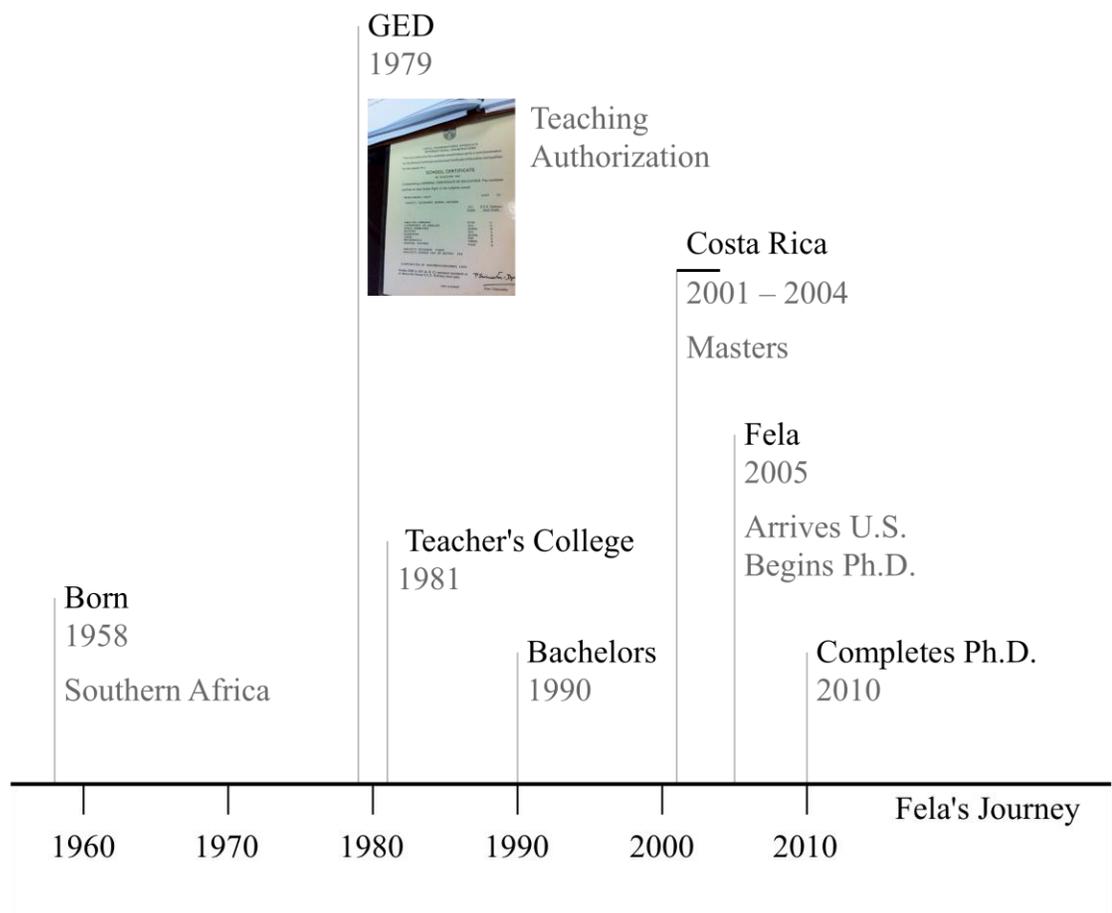
Figure 4.11 Timeline of Fela's Journey

Fela's two interviews took place in his office where he had pictures of his wife and children, and his younger brother in display. As reflected in his timeline (see figure 3.11), Fela was born in southern Africa during the time the country was colonized by the British. He was the first born of eleven children. Fela obtained his masters in Costa Rica and his doctorate in the U.S.

Figure 4.12 Fela's Father

Fela's Account

My father (Figure 4.12) was in another county on the very day I was born, and so, I grew up the first three years not knowing who my dad was. He was just like a visitor; he would come and go, stay one night or so and then leave. I grew up in the rural area; I guess it looks like what you see on TV on National Geographic. I know that there were times when I would wake up and go out to look after animals without clothes.

In 1965, my father moved out completely and abandoned us. In our culture, with my dad gone, I became responsible for everything; I became the head of the family! When I turned six or seven, I was making decisions for myself. School was no longer something interesting, it was like employment to me, because I had very important duties to do at home, look after the cattle or our few animals, till the land, work on the fields

and so on. I also spent two hours each day with my grandfather to inculcate me with family values and traditions.

The White people were only found in cities. My grandma, who was my father's mother, went to live in the city. She went with all her children. My aunts, when they got there they realized they could get married to White people. Getting married to a White person was changing class. Even if you didn't have anything financial or economic to show for it, it was changing class. Although they initially struggled to learn the English language; by attending formal education courses; they mastered the language quickly, which in turn actually separated them from us socially. We saw them all sitting like people from a high position and they also wanted us to look at their kids as people of higher class than ourselves; that is why we were always clashing.

When I visited my aunts, they wanted me to say "boss" to cousin Reginald, and Reginald was my age, and we played together. When we were playing outside by ourselves as kids, nothing like that came up... The community that we were living in did not regard them [my aunts and cousins] as African anymore. They called her [my aunt] Mrs. Johnson. So, for me to call her Mrs. Johnson, was hard, because it was like she was not Black but White. She had another name that I knew, but I was forbidden from using it.

I attended a Baptist school, which was American. After graduating from high school in 1979, I had enough education to be responsible, but in the process I realized I needed a job that would help me make sure that my mother was living well. In my country at that time after high school you could go straight and get your teaching certificate, which I did. I finished with a distinction in teaching award, so they wanted me to be a

model for others and they allowed me to teach in a school in town. I was really working hard to make sure that all my brothers went through the same level of education, which could give them a job. The good thing was that a year after my graduation, my younger brother also graduated. So, we had two good salaries and we were able to pay for our other brothers' tuition. Four of the eleven children in my family became teachers. Personally, I obtained a teaching certificate from a teachers college in 1983. In 1990 I returned to school part-time to work on a bachelor's degree. In 1995, at the school where I was working, I was promoted to senior teacher, and then six months later, they put me into an assistant principal position. I completed my bachelor's degree in 1997.

During the year 2000, in my home country, the political situation became unstable with the government forcing the Whites to leave. At that time I was the principal of a school. There was a constitutional referendum to decrease the power of the president and the people voted against the president. As a consequence, war veterans came and invited us, school people, to a meeting to answer why people had voted against the president… We were tortured that night! They put iron rings on my shoulders with some weights on top, and this actually broke my shoulders. One of my teachers died there; I was watching. I realized that by watching him dying that I had missed death by a whisker. I moved with my wife (see Figure 4.13) three hundred miles away from that place, and moved everything. I left the country and went to South Africa, but immediately, I met with two guys that

Figure 4.13 Fela's Family

had also escaped, and one of them had a letter for me from the Movement for Democratic

Change, which was our party.   I went to the Costa Rican Embassy with the letter and

applied for visas there.   In Costa Rica, I applied for a scholarship to do a master's

degree.

   They said, "Yes, we can give you a scholarship to do a master's degree, but you

need to learn Spanish." I mastered Spanish in three and a half months. I knew that if I

failed to master this language, I would lose the scholarship. If I lost the scholarship, I

would have to go back home. In Costa Rica the professors did not really understand my

culture. Whenever I was participating in class, there was this downward look as though

my contributions were not being considered; however, I worked hard and completed my

master's degree in 2004 (Figure 4.14).
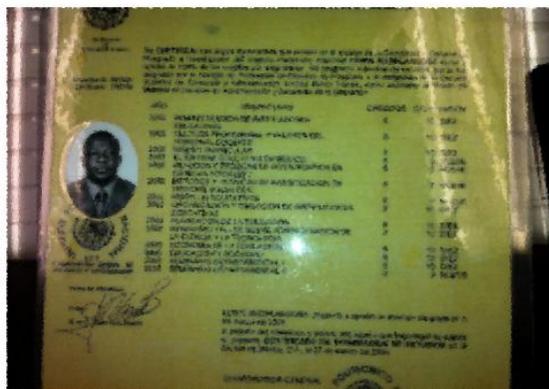
Figure 4.14 Fela's Masters Diploma from Costa Rica

During my master's studies, I met a professor from a university in Texas who was doing

research in Costa Rica, and when I told my story, he invited me to apply to the university.

I applied and was accepted. However, it took me one year to complete the application

process. I still remember the first night when I arrived in the U.S. That night I woke up in

the middle of the night and pinched myself twice wondering if it was true that I was in the U.S. Is this true? I couldn't believe it.

I was treated very nicely in the department where my program of studies was housed; I don't have any complaints. The people in the department helped me with all the things that I needed in order to settle in. I didn't know that everything was so expensive, and they gave me everything, from plates to cooking utensils to transportation. Someone gave me a bicycle. It was a big surprise! Because a bicycle is like a motorcar in my home country—not many people can afford it. Sometimes people would prepare food when I didn't have food, and they would share it with me. All of this help made it possible for me to complete my studies.

The work that I was assigned improved my understanding of what goes into the process of writing an academic paper. It didn't feel like I was doing work. Instead it felt as if I was taking an extra class, which would give me credit towards my Ph.D. because I was an editorial assistant. This job helped me to grow academically and professionally. When I left the department, it was like leaving my family because everybody in my the department had been so supportive.

During my program of studies, there are just one or two classes that really bring sadness to me when I think back. When I made a comment in the classroom, there were certain professors, who, I can't give names, would not give any feedback or acknowledge my participation, but when others participated; their examples were accepted and well received. Also, when writing an assignment, I was told, "You need to redo the assignment." … I didn't redo it; I just changed the top page, gave it back to the professor who would say: "Thanks for the extra work." That really hurt me, because I knew I had

done my best initially, but he didn't read it. He just told me: "Thank you for the extra

work." It lifted my grade to a B from a D. That was so miraculous! I thought it was just

going to be a C, which I would have accepted. It just didn't make any sense, because I

submitted the same piece of work!

When I was about to finish the dissertation, they gave me an outstanding graduate

student award and a medal, even though I didn't get a 4.0 GPA. I was really impressed

that they recognized me! Because the way I was brought up…this belief that I was

inferior; it wouldn't be me or somebody of my color who would receive the award. It had

to be somebody White. That's what I was thinking when I learned the news.

Discussion

Fela from Southern Africa still provides a different perspective.
By the experiences in his home country what happened here was not unexpected.
He certainly confronted racism when dealing with family.
Racism in Costa Rica and the U.S. may also not have been a surprise.
Having his contributions discounted while attending school there.
His experience was same here and there!
Fela demonstrated both mental and physical endurance and sacrifice.
Not allowing physical torture or abuse shatter his life.
He was always respectful, sought help and received assistance from people who cared.
His story was insightful with the candor he shared.

Fela provides a unique experience regarding racism in three countries; his home country,

Costa Rica, and the U.S. Although set in Southern Africa, the story about his aunt and

cousins trying to mask or deny their heritage or culture speaks to the power of racism and

as CRT explains, racism permeates all aspects of one's life including family. Fela

exposes his encounter with faculty and students at universities in Costa Rica and the U.S.

Specifically in both schools how his input was discounted. Also, in the U.S. how one

faculty member felt comfortable in the institution to make Fela redo work when it was

not required!   Finally, Fela like Earle shared the internalized oppression (Pyke, 2010) of believing that he was less than Whites. Although not a native to either country, Costa Rica or the U.S., Fela understood that he was being treated differently because of his race regardless of where he was living.

Chapter Discussion

Going back to the title of the Chapter, the timelines and journeys of Earle, Roberto, and Fela take place during the transition from segregation to integration of schools. School desegregation was the outcome of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and the Civil Rights Act (1964); both are hailed as significant events, often cited as pivotal in the advancement of the civil rights movement. However, the nature of these events and their root cause are challenged in the light of CRT.

Specifically, CRT posits that the civil rights policies established as a result of the law and the court decision were limited to addressing only the most blatant barriers to equal access, making segregation of schools based on race illegal. However, these same policies have failed to address the real problem of social inequities created after centuries of racialized oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Zamudio et al., 2011). A clear example is the failure of these laws to address the longstanding issue of equitable funding for education in communities of color. Without adequate funding, Black communities are unable to maintain their neighborhood schools, or ensure they have supplies, educational materials, buildings that are adequate for learning and teaching, or provide choices for curricula, or attract and retain staff and teachers, or prepare Black children who can be competitive in society.

The principles of CRT are represented in the stories of these three study participants. For example, their stories illustrate the pervasiveness of racism that each experienced. As a case in point, Earle tells about overt racism with the "Colored" sign clearly indicating that people of color were to use a specific entrance, waiting room, water fountain, or obtain any public service segregated by race. Institutional racism is also illustrated in the examples provided by Earle as he shares moving from segregated to integrated schools and the expectations for Blacks to fail at school. Meritocracy is another issue that is present in Earle's narrative; he is unable to meet the requirements (merit) for commissioning into the military; for Blacks merely meeting requirements was not sufficient. Critical race theory (CRT) challenges the view that achievements are based on merit. Meritocracy does not level the playing field for people of color; instead merit practices house hidden race specific preferences for those in power (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Zamudio, et al., 2011). Whether in the workplace or at institutions of higher learning, merit systems are vehicles that limit access under the guise of objectivity or color blindness.

On the other hand, Roberto constantly struggled to be accepted as a Black Hispanic in the eyes of Whites and African Americans. He was discriminated against by both groups and had a hard time trying to fit and belong without loosing his Hispanic roots. As contended by the principles of CRT, other forms of oppression beyond race are present and intersect; we cannot think of race as an isolated element. Race intersects with gender, class, language, and culture with each serving as a basis for marginalizing individuals. As Roberto shares he wore many hats in moving in and out of social circles with Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. While each of those groups attempted

to label Roberto with one characteristic, he maintained that he was not defined by any single factor.

Also, Fela provided several examples that convey the widespread nature and impact of racism. His example about getting married to a white man and changing status to a higher class speaks to not only the pervasiveness of racism but also the internalized oppression that emerges from years of experiences racism. His family members believed that they were less than Whites and that in marrying Whites they would elevate their status to be above other Black Africans. Therefore, it is not a surprise that Fela believed that someone else—White—should have received the award instead of him, a Black male.

To sum up, this Chapter presented the life histories of the three study participants who were in their fifties at the time the study was implemented; Earle, Roberto, and Fela. They informed a larger socio-political and historical context related to the topic of race over the last half century in the U.S. The life histories of the remaining four study participants, Charles, William, James, and Michael, appear in the next Chapter. Charles and William were born around the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964). James and Michael were born in the early seventies and late eighties, respectively. As discussed in the previous chapters, additional legal action and continued civil disobedience was necessary to bring about change. Thus, the following chapter focuses on the concept of affirmative action.

CHAPTER V

COVERT RACISM: AGE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

This Chapter presents the life histories of the remaining four Black male study

participants, Charles, William, James, and Michael. As illustrated in Table 5.1, two of the

study participants are in their 40's, one in his 30's and the youngest one in his 20's.

Table 5.1 The Remaining Four Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Self-Identify As	Doctoral Status	Employment
Charles	40+	Black	Student	Public Sector
William	40+	Black	Already a Ph.D.	Public Sector
James	30+	African American	Student	Public Sector
Michael	20+	African American	Accepted into a doctoral program	Public Sector

At the time these participants began their educational journey school segregation

was illegal by law. The Nation was taking steps toward creating opportunities for

minorities and women to be able to have access and participate in employment/jobs and

educational institutions through "affirmative action" programs. It is important to note

that the degree of access and the effectiveness of affirmative action programs, especially

regarding education, were dependent upon the decisions made by the U.S. Supreme Court

in three significant cases. These are: *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*

(1978); *Hopwood v. Texas* (1996); and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003).

In the case of the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (*1978), the

Supreme Court allowed the university to consider race as a factor for admissions, but

struck down the practice of setting aside a specific number of admissions for minorities.

But, in 1996, the Supreme Court by not ruling on *Hopwood v. Texas*[15], let stand the 5th

U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' decision, which ruled any consideration of race as

unconstitutional. However, in 2003, the Supreme Court established through *Grutter v.*

Bollinger that a university's narrowly tailored use of race in admissions decisions was not

unlawful.   The Supreme Court in essence has ruled that universities can consider race as

a factor in its admission's practices as long as race is not the only factor and as long as

universities do not set aside a specific number of admissions for minorities—commonly

referred to as not setting quotas for minorities.

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[15] The actual case before the U.S. Supreme courts was Texas v. Hopwood (1996).

Charles

It's okay to say you want to move forward on [diversity],

but it's a different thing to live it…

High School
1980

Graduates

Bachelors
1989

Born
1962

North Texas

Masters
1991

Begins Ph.D.
2005

Charles' Journey

1970   1980   1990   2000
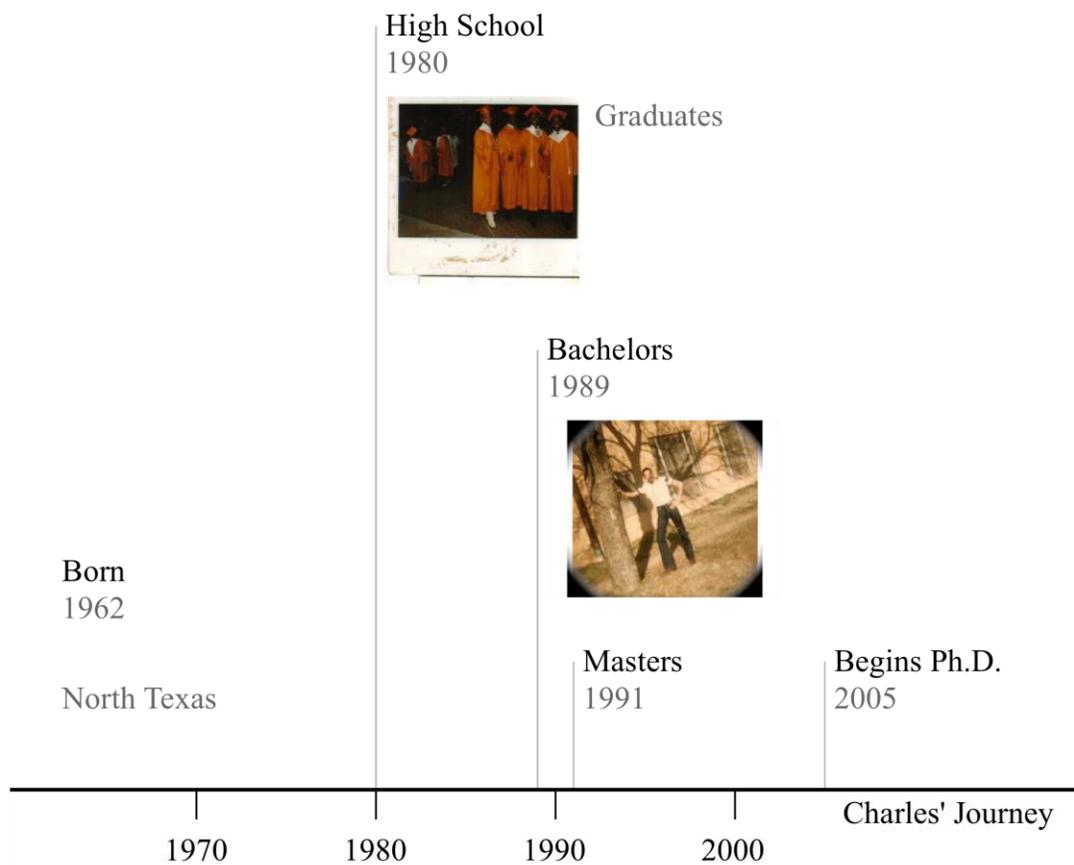
Figure 5.1 Timeline of Charles' Journey

I interviewed Charles in his office where he has sports memorabilia, family photographs, plaques, and other items given to him expressing appreciation for his contributions. As reflected on the timeline (Figure 5.1), Charles' journey begins in North Texas in the early 1960s. He has a brother and stepsister. His mother and grandmother raised him while his father who lived in southeast Texas raised his other siblings. Charles' mother, a college graduate, taught elementary school briefly but spent most of her time working for a retail electronic company. Charles loved his mother but admits they were not close. His mom died from cancer at age 54, leaving him to be raised by his grandmother. His Aunt Bea has also been an influential person in his life. Charles completed his bachelor's in 1989 and his masters in 1991 and began work on his doctorate in 2005.

Charles' Account

I remember sitting with my grandmother looking at "Meet the Press "on television. We would read the local newspaper together. My grandmother had two phrases that still guide me today, "God don't like ugly" and "anything beats a blank." The first statement meaning to carry yourself with the dignity that will earn respect and the latter meaning that doing something is better than doing nothing.

Figure 5.2 Charles with Friends and Teammates

But my surroundings were that I was with all my people (Figure 5.2), even when I look at the weekends with Aunt Bea (Figure 5.3) and I sort of reflect back on those neighborhoods say they were upper middle class. Even in those neighborhoods, they were mostly Black, at least the streets that they lived on, and I didn't venture out too much off of her street. Many of my friends thought that Aunt Bea was or should have been my mother because we had similar dispositions. We were not upset easily and did not hold a grudge.

Figure 5.3 Aunt Bea

Up and down that street, it was probably 75% Black.   When I stepped outside of those areas, my upbringing was such that when I went out, I knew how to behave. We had an idea of how to conduct ourselves to where you didn't bring a lot of attention or reason for anyone to be upset with you or mad at you or questioned whether or not they wanted you in their business. I just didn't have those situations.

There was the issue of my skin complexion—there were times in our neighborhood that my friends, would call me "White boy" it wasn't anything that I felt bad about. This happened more in college and people would ask, "Well, how you got the nick name?" I would answer, "Because I'm light." No, not light. "I'm bright."   If I said that to somebody Black, they'd say, "Oh, okay." When I said it to White people, they were like, "Well, what does being smart have to do with your skin?" and I would say, "Oh, no, no, no. Bright meant smart."

You remember when some people said playing dozens. That's more about your parents. We would say, "Well, you casing each other." That's when you're making jokes, and so when they would, they call me, it was all talk about my skin complexion (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 Charles with Friends

For the 6th grade, I went to school in my neighborhood and they bussed the White kids there. I don't remember any bad incidents or concerns of Blacks jumping on Whites or vice versa or people manifesting having issues with this. And then for 7th and

8th grades, I was bussed to a neighborhood that was predominantly Hispanic. The north side, everybody said that's where Mexicans lived. I don't think many Blacks lived on that side. For 9th grade I went to basically an all Black high school.

Our graduating class was probably around 340, and they identified about 30 of us as supposedly the high-ranking students. They picked four of us. They said we had learning intellect, potential, and called us into the National Honor Society. But when I think about it now, I recall that no one said anything about college. No mention about attending college. No direction, none! But I did go to college and those undergraduate years were the fondest years of my life. I went to college in 1981 and got my degree in 1989. There were a lot of mistakes. There were a lot of relationships that were created that were real and true, and strong to this day. There was also a lot of wasted time in terms of our development and our education. It shouldn't have taken me all those years to get my bachelor's degree. James Bell was part of the institution and he was the only resource that I took advantage of. He took interest in me and helped me create some structure, some guidance, and he also built in that sense of obligation. I somehow felt that I couldn't let him down. Life was okay until I took a deeper look at myself.

While working on my bachelors I worked at a large retail store in the back loading and unloading trucks and bringing boxes to the floor at the end of the night. I did have one run-in where they fired me one time. I was told, "Well, if you're not going to do this, then you can just take the rest of the day off." So I went home and I took the day off, but I came back later that night to buy something and I told them to use my employee discount. Another manager had to give approval, then, he said, "Well, you left. You know, you were fired today." I explained I was not fired and that I was told that I

could take the rest of the day off." He said, "Well, that's not what I got, so you're no longer an employee here," and I guess due to my upbringing, I didn't raise my voice or acted like a fool. I said, "Well, I tell you one thing. This is something that you and I need to talk about. I can either talk to you about this in this line with all these customers or you and I can go and talk. So we went to the back and I explained, "No one said, 'You're terminated." The sales person said, "Well, I'll just have to talk to the store manager, Mr. Brown." Two or three minutes later, Joe my supervisor said to management: "I'm not going to say what he should or shouldn't have done. Maybe he shouldn't have left, but I'll tell you one thing. Y'all not going to find anybody to replace him back there. This guy busts his ass, and everybody in the store knows it" With that conversation, Mr. Brown said, "Well then don't even worry about it." I don't think he carried a grudge.

After having the experience of taking so long to graduate for my bachelor's; I decided that for my master's I was not going to fail and repeat classes. I told myself, "You're doing it in two years. You're not screwing this up." I was getting ready to graduate and that summer I had to rush it because James Bell told me about a job opportunity. I had the last three accounting courses when this offer came. I said, "There's no way I can finish that. I've got to spread those out." But I had an academic advisor who knew my strengths. I went to talk to her about what I had to do during the summer. I found out—again, wasted time—that I was short of courses and still was missing a PE course. In addition to this, I also had the GRE for the doctoral program. For those three accounting courses, I made two B's and one A, graduated, and was hired at the university.

Oh man! The experience working for that university was enlightening. I ended up on the diversity taskforce that dealt with issues related to racial issues. I brought up some things and I said some things to people too.   There was no mincing of words. Whatever the issues were, I laid them out there. There were people who were in high-level positions that I put on some hot seats to the point where I had people say, "You may want to watch what you're saying. Not that we're not for what you're saying, but you're coming straight at them." I said, "Well, that's the only way to do it." One colleague told me, "You know what? Now I'm telling you. You're sticking your neck out for a whole bunch of Black people, but I guarantee you, if you take a look around, those Black people are not following you. But you're fighting for them." At that point I didn't have kids and wasn't married as I am now (Figure 5.5), so I didn't feel as though there was a whole lot for me to lose and I felt comfortable about the things that I was fighting for and addressing were legitimate or else I would tell the Black people, just like I told the local NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), that I'm not battling that. I was not afraid of Black people, either.

When the taskforce came with recommendations about diversity, I said some things to the president. I said that it's okay to say and want to move forward on it, but it's a different thing to live it. When they talked about the transformation and we did the presentation before the president's cabinet and the deans, the taskforce members said: "Now we're going to wrap this up and it is unanimous who is going to conclude and wrap this up," and that was me.

Figure 5.5 Charles with His Family

Discussion

Charles with a big voice
was born just in time to experience the racial discourse.
He fell into some of the hype and almost squandered opportunity away,
but with the help of others he sought a better way.
And now as he pursues his doctorate,
he also fights for people of color who are less fortunate.

For Charles discrimination was not as apparent in the predominantly Black community; however, Charles notes that community members knew how to conduct themselves when outside the safety of a homogeneous neighborhood. From the influences of his grandmother and aunt he realized that there was an expected decorum for people of color as was shared in Earle's story regarding the unwritten rules of behavior. Even when faced with the possibility of being fired from work, he knew that he could remain firm but not disrespectful because those were the rules and values that his grandmother taught him.

William

I never felt Black until White people made me feel Black because of the

environments in which I was…
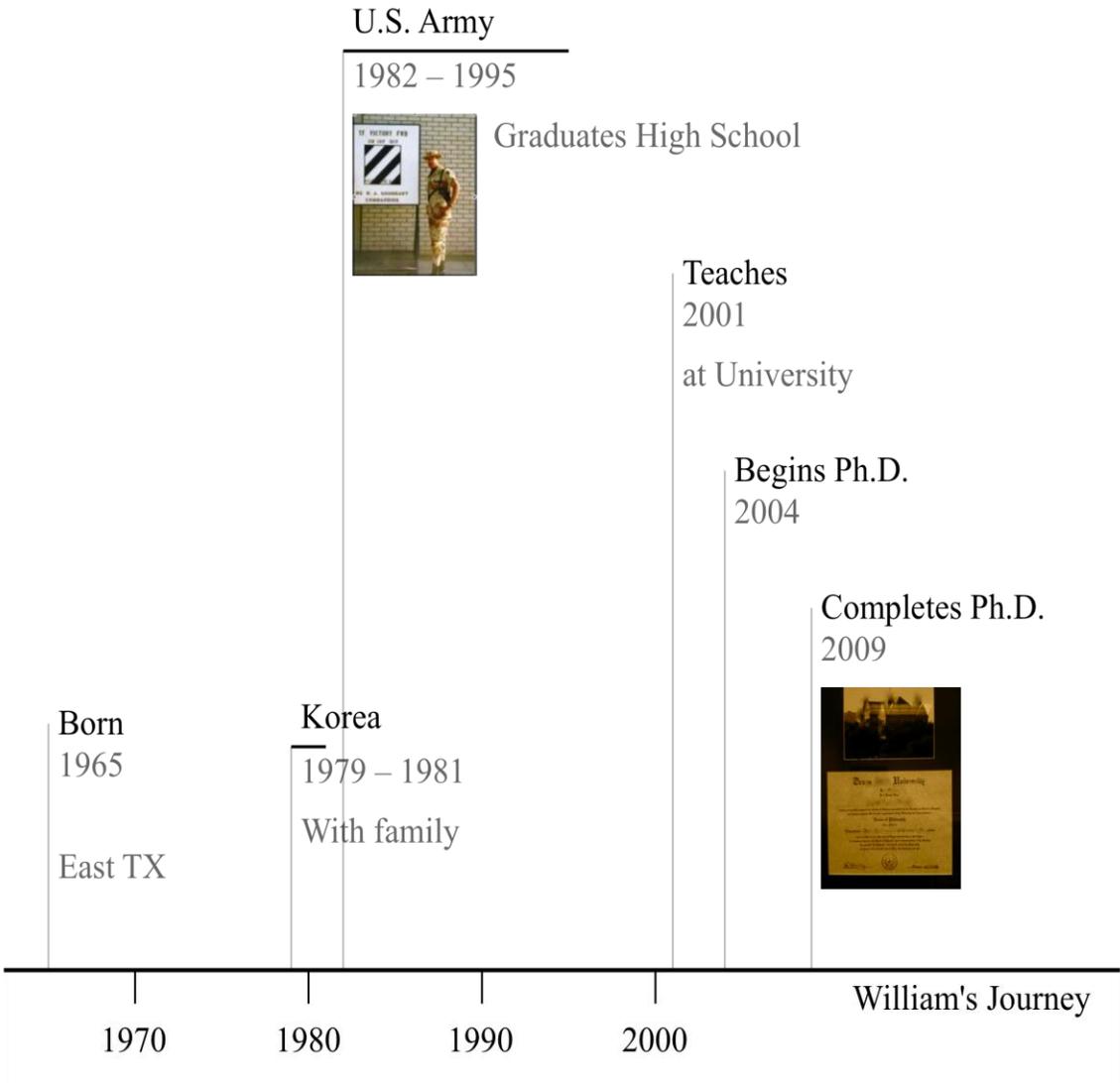
Figure 5.6 Timeline of William's Journey

William invited me to his home for of his interviews. Immediately upon entering William's home you know that his children are the focus of the home. Play areas are located from the front living area all the way upstairs. Additionally throughout the home are bookshelves filled with two and three-inch binders containing photos, official documents, and other memorabilia that catalog his life and his family's history. As reflected in Figure 5.7, William's journey begins in East Texas in the late sixties; he was born to a single mom. When he was six months old he and his mom moved to west Texas where she met and married a military officer who adopted Williams. His dad was one of 72 Black flag (general) officers[16] in the US Army. William would also join the U.S. Army after graduating from high school.

Williams' Account

My dad is my number one role model; he instilled basic principles of "knowing right from wrong, to do right by people, do right by yourself, take care of your family and have pride in your name." My brother and I were expected to attend a military academy.

My community was the military for what I can remember.   The circles we ran around then were mostly White. There weren't that many senior Black officers to speak of, back in the early '70s. And so, I think that had a lot to do with how I perceived life, or how I perceived color. I mean, I think of all the different neighborhoods we lived in, and the people we lived around, and they were all predominantly White.

---

[16] Blacks in Defense of Our Nation: A Pictorial Documentary of the Black American Male and Female Participation and Involvement in the Military Affairs of the United States of America. Department of Defense. Retrieved 12/08/11/http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/defense.txt11.

I knew there were people out there in segregated communities, but we were also segregated in the military, it wasn't based on race though. That's why the military was always a safe haven for, I know, my father, and even for me, for me! We were sheltered from a lot. The term "segregation in the military," was based on rank. That's hard for people to understand. We socially self-segregated by neighborhood, by income, by how much house you can afford. It was kind of the same thing. Race was never really an issue; we all got along. I was dating and hanging out with White kids and other Black kids, who brought up issues. Also, I didn't have my first real contact or experience with large numbers of African-Americans until I joined the Army, which was in June of 1982. I graduated from high school and a week later I left for the Army. I was 17 years old, when I left home.

Racism didn't ever really rear its ugly head until I joined the military myself. And then I believe it was because I was around a different social class of people. They were raised differently. I mean for the first time in my life, when I joined the Army, I was around White people who had never been around Blacks and Blacks who had never been around Whites; thrown together or thrust together for the first time. You knew there was a difference, when before, it just wasn't like that. That's when I first really noticed it (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7 William in Military Uniform

I don't know that I did this on a conscious level, but I did not deal with it, I went and stayed in Europe for the next 8 to 10 years. Almost all my time in the military, except for those last two or three

years here in the United States, I stayed in Germany. I could be in Germany and be hated for being American but not for being Black. Not that I felt hate by any one particular people, but just the racism-- I mean, you know that racism exists. People do things, they say things, and how they treat you. I didn't have to worry about that in Germany. A lot of my friends have always been White, and I knew that I could maneuver amongst my peers and live how I wanted without any repercussion or condescension or anything because, again, in that military family, people segregated by rank and not by color.

Between 1982 and let's say to 1995, there was lots of drinking, but in 1995, I got sober and I knew I didn't need to be in the Army anymore and worked to get out. They paid me $20,000 as an enlisted person. I got out December 21, 1995.

After the military, I wasn't working. I had money saved up, so, I was just going to school, full-time, every day. I obtained an associate's degree. From '96 to '99, I finished my bachelor's and my master's. From a school standpoint, I don't think I ever felt any issues with race, at all. I joined a business fraternity that welcomed me with open arms. And that's just always been a belief that I've had. Then they elected me their president.

In 1999, I got my first job out of school and worked at a computer company writing code. I did that for about two years and they started cutting our hours; that's when I started working for the university in 2001. I'm a faculty member. I was a graduate assistant instructor for a couple of years before that. I never had any issues with race, not a single one. In fact, and now no one has ever said this, I truly believe it didn't hurt, the fact that I was Black, when they hired me. Because, and even to this very

day, we still only have two African-Americans over in the school. No one ever even

mentioned anything like that, but I'm always looking for a deeper reason, because we're

human beings. I just have a feeling that while I was good at what I could do, also part of

why they hired me was that I was Black… trust me; they hired me with a master's degree

only. So you can't tell me there weren't other people more academically qualified to

teach. Another example is that I couldn't even get into the Ph.D. program without an

appeal. I started the Ph.D. program in the fall of 2003 and was married shortly after

that (see Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8 William with his Wife

The director of the doctoral program, I'll never forget, pulled me out of class one

night. The way they had the program set up is you took like a year worth of courses,

then you took some statistic courses, but you took like some beginner statistic courses.

Then you took the quantitative stuff. Well, that's my forte, and he said: "Oh, you can't

take these classes out of order. You can't take the two quantitative ones before you take

these other courses, blah, blah, blah, because you won't do good," and I was like, "What

do you mean, I won't do good? You don't know me." I was like, "This is the only thing

that I feel comfortable in and you're telling me I can't do it," and I'll never forget it.

"This fool just told me I can't do something," and I was like, "Oh, I will prove his ass

wrong." I now have my PhD. Why he did that? I have no idea! In 2009, I completed my

doctorate.

Discussion

William a proud man, like his father served in the military.
Overcame problems with drinking while seeking *safe haven* in Germany.
He found that he was treated differently by the people in place.
He felt they judged him by his nationality and not by his race.

William shares a work history where he believes race was not an issue. His only

exception was being hired as faculty and believing that being Black was reason that his

was selected. The military provided a shield and refuge for him as a child and adult. As

an adult, the military provided an opportunity for escape or avoidance of race issues

through his assignment to Europe where William shares race was not an issue. Back in

the U.S. William found what he believed was another safe haven in academic institutions

where he believed people of color encountered minimal barriers. As he states:

"education is the great equalizer", despite the program director discouraging him from

taking certain courses out of sequence.

James

It is almost like there is punishment for success. It is almost like success is a

penalty.

Bachelors
2000

Masters
2008

High School
1995

Graduates

Born
1976

Eastern TX

Working
2001

Large Retail
Store

Begins Ph.D.
2010

Teaching

James' Journey

1980   1985   1990   1995   2000   2005
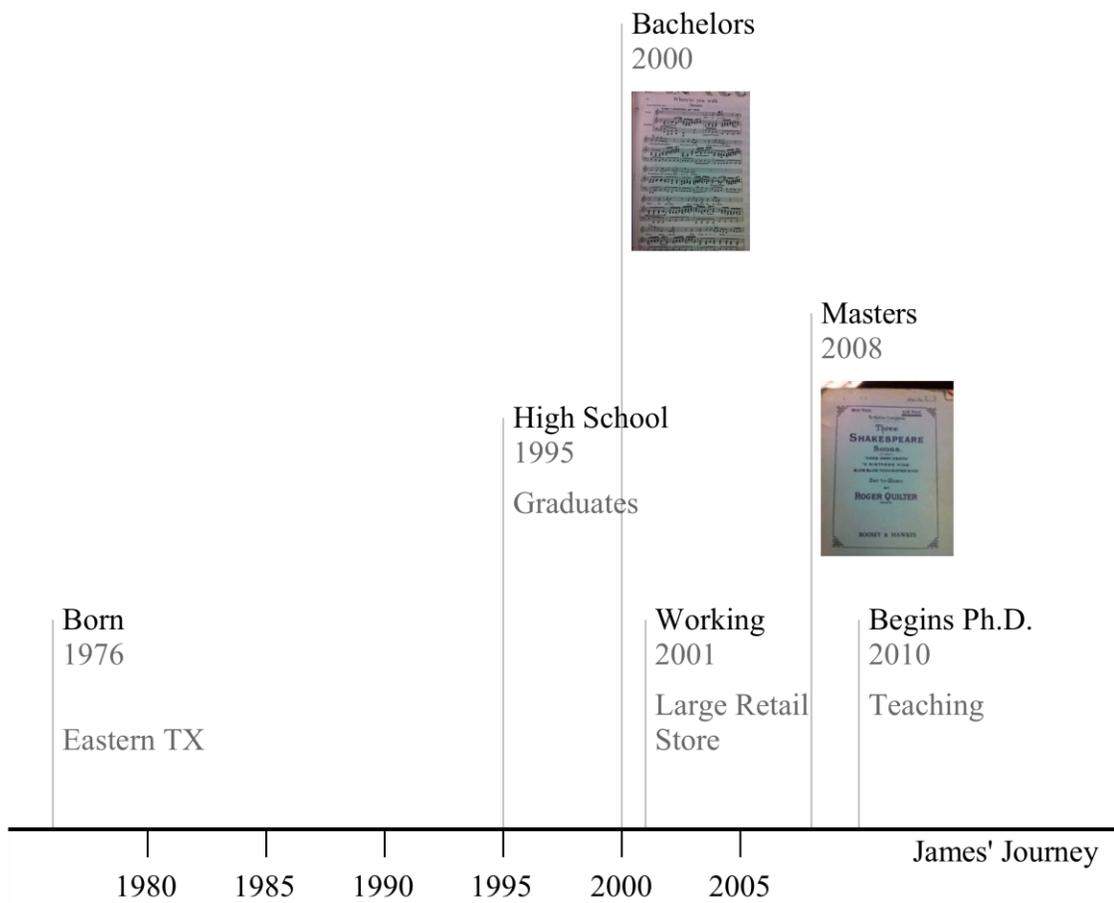
Figure 5.9 Timeline of James' Journey

James' interviews took place in the university library. He is a first generation student. As reflected in Figure 5.9, James was born in the early seventies in East Texas; he was the only child and he never knew his father. When he was four, his mother died of cancer. James' grandmother raised him after that. He knew from an early age that he would obtain his doctorate. Except for enrolling in the doctorate, James had lived his entire life in the same city.

James' Account

I grew up in the same home from birth--actually to the present I still have the same home. That was my great grandmother's home, and when she passed away, she willed it to me. So that house is still in the family, it's still there. My neighborhood was all African-American. It's an older community. And actually, it is probably middle-to lower class because it was not one of those areas where you see million dollar homes. It was an average, older community. I would not say a high crime rate, but there was crime. People of the community always praised me for not falling into the street life and still to this very day, I get praised for not falling into the drugs, not having a criminal record, not getting in trouble with the police for anything. I always had my own mind and my own goals. I never tried to be part of the in-crowd and be cool. I was never a follower. I was always a leader. I did not have many friends because of that, either. That is very significant. I'm proud that I did not succumb to peer-pressure and participated in criminal activity. At an early age I was focused on achieving certain goals in education.

I actually started off in a private elementary school. I remember I was actually the only Black child at that school. That private school was not a good experience for

me. The teacher always isolated me. The other kids would be out playing recess and I would always have to stay behind in the classroom because she would say I was talking too much, or not paying attention in class, so that was my punishment. I felt like many of the teachers were very prejudiced. Every day my grandmother would pick me up; there would always be some type of note from the teacher: "James is not paying attention. James is talking too much in school. James is doing this. James is getting into fights. James is starting trouble in class." It was always just me. My grandmother took me out of that school because my learning experience was not good. She also believed that they were prejudiced there.   Those early years were not pleasant for me at all. That is really the only racial negative experience that I had at that young age, as far as having that feeling of isolation. It is funny because a private school is where you are supposed to receive the best education versus a public school. Once I left this school, a dark cloud just lifted because I was integrated into a more diverse school setting. Teachers were more assisting, much more supportive. My learning really just took off.

I love music especially playing classical piano and my grandmother supported that interest by attending all my musical events through middle school and high school. People are often surprised to learn that I did not study jazz, rhythm and blues, or pop music. Instead I studied Mozart, Beethoven, and other classical and symphonic music.

Later, in undergraduate music school, I was the only African-American man in the program and studying classical music was, I do not want to say out of the norm, but strange, because most African Americans went to sports. It was not music and the fine arts, so, I stood out in that sense. Many of the African-American students isolated me

because they thought that I saw myself as being superior because I had a love for the

classics like Shakespeare (Figure 5.10), and that maybe I was trying to conform into one

of the White students because of that. As a result, I did not have many African-American

friends during that time; we did not share the same interests. There was no problem with

Caucasians. We all worked very well together in rehearsals. The camaraderie was very

strong. I really did not have any negative experiences. Most of the time, after rehearsals

or shows, we would go out to eat and socialize. It was a good experience.
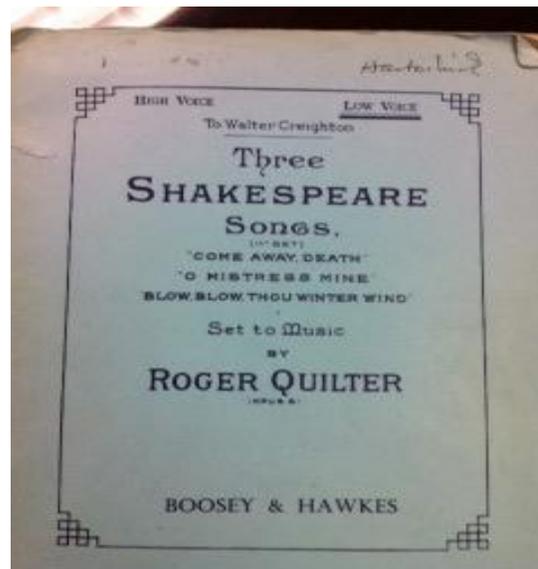
Figure 5.10 Shakespeare Sonnets

I received my master's in English in 2008 in a high social class, very Caucasian

community, so, that experience was very similar to my undergrad in music.   Still within

the humanities, the fine arts, literature, music, and theater, is where it seems there is a

shortage of African-Americans. I would take graduate seminars, and once again I was

the only African-American male—or African-American in general.

The professors were very supportive of me, but I got the feeling whenever I was in class that some of the students wanted to say something, but they did not because the norm is you do not say anything about race because that is insulting to people. You get a feeling that they are wondering "why are you here?" "Wow, it is strange that you are in this class." Although they did not say it, I got the vibe they are thinking that way.

I started working after my undergrad, which was 2001 with this large retail store. I moved up to supervision very quickly because I took my job very seriously. I was never absent. I had a good attitude and a good relationship with the customers, the store manager picked up on that, and so I was promoted to supervisor in less than a year. My title was customer service manager. However, my cashiers did not really want to listen to what I had to say because I was very young. I would give instructions, and they would always get a second opinion over me. The majority of my cashiers were White. I was also the only Black supervisor. I would do meetings, and they would zone out. I felt like an outcast due to both skin color and age. I would get complaints about being mean, or 'James is talking rude to me', when all I was doing was actually following exactly what the store policy stated. They just did not want to take directives from me. That went on for about a year after I became supervisor. Eventually some of those people transferred to other stores, and so the problem kind of fizzled out that way. I left in 2008 when I got my Masters in English.

Shortly after obtaining my masters I started working for Woodville College. There was an incident about two days after I was hired. I have always been younger than the average professor or instructor, especially in the English Department. And once

again in this department, I was the only African-American male instructor in the English

Department. Woodville also had a high White population.

An incident I recall that became an issue is that I did not like the textbook that I

was assigned to teach my class, so I went to the dean and I asked if there was any way I

could change it because the reading selections in the book just did not seem very diverse.

It really did not represent the diversity that we see in the classroom in this day and age. I

asked if there was a book that I could use that represented more diversity, and he said

that I was not allowed to choose my textbook because I was not full-time faculty. I told

him that I did not want to use that book primarily because it just did not have what I

wanted in it. He told me that maybe I could find some outside selections to integrate into

the class of my choice. He did give me the option to do that. I guess that was the first

time I took a stand for my belief and went to talk to administration about something I

firmly believed in. And this confirmed pursuit my Ph.D. believing with that I would have

a say.

On the other hand, sometimes, there are people who view this negatively and say

things like... "Oh, you think you are so much better than me or anybody else because you

get a Ph.D." I still hear that even to this day. But it is funny, because it does not make

me upset, it does not make me mad or angry. I just believe that it is ignorance. It is

almost like there is punishment for success. It is almost like success is a penalty. It is

like the Ph.D. is viewed as a dirty word. However, this makes me feel glad that I

prioritized my education.

I guess as far as any racial discrimination I know there's still a lot of racism. I

can be shopping in a store and I can see eyes following me just because of my skin color.

It's been an interesting experience to know that it's just automatically assumed that I'm going to steal or I'm going to do something that's against the law just because I'm African American.

Thank God I didn't experience what my mom and my aunt had experienced with having separate water fountains, a water fountain for "colored people" and a water fountain for Whites. My aunt would tell me a lot about the way life was in the early 50s and 60s. It reminds me of how good I have it now compared to the way she had it, and how much things have changed.

Discussion

James my young brother who took a different path,
raised by his grandmother did not know the overt wrath!
Racism in the sense of being called out by derogatory names,
but the actions by others were just the same.
Being told he's too young, or does not have the time in the workplace;
He may not have understood they were a coded message denigrating his race!

James' story reveals the continued presence of racism. At the individual or micro-level, he was singled out in the private school as being disruptive—his grandmother saying they were prejudiced. James also experienced covert racism when his White subordinates discounted him in the retail store and being followed around when shopping. At the institutional or macro-level he repeatedly noted that he was the only African American male in the group.

Michael

There are different races; different races blend really well.

It's just that not everybody in every race wants to blend.

High School
2005

Graduates

Korea

1988 – 1990

Parents in military
transferred

Bachelors
2009

Masters
2011

Born
1988

Accepted Ph.D.
2012

Starts Fall 2012

Army Post,
Carolina

Michael's Journey

1990   1995   2000   2005   2010
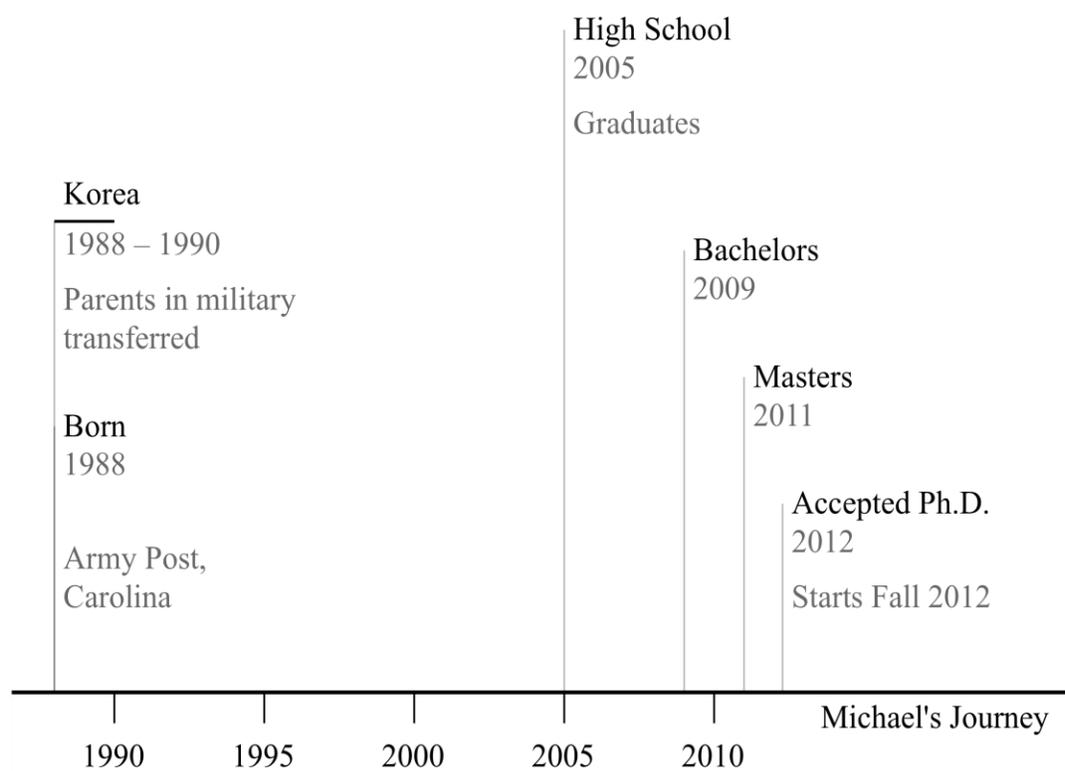
Figure 5.11 Timeline of Michael's Journey

Michael's first interview took place in a coffee shop and his second interview was in an office on campus. Michael provided no photographs or artifacts. As reflected in Figure 5.11, he was born in the 1980s on an Army post in the southeastern U.S.   Both of his parents were in the military. His mom was an Army nurse and his dad worked in administration. Michael is the only member of the family who did not join the military; instead choosing to play football and attend college to obtain a bachelor's degree in 2009 and masters in 2011. He was accepted in a doctoral program for fall 2012.

Michael's Account

A year after I was born, my family moved to Korea where we stayed for four years. Afterwards, we came to an Army post in Texas where my brother was born. I lived there until graduating from high school. The community was diverse because of the military base. But at the same time, when you bring in that diversity, you will see different races have problems with each other.   I mean there were subtle comments sometimes. I know football games, for one, depending on the school we played, we might hear racist remarks during the game or something like that. I don't have a ton of memories. I would say other than those racist remarks; it was not too bad, because I didn't let it get to me. It was common but not an everyday event.

One girl I dated was Asian, I remember some guy-- he was either Hispanic, or he might have been from an island as, saying something about, "Why are you with that n-word?" She would get all tough and want to fight the guy, and I'd say, "Don't waste your time. Let him be ignorant. He doesn't understand it." I don't like ignorance and I don't let other people's ignorance get to me.

Another incident was a time when I was hanging out with the guys, Larry, Joe, and Don. I think we went to a bowling alley. There were these other guys drinking and just being a little belligerent. We weren't too far from them, and I thought they said the n-word, and then they were talking about Black boys, boys this, boys that. So, Larry and Joe were getting upset, and I said, "Don't even do listen to them. Ignore them. We're having fun." Overall, I was able to keep them kind of relaxed… and then, the girls came… There are different races; different races blend really well. It's just that not everybody in every race wants to blend. And I think that was an advantage of being at a military base.

I recall in third grade I took some tests for the Gifted and Talented (GT) program. I did extremely well and they placed me in courses with those kids in the GT program. Middle school, I can't remember race ever being much of an issue. For the most part, I hung out with the people in the GT classes. I actually liked being in the GT classes because I wouldn't hear the n-word. What was important was what you could bring to the table academically, the learning you were doing and the skills you were developing, with writing, math, and arithmetic. From that point through high school I was in the GT Program and the Advanced Placement courses in high school. I took a couple of classes for college credit, I believe sophomore, junior, and senior years. I think race was a lot more apparent in high school, being that it was a military area. There were plenty of racial conflicts, but I kept thinking they should just work out conflict; but... the n-word was used 24/7, ugh, my goodness!

I can't think of any huge, specific, racial problem affecting me directly or personally. I had witnessed race becoming an issue in fights and seen fights develop, a

White guy and a Black guy, or a Hispanic guy and a Black guy, and call each other the other race's worst name ever. So I mean race was definitely bigger--you definitely saw it. I had a better understanding of it, or at least I thought I did.

Gangs were an issue-- I call them fake gangs. Everybody just wanted to be a big dog. They'd think they had to show off and be tough, and they really didn't understand what they were doing, so they would join gangs or create gangs, and that became an issue for a little bit. I never got involved or had that problem personally. I was one of those guys who, even in the locker room, they would refer as, "the brainiac in the room," and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed knowing they saw me as smart.

My college experiences were great! As far as racial challenges, there were some, and most of them were with elderly individuals. I remember one occasion, there was a student that I supervised, who was having issues with an elderly client. I tried to figure it out, but I never did until I actually met the client. When I did meet with the client, I realized she didn't like the female student, because of her race. The first time she met her [the student], she was okay with it, but I guess she thought it was a one-time thing. When the girl came back, after they scheduled another visit, she kind of just was like, "Who are you, why are you here? I don't want your kind around," that sort of thing. The student called me and told me, following exactly what I usually tell them to do/ the solution was to assign the student to another individual for her internship, and she had a good experience. Like I said, I don't know if it was a racial barrier, or if it was a generation barrier. ... Maybe both...

My degree was a Bachelor in Business Administration, and I focused my coursework in Healthcare Administration and Physical Education. I started my master's

program in health administration that fall as well and finished it in August 2011. This

was a Masters in Health Administration. I have been accepted into a doctoral program

for Fall 2012 and that is my next journey.

   I've tried a lot of different jobs. I didn't really start working until after high

school. Some summers I worked at a hotel as a front office desk night auditor. I would

see under remarks, but it was never so much in words, it was how people would treat

other people or me. Like I said, I don't know that race was the issue, I thought it was

more of a just, "Okay, you're supposed to serve me because you're here and I paid for a

hotel service," that sort of thing. Other than that, I didn't see really any racial issues

going on. I did, however, at another position when I spent about two and a half weeks as

a bar back at a nightclub. There were lots of racial remarks there. Oh my goodness! It

wasn't like it was just one race or another-- I mean of course, everybody's calling each

other the n-word, all Black people calling each other the n-word!

   There was one occasion where a White guy said, "Hey, boy," and I didn't think of

it as anything, and then he tried to make a southern accent out of it. "Hey, boy. No you,

boy," and he just kept repeating himself. I can't serve a drink. I can only help buy the

ice and bring supplies and stuff, and he's just yelling, yelling, "Hey boy, boy, boy! Get

me this drink, get me this drink!" I just stared at him for a minute, and then the

bartender finally comes over there, "Okay, what can I get you?" The bartender heard

him and we talked about it later; she apologized and told me that happens a lot. That

was one of those times when I really didn't know what to do, what to say. I didn't take

anything from it, but it bothered me that night, I just continued on my work…

Discussion

> Michael, the youngest, had insight in his own way.
> While short in life experience had meaningful words to say!
> Certainly he was not around when the civil rights movement occurred
> with most of his knowledge about it comes from what he heard.
> But he was aware of how racism impacts young Black men
> Disrespecting each other; using the n-word again and again;
> He chose not to use it and react to being called that; for some it was a surprise,
> He chose reasoning to educate the name-caller instead of engaging in a fight!

Being in diverse communities did not shield Michael from racism. Although he was the youngest of the participants, Michael vividly describes experiences regarding prevalence of racism. His experience at the bar reveals one where emotions are varied and run deep. Feelings of confusion, anger, helplessness and most likely fear with being singled out "bothered" him. The incident at the bar is most revealing in how racism can strike and its aftermath. Michael also shares that he would rise above the name-calling by trying to reason, educating the perpetrator, or calming down his upset colleagues. His sanctuary from the n-word was with the GT students. Avoiding confrontation (Cross, 1991) or not putting oneself in situations in which racism and discrimination are evident is a strategy for surviving racism. In avoidance, some of the participants sought out a place of refuge to escape racist behavior.

Chapter Discussion

One of the tenets of CRT is "interest convergence" and explains how racism brings material advantage to the majority race (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano, 1997). In other words, promotion and progress of a racial group only occurs when it is in the best interest of the dominant group. Without that mutual interest there is no advancement of civil rights for oppressed groups. Affirmative action is a manifestation of interest convergence (Delgado, 2002; Litowitz, 2009) and

aims to increase representation of women and minorities in areas of employment,

education, and business, from which they have been historically excluded (Fullinwider,

2011; Garcia, 1997). The term first appeared in Executive Order 1095 signed by

President John F. Kennedy on March 6, 1961. It was used to refer to measures to achieve

nondiscrimination and representation. Next, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed

Executive Order 11246 requiring federal contractors to hire regardless of race, religion,

and national origin. For employers, affirmative action serves two purposes: one is to meet

federal and state requirements, and the other is to increase the representation of minorities

and women in organizations. In meeting these two purposes, modest gains for Blacks

from affirmative action are outweighed by the gains for Whites as claimed by the interest

convergence theory (Delgado, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Litowitz, 2009). As a

case in point, in the study, Charles described an example of interest convergence during a

mentoring session he received from his supervisor:

> **Supervisor:** How come you never said anything about considering someone
>
> Black for this job?
>
> **Charles:** What?
>
> **Supervisor**: Diversity. You know! The school talks about diversity and people
>
> diversity. Does that make any difference to you?
>
> **Charles:** From a Christian basis, I love my Black people, but I'm looking at this
>
> and saying we want the person who's going to be able to come in and do the job,
>
> the best qualified.
>
> **Supervisor:** Yeah. You know, a lot of times those are buzz words. Best
>
> qualified. Well, what's best qualified?

Charles: Well, sort of the things that we talked about here.

Supervisor: You know, people could put in and it's no offense to you. What if we put in and we talk about communication or articulation. If that's a qualification and whatever, they could tell you don't speak well.

Charles: Well, yeah. Well, if that's important and you have to speak to the public, whatever.

Supervisor: Well, you speak to the public. Are you able to speak to the public? You do managers' training. You've got rooms full of people. Do you have problems speaking to the public?

Charles: Well no, I don't.

Supervisor: Well then think about what I'm saying, then.

Charles: Well, what is your job as director? Isn't this information that you should be giving to your staff? Aren't these the things that you should be telling them to consider?

Supervisor: Yeah. I can do that. But when you look at where you come from and you're proud of where you come from, how much are you going to fight for your people? I make the decision. Those are some of the things I look at. When you came here, one of the things I pointed out was the lack of diversity. So you know what? I said, 'Shit, I'm diversifying and I know just the guy'!

Again, this way of putting race at the center of the matter appears to be positive; the organization improves representation of minorities in order to meet federal and state requirement. Favoring the interests of the individual is secondary. Although the purpose of affirmative action is to promote equal opportunity in government, employment, and

education settings to ensure that minority groups are represented, according to CRT, such

advancement in civil rights goes as far as it benefits the dominant group, the group in

power.

CHAPTER VI

HYPE TO HOPE AS A PATH TOWARD CHANGE

It is certain that men and women can change the world for the better, can make it less unjust, but they can do so only from the starting point of the concrete reality they "come upon" in their generation. They cannot do it on the basis of reveries, false dreams, or pure illusion…What is not possible, however, is to even think about transforming the world without a dream, without utopia, or without a vision. (Freire, 2004, p. 31)

Building upon the tenets of critical race theory this qualitative research examined the life histories of eight Black males up to the time when they obtained or were in the process of obtaining a doctoral degree. The research questions guiding the study included: What are the life histories of eight Black males pursuing doctoral studies? How can we make sense of their life experiences through the lenses of critical race theory? What can be learned from their life histories that can inspire other Black males and inform the policies and practices of institutions of higher education?

The research study aimed to providing voice to the stories of eight Black males who have not lived the *hype* and have risen above the challenges. These life histories have the potential to inspire other Black males and inform institutions of higher education about the challenges Black males face while pursuing graduate studies. Study findings

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can also be helpful for suggesting approaches to policy and institution change in the quest for equity and access.

Chapter One introduced important aspects such as the focus of the study, the research questions, the concept of the hype, and my life history since my role in the study is that of a participant observer. Chapter Two presented the main socio-political events as they relate to the history of Blacks in education. It also provided a review of relevant theories and topics such as racism, white privilege, deficit thinking, Critical Race Theory, and the strategies for surviving racism. Chapter Three, the methodology, explained the overall study design, data collection and analysis. Chapter Four described the life histories of the three participating Black males who were over the age of fifty. In Chapter Four I also took a closer look at the life histories of the participants through the themes of overt racism, internalized oppression silenced voices, and the intersection of racism with other forms of oppression. In Chapter Five I continued presenting the life histories of the remaining four study participants through the themes of covert racism and affirmative action as a manifestation of interest convergence. In both chapters, four and five, I use timelines to map out important events in the lives of the participants and use artifacts and documents that they provided in order. These timelines assisted me in painting a more complete picture of the life histories of the study participants.

Finally, the present chapter aims to bring the whole document together. It highlights the essence of the participants' life histories; provides implications and suggestions for taking action towards the possibility for change; presents ideas for future research and some concluding thoughts.

Highlights from Participants' Stories

After having presented and examined the life histories of the eight participating Black males, I am able to bring to light the most important features of their stories, as a group and as individuals (see Figure 6.1).
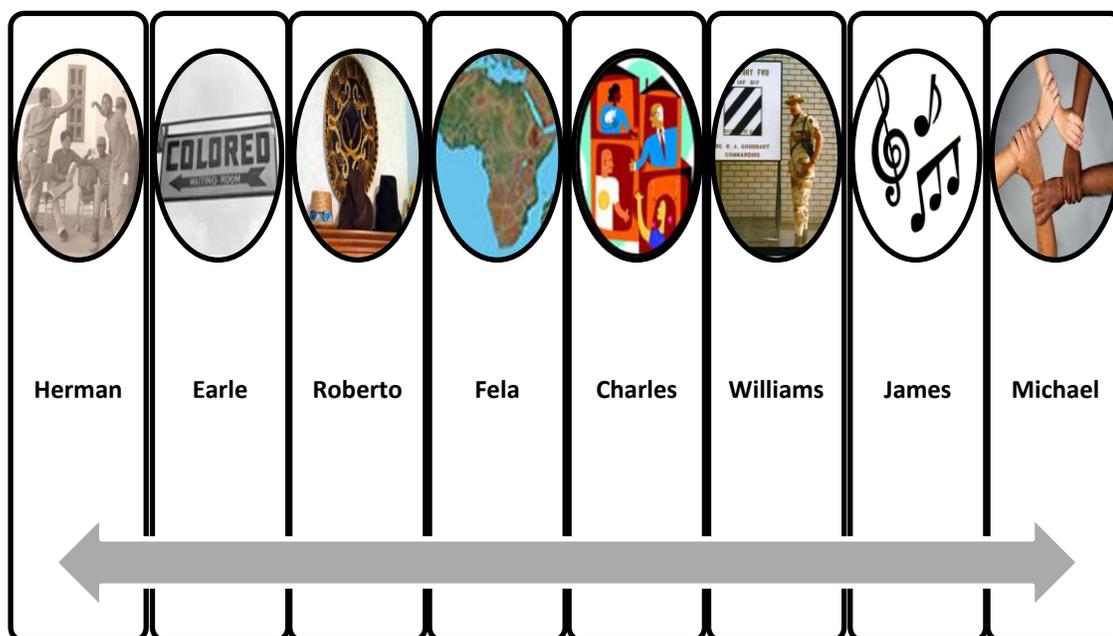

Figure 6.1 Participants' Summary

As illustrated in Chapters Four and Five, all study participants experienced racism in its many forms; however, their responses toward race related issues and discrimination were different and not all of them recognized being targets of racial discrimination. For example, William did not identify racial issues as reasons for being treated differently. Fela, Charles, Earle and I went through a period of time when we all experienced some degree of internalized oppression believing we were less than Whites. This is not to say that we were aware of what was happening at the moment. Almost all study participants talked about being treated differently because of the color of their skin. Earl, Fela and

Roberto spoke of experiencing harsher treatment due to their darker skin color while Charles and I recall being told about our light skin color; this also had an impact on whether we were considered Black enough by our peers. Additionally, Whites tended to treat us as if we were "better" because we had lighter skin color, especially when referencing "those people," meaning Blacks.

In addition, there were two instances of convergence of interests; William and Charles shared that they were hired because of their race instead of their qualifications for the job. They later understood that the institution wanted to send a message of working toward improving diversity by their hiring. Showing preference to these two Black males for hire benefited the employer. They were not just hired because of an effort to provide equal opportunity to all job applicants.

Silence was a pervasive element in the life histories shared by the study participants when faced with racism. Only two of the participants would always be willing to defend their point of view about racism. These are the stories of Charles and me. Charles was outspoken about how he and other people of color were treated in the workplace. He was often chosen as the representative to bring issues of unfair treatment forward to organizational leaders. Likewise, I have argued for fair treatment for myself and others within and outside organizations.

Furthermore, service, employment, and living in communities in the military with associated characteristics of discipline, structure, and sacrifice, were common elements among the participants. Six of the participants either had parents in the military or joined the military. William and Michael, both with military parents, spoke of a strict household. Through the participants' accounts it became evident that military

communities were more heterogeneous making distinction based on the rank of the

military member rather than race. Education opportunities were readily available for the

participants who joined the military. Again, for those who joined, the military

exemplified those characteristics of discipline, structure, and sacrifice along with duty,

honor, and love of country. William described the military as a *shield* from many of the

ills of society especially racism. Earle shared that the military was a synonym of freedom

for him.

A central strategy used by the participants in coping with racial discrimination

was their focus on pursuing education. While not true for all participants, the actual

pursuit of education served as a strategy for dealing with racism. Whether it was James

who knew at an early age that he wanted to obtain a doctorate and geared his lifestyle

toward doing so or Earle who obtained over ten diplomas, the study participants used the

process of gaining education as a coping mechanism to survive racism. The pursuit and

acquisition of the next higher degree strengthened their ability to fight discrimination.

Earle with each denial of opportunity, especially promotion in the military, returned to

school to obtain another degree. William's educational journey placed race and racism

on the back burner. He did not see the barriers preventing him from achieving a Ph.D. as

having anything to do with his race. Also, for Fela education was a means of survival; he

saw education as the pathway in order to be able to care and provide for his family.

Personally, for me, being in the top 1% in any education or training program gave me the

strength and courage to question racism and not be discounted.

Finally, the participants' unanimously identified the strength of their faith as a strategy for coping with racism. This finding goes in agreement with the literature; regarding the role of faith among Black males in education; Cuyjet (2006) states that:

> Coping with racism is not an easy task for most young African American men. African American men are subjected to a certain amount of environmental stress from racism with regard to organization practices, faculty attitudes, and other activities in their collegiate experiences. Along with belief in a higher being, an awareness of their "Blackness" completes the sense of spirituality these African American male students use to sustain themselves in the college environment (p. 124).

Each study participant, during the course of sharing their life experiences explained how their belief in God helped them along their journey. The participants described their faith in different ways; for example, Charles recounts from his grandmother that: "God don't like ugly." In other words, God wants you to be good and do good. Earle has a degree in ministry, which guides him in his life journey. Roberto is also a minister. Both Michael and James described having deep-rooted faith-based beliefs handed down from grandmother and parents, respectively. William speaks of his faith as related to strong family values, which he instills in his children. Fela believes that his faith helped him survive the torture he experienced in his home country and gave him strength to withstand the long separations from his family as he pursued graduate studies in two foreign countries. Personally, in my journal, I also found notes on how I have attributed my success to the grace of God. All in all, faith has served each of the participants in their journey as a coping mechanism to face life challenges.

In sum, the life histories of the eight study participants, as a group, reveal different responses to racism. They illustrate different treatment based on skin color, interest convergence with hiring, silence about manifestations of racial discrimination, and a common connection to growing up, being employed, obtaining education or living in the military community.

Highlighting the Individual Stories

Earle has internalized racism as a result of living through the time of legal segregation. He would seek validation that his internal belief of inferiority was false. When his skills and capabilities were not validated by others, he found validation through education. Earle thought he had to work harder than Whites.

Roberto, as an immigrant from Central America, presents a different perspective of racism in the sense that he felt discriminated by both Hispanics and African Americans in the U.S. He struggled with retaining his Hispanic heritage and stayed true to his cultural roots.

Fela, as a non-immigrant resident from Africa, also had to face the dilemma of being a Black person but not an African American. He expressed internalized oppression in the self-doubt he had regarding recognition. For Fela education was mandatory in order to provide for his family.

Charles knows how to fit into organizations and establish relationships with diverse people. However, Charles has not lost sight of the issues regarding race and racism and is often called up to speak on behalf of those who have been treated unfairly.

William views education as an equalizer. In his own words "I never felt Black until White people made me feel Black." He found safe havens in the military in order to escape from racism such when he stationed in Europe.

James stood out from other African Americans because of his love for classical music and the fine arts. This was not well received by his Black peers who saw James as acting like he was superior to them. Likewise, he experienced the unspoken sting of racism by White colleagues who did not really understand or want him in their classes or in the workplace.

Michael was the youngest of the study participants; however, living in a diverse community did not mean that he was exempt from experiencing racism. His response to racist behavior was to educate the perpetrator or retreat to a safe haven.

Herman, I have experienced racism throughout my life and I have been involved by choice and by chance in furthering racial justice for nearly all that time. While I have enjoyed success professionally and academically, at the end of the day I believe race always matters, always.

The Hype

Each participant has indeed chosen to not believe the *hype* by not living the *hype* about Black males. This is not to say that the *hype* no longer exists because it is a truism that racism is alive and present. The *hype* is the belief that Black males are an endangered species due to being overrepresented in prison, negative health disparities, poverty rates, and the military, while being underrepresented in higher education. Acknowledged or not, racism has impacted the eight participants at their core. Race has affected who they are and how they have navigated their life journey, negotiated their

interactions and relationships with individuals and institutions. Each of the Black male

participants chose to move beyond the racism they experienced by not allowing or

accepting being defined by the *hype*. Even though the study participants did not follow

the path of the *hype*; obtaining a doctorate does not change the color of their skin; all of

the participants with or without the Ph.D. remain Black males in the U.S. The watchful

eye in the retail store, being ignored by a taxi driver, being target of racial profiling,

denial of hire or promotion, and other racist acts will continue for them. They will

continue to survive and at times they will wear the mask as described so eloquently by

Dunbar (1896):

We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,--
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In containing all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
     We wear the mask.

We smile, but O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream other-wise,
     We wear the mask!

While there are different interpretations of his poem, Dunbar (1896) captures the essence

of Blacks surviving racism by hiding its impact. As a matter of fact, the study

participants' life histories reveal their experiences with racism and how they have used

the mask as a coping strategy.

Implications and Tensions

CRT in education examines the contradiction between the promise of schooling as the great equalizer and the harsh reality of inequities present in the education system (Brayboy, Castagna, & Maughan, 2007). In other words, CRT challenges the notion of education being a means to level the playing field for minorities to be able to compete with Whites when many of the practices in education serve as barriers to minorities in obtaining the skills necessary to be competitive. Likewise, Nieto (2005) suggests that education is both the dark and the light of U.S. society. The light is the promise and the potential of education to greatly expand the potential of students while the dark represents the reality of education inequalities due to racism.

CRT contends from kindergarten classrooms to university seminar rooms that inequalities stemming from racism determine the education of Blacks and other people of color (Zamudio, 2011). As stated by Brayboy et al. (2007) such experiences "translate into poorer schools, deficient teaching, lower achievement, and inadequate preparation for meaningful economic engagement" (p. 164). These authors further assert that while there have certainly been changes in the structure of education, "inequality has remained with students of color, consistently provided lower quality education in a system that purports to provide equal educational opportunities" (p. 165). Despite the efforts to give minorities access to education, the question remains whether education is the great equalizer when the education system is wrought with inequalities for Blacks and people of color.

Is there a possibility for change? "Pure illusions are the false dreams of those who, no matter how plentiful their good intentions, propose fancies that cannot be

realized. World transformation requires…Dreams…visions for which one fights…" (Freire, 2004, p. 31-32). Change is possible and we are responsible to make it happen; however, in order to make change possible we need to have a vision and clear goals. The plan of action I propose has roots in hope as a tangible element not as an illusion. The work of Snyder et al. (1991) aims at defining hope as a cognitive set that is composed of a reciprocally derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (planning of ways to meet goals). In other words, hope speaks to the assertion that change is possible if we take agency. Hope with both sufficient agency and clear pathway provides an action-oriented model for change, but first we need to believe again in the struggle to challenge inequities.

Change occurred in the 50s and 60s because of the challenge to the status quo. However, much of the change was initiated from fear, frustration, anger or despair of the indignities suffered by those marginalized. Instead of letting those feelings serve as the catalyst for change, let use hope as a process for change. Not hope as a dream that everything will be all right, but hope as change agent. Through hope we can achieve a sense of agency by being determined in reaching a common goal of eliminating racism and other forms of oppression. I also trust Freire's ideals in that we need to have a dream and vision in order to transform the world, but we also need to know where we are, and where we have been, in order to use this historical perspective, the knowledge from the past and the present, and the new technology in order to make a better future. There are a few considerations and steps for us to ponder; these include: Establishing conversations for action, including allies, readiness for change, and the need for government to listen to the people.

Conversations for Action

Little is gained by searching for blame; instead, reframe conversations to focus on positive solutions. Create communities for open dialogue with those who share the common goal of advancing civil rights. Break the barriers to change created by ignorance and isolation through an environment that welcomes the sharing of information and giving voice to different points of view and those who have otherwise been silenced. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) offer that many suffer racism in silence and often blame themselves for their predicament; yet by giving them *voice*, they discover they are not alone and can join with others in the fight for justice. I see dialogue as the beginning to come up with a common understanding, strategies and ideas, and a plan for action. It is unfortunate that still in the year 2012 talking about racism is taboo; we need to reopen and continue this conversation and invite all regardless of race to this dialogue, not just Black people.

Allies

In order to make real change regarding racism allies beyond other people of color or members of marginalized groups are needed. Tatum (2009), in her discussion regarding educating Whites about racism and Whiteness, draws attention to the inadequacies of the three models of whiteness readily available with which Whites might identify: Actively racist white supremacist, the "what whiteness?" or the failure to acknowledge skin color, and the "guilty white". As an alternate, Tatum (2009) proposes a "model of the White ally" (p. 285). As Tatum (2009) notes, the history of civil rights and the movements focused on fighting racism included the participation of Whites. From the three White civil rights workers, Viola Luizzo, James Reeb, and Michael

Schwerner, who were murdered to Morris Dees, head of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Senator Bill Bradley and others, Whites have been engaged in opposing racism. However, their contributions have been lost in all the vitriol about race. These allies are partners who speak up against oppression, invite and challenge other Whites to do the same, and work together with people of color to end racial injustice.

Ready for Change

Joining the dialogue and becoming allies also imply the need to recognize that you are ready for change. Do not let the pain, the fear, the anger immobilize or otherwise prevent you from seeking change. We, Blacks, have been in this state of mind for too long; it is time to break the silence and educate the ignorant about the reality of non-whites and the painful truth that racism still exists.

You have the inner strength to transform those negative feelings into positive action. You have been prepared to do so through your life experiences. You are well equipped to act. Now is the time to work toward a real and more permanent change.

Government: Listen to the People

Government must take bold action to make change possible. Start by listening to the voice of the new conversations of action--which include the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society. Engage in those conversations and frame action around them. Be bold in taking the action regardless of political risks. Short time success can be encouraging but establish systems for government as an entity to stay engaged for the long term. As a case in point, our current President, Barrack Obama, has proposed that education should be for all and that education can be the solution for poverty and social inequity; however, the answer from other politicians has been that he

is a snob and that his ideals are not practical. In addition, politicians say that we are a democracy and that education should be for all, however, not all have the same possibilities for access in terms of the ability to pay for a high tuition or afford a car to get to school.

Change Beyond Merit Compliance

There are several actions institutions of higher education can take in order to bring about change. These actions go beyond compliance with government statutes and regulations intended to ensure fair treatment based on merit. Under such systems of meritocracy the assumption is that the playing field is level; thereby, ignoring practices that assist one group of students to succeed and another to fail (Zamudio et al., 2011).

For example, institutions of higher education should address the following: Rework admission requirements to eliminate barriers to entrance in higher education; assess epistemological orientations in order to eliminate racist assumptions about knowledge; revise multicultural education to address misconception and create deeper understanding of differences and commonalities among groups of people; create counter-spaces for responding to racism; and expand educational research to document racial experiences of students.

Institutions of higher education should reconsider admission requirements to eliminate or reduce reliance merely on high stakes testing (e.g., SAT, ACT, GRE, MCAT) as a measure of aptitude and applicant capability (Zamudio et al., 2011). As a case in point, Weisglass (1998) states that "the development of the SAT test was influenced by the desire to decrease access to certain ethnic groups, more than for the public spirit [to increase access to college]". (p. 60). Likewise, Zamudio et al. (2011)

argue further that the continued use of SAT test in determining college admittance works to decrease access to college for Blacks, Latinos, and American Indians. As noted by CRT scholars, Whites on average score higher on these tests than people of color. Whites gain access to better schools, receive better training, get better jobs, earn higher salary; acquire more wealth; and have more opportunities (Zamudio et al., 2011).

Institutions of higher learning should examine their epistemological orientation and consider assumptions they make about how knowledge is acquired, what knowledge is valued, how knowledge is accessed and shared (Zamudio et al., 2011). Specifically, Scheurich and Young (1997) assert that failure to question racist epistemological assumptions allow institutions and interpersonal relations to also be racist.

Additionally, as suggested by Zamudio et al. (2011), institutions of higher education should examine their multicultural programs in order to move beyond the dominant group's superficially understanding other groups' culture (i.e., food, folklore, and fashion) and reinforcing stereotypes. Instead multicultural education should include discourse about racism, power, privilege, agency, activism and oppression (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2003) with students learning how to engage with communities and others in promoting social justice.

Next, as recommended by Solórzano et al. (2000), institutions of higher education should provide counter-spaces for students and faculty to cope and respond positively to instances when acts of racism have taken place, including micro-aggressions. Solórzano et al. (2000) continue to describe these counter-spaces as sites where negative notions about people of color can be challenged and a positive racial climate can be established. According to these authors, counter-spaces provide an environment where students of

color can share with others their experiences with racism; have these experiences validated and viewed as important. These counter-spaces can be created in social settings, classrooms, and student organized activities.

Finally, institutions of higher education should use educational research to document the everyday occurrences of race and racism in the schooling experiences of students of color (Zamudio et al., 2011). More specifically, this research can document manifestations of racism whether they are micro-aggressions or overt racist acts. As DeCuir and Dixon (2004) suggest, this research can provide a glimpse of the hostile climate and can be used to identify ways in which institutions perpetuate discrimination. With that information institutions can make changes that could reduce the negative experiences of racism that occur on campus.

Future Research

I embarked on this research journey with enthusiasm, passion, and optimism, looking for answers, to bring meaning, and understanding about Black males by telling their stories. I learned that stories have an impact; they can spark change (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010); they can educate the public; they can set the context to go deeper into a phenomenon; and they can reveal truth about individuals from their perspective. The present study is just the beginning of my research agenda and constitutes a minimal contribution to a larger inquiry topic. The following are suggestions for future research that other investigators interested in the topic may find feasible.

Conduct research that includes several universities around the nation in a larger qualitative/quantitative longitudinal study on Black males pursuing doctoral degrees in

order to identify the causes of attrition and under representation and make suggestions for changing these trends in higher education.

Investigate and document the different initiatives that are taking place at the national level in order to make progress toward a post-racial society. There are a number of programs and community initiatives working in isolation toward the same goal; however, there is not wide dissemination of the work they are doing.

Concluding Thoughts

Early in my doctoral program our cohort was engaged in a spirited debate about race and racism. The conversation revolved the polarizing rhetoric that exists today where there appears to be no space to discuss race. There was fear of being labeled racist, liberal, conservative, feminist, bigot, socialist, supremacist, anarchist, un-American, extreme right, extreme left, war monger, homophobe, even, believe or not, hippie occupying the space where constructive discourse around this sensitive topic could take place. There was the extreme reluctance to avoid possibly uttering the politically incorrect term resulting in verbal admonishment, righteous indignation, reprimand, exclusion, scarlet lettering, violence, or sanctions. At any rate, we, as a class, were experiencing difficulty discussing the topic; as the Nation is also.

With that backdrop, I shared the following anecdote with my classmates with the belief that we, as a diverse group of people, must, once again, create a space for open dialogue if there is any hope for a better future.

Folks, it's funny how 40 plus years later, we seem to be in the same place where we were back then in the early 70's—unable to discuss race rationally. I remember how a White guy and I would go around talking to other students in

schools about race and discrimination. Bob was a senior in high school as was I; he was a White dude whose arms were stronger than his legs. He was angry at being labeled something that he wasn't, a bigot, and because people wouldn't listen to his explanations! I was a Black dude with a big afro who was also angry but for different reasons. I wanted change NOW; I did NOT want to wait! I had a long journey in front of me… Nevertheless, after Bob and I met, and after acknowledging our differences, we moved past the rhetoric of race by operating from a position of respect for each other, self, and others. We told students we did not always agree, but we could disagree without being disagreeable, or violent. We found common ground, like bringing folks together in order to assist them to move beyond the name calling and racist behavior, and deal with their feelings of anger and hate. We wanted to serve as role models for others. We believed that the two of us speaking together somehow gave others permission to do the same. Don't get me wrong… Bob and I did not become buddies; we did not swap music—I couldn't stand rock and hated country, and he thought Funkadelic, my favorite group, was psychedelic for Black folks. There was no conversion attempted in becoming Black or White; instead we respected each other for who we were.   And we could talk about issues without being disrespectful.

That was the point I wanted to make to my classmates; that the ability or art to have spirited debate without attacking, retreating, or disrespecting, has been lost. It needs to be found. Bob and I also aimed to transform the pent up anger and fear people had into hope. Our actions were initially met with resistance; but we stayed on the course and

believed that we made an impact. I have long since lost touch with him. Hope worked

then; perhaps it could work again!

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