

“Thanks to DI my child can read”:

Direct Instruction and the pathologization of Black students

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Foreword

“What is wrong with these people in Baton Rouge? This isn’t an opportunity. It’s a goddamned tragedy. Are they blind?”

“No, they’re not blind, they’re evil. They see just fine.”

—Conversation between displaced victims of hurricane Katrina (quoted in Klein, 2007: 5).

After my first year of college I was hired by the Harbor Pedagogy Project to work as an in-school tutor and teachers’ assistant in three of their title I charter schools in a major east coast city for the last month of the school year. That month was the first time I had spent time in a school on the “adult” side and also my first experience in almost all-Black public schools since I was twelve. I remember talking over the experience with one of my old teachers that summer. After going over a few of the moments of educational inequity that I had witnessed I told her that, “the problem” was that “there have never been good systems for Black people in this country.” I felt at that moment that public policy aimed at black people had begun and ended with slavery and we were still living out the impact.

When I came back to Tufts that fall I immersed myself in Black and cultural studies, which eventually led me to Critical Race Theory. Those courses allowed me to work through my own particular experience with racism and deculturalization as a Black man with a White mother who had been educated in private school, and I began to see the role White supremacist ideologies had played in shaping my relationship to schooling. Eventually I realized the error of my earlier thinking. The failure of large, urban school

districts to provide students of Color with an adequate education does not signify a lack of systematic function. Poor results do not indicate a deficit of planning. While I fully acknowledge the danger in blaming ideologies such as White supremacy, instead of individuals or governments, for the violent and degrading social realities they engender, I know there is immense value in naming the structure of oppression that navigates invisibly through the different sites of power in our society. Until I was taught Critical Race Theory, my historical and political understandings were missing a holistic understanding of how inequalities have been produced and sustained over time. Through examination of the homophobic, racist, sexist and classist actions that have been legally and socially condoned throughout U.S. history for the protection of White privilege I have begun unraveling American history and contemporary politics.

As I began to locate my past within a larger context of Black experiences in schooling, I re-visited my time in the HPP schools. I interrogated the reality I had accepted after my freshman year and used it to frame my historical lens. How could I, a Black boy born in Baltimore, come to this city after my first year of college at the most expensive school in Massachusetts and work at a school where other Black students were struggling to read on grade level? How had the historical development of schooling for Black people led to this inequality?

In an attempt to understand the educational environment in which I have been schooled, I have chosen to look at Direct Instruction (DI), the unique curriculum of all Harbor Pedagogy Project schools, in order to uncover the suppressed thematic continuities that have persisted throughout the history of Black schooling in the United States. I did not choose Direct Instruction because I believe that it is the future of Black

schooling; in fact, it does not even have a monopoly on the present. I believe equally interesting and insightful papers could be written using Reggio Emilio, Waldorf or Montessori curricula. I chose Direct Instruction because it was through DI that I first saw myself contributing to the system of education as an adult and it is from that point that I wish to interrogate the operation of White supremacy in the history of Black schooling.

KHE

Introduction

Direct Instruction and the Pathologization of Black Students

When we are not physically starving, we have the luxury to realize psychic and emotional starvation.

—Cheríe Moraga (1979: 29)

Almost one year ago exactly Pat, a very close family friend, reminded me of interviews she had conducted with her son, my sister and me on children raised in interracial households. Although I had forgotten about the interviews, Pat reminded me that she had asked which race I would choose: would I rather be Black like my dad or White like my mom? I told her that I would choose to be White, “because I think White people have an easier time getting jobs.” I was nine years old at the time. In this way, the racialized achievement gap has always been on my mind.

Over a decade later I found myself drawn to urban education, and the summer after my freshman year at Tufts I was hired by the Harbor Pedagogy Project (HPP) to work in two of their Direct Instruction (DI) charter schools. I returned to work for the HPP four times from spring 2007-winter 2009. During this time I worked as a one-on-one tutor, an assistant art teacher, and a supporting counselor in a young men’s group that met during the lunch period. At one point I worked as an assistant teacher connected to one class of eighth graders that the teachers and principal identified as requiring extra

support. I followed this class throughout the day, assisting teachers in various subjects and providing one-on-one support for students when I could. My work in the HPP schools was my introduction to schooling from the teacher and professional side. Before then, I had participated in schooling only as a student. My experience in the HPP schools was the impetus for this, but those experiences are not drawn upon as data for my analysis. Ethnography is an invaluable resource, but my presence in the HPP schools was not that of a researcher. While in the schools I was engaged as a teacher and student support, and my memories and recorded observations from that time are not academic. To ensure a scholarly approach and review I chose to conduct document-based research on Direct Instruction, supplemented by interviews with two HPP leaders, and based my writing exclusively on those findings.

Direct Instruction, which I will elaborate on in chapter two, is a curriculum born out of Siegfried Engelmann's, and later Carl Bereiter's, educational experiments with "disadvantaged" students in Illinois. The curriculum is characterized by large group participation, intense focus on exclusively verbal communication, and repetition (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2006). The program was popularized during a national effort aimed at ameliorating the achievement gap. The achievement gap, which Sabina Vaught (2009) defines as, "the strikingly disproportionate degree to which schools fail Black and Brown children" (550); and Gloria Ladson Billings (2006) refers to as, "the disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and White, and recent immigrant and White students" (1) has been a prevailing topic in education research since the 1960s (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Berlak, 2001; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Ladson Billings, 2004, 2006;

Vaught, 2009). Using Critical Race Theory, I argue that Direct Instruction fails to ameliorate the racialized achievement gap and actually reinscribes White supremacy by establishing Black students and families as the source of their own pathology. Ascribing the systematic failure of schools to educate Black students to a biological or cultural deficiency in Black families, what I call pathologizing them, erases the impact that racialized barriers have on people of Color's life chances. To contextualize my argument, I investigate how the same pathologization of Black people I identify within Direct Instruction functioned within the White-led educational reform efforts made by the Freedmen's Bureau and the freedmen's aid societies during the Reconstruction era.

Race, which I will define in depth in the coming chapter, is simultaneously a rich and empowering sense of shared history and cultural identity (Gotanda, 1991; Vaught, 2011), as well as a socially constructed classification system that subordinates people of Color for the benefit of Whites (Guinier, 2004). This paper focuses on the structural and institutional function of race and does begin to explore the complex role race plays in individual and collective identity formation. Based on my choice to examine race as a collective, instead of individual, phenomenon I have capitalized the names of racial groups to indicate their status within society at large beyond indicators of physical appearance.

To understand how Black families and communities are pathologized it is necessary to look at Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and how it has led some interpreters to an understanding of poor African American communities as culturally deficient. Bourdieuan cultural capital refers to a collection of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities that are possessed and inherited by privileged

groups (Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu asserts that cultural capital can be transmitted from one generation to the next via parenting or through schooling. Certain interpretations of this theory use Bourdieu's assumptions about cultural capital to claim that Black children's failure in school, or at least their inability to remain competitive with their White classmates, indicates a lack of cultural capital at home (United States Department of Labor Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965). Furthermore, if wealth and academic success can be seen as familial inheritance, then so can poverty and academic failure. Assuming that Black poverty is passed on intergenerationally in the United States, "dominant ideology suggests that Black children lack the attention and care allegedly lavished on White, middle-class children. This alleged cultural deficiency seriously retards Black children's achievement" (Collins, 2000). The belief that poor or otherwise unsuccessful groups are somehow deficient is called cultural deficit theory and is firmly rooted in meritocracy, the notion that success follows hard work and failure indicates a lack of commendable effort; and social Darwinism, the theory that individuals are subject to the same natural selection as plants and animals.

I have dedicated my time and attention to Direct Instruction and the ways in which its underlying ideology buttresses White supremacy by pathologizing Black students because I believe that education for students of Color can either liberate (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Ladson Billings, 1995-A, B; Marti, 1979) or enslave (Adams, 1995; Du Bois, 1935; Giroux, 1983; Woodson, 1993; Valenzuela, 1999). Schools are neither politically neutral nor ideological innocent (Giroux, 1983), and so their central role in the creation and reproduction of inequality must be well understood in the larger struggle for justice. This conception of education locates schools uniquely within the power structure

as institutions with the agency to reproduce the status quo or to resist it. Slavery is the widespread and systematic denial of the rights to humanity by the imposition of Whiteness. Whiteness, as I will elaborate on later, is a property interest that encapsulates the ownership of humanity. As such, Whiteness is not simply the access to power, but the manifestation of it. Because of this, Whiteness is inherently colonial and disposed to the imposition of slavery. The centrality of Whiteness to slavery is the defining aspect of this particular form of oppression that affects people of Color uniquely. While White women no doubt face a complex and defining type of oppression stemming from White male patriarchy, their Whiteness fundamentally alters the form their oppressor-oppressed relationship takes and thus is not included in my definition of slavery. Slavery—whether accomplished by formal bondage, incarceration, or systems of economic peonage—is what White society has naturalized for Black people (Harris, 1995) and deviations from that norm are viewed as dangerous, impractical and radical. So, Black schooling that reproduces the status quo contributes to the continuation of slavery, and that which directly challenges it—it being the enslaving force of Whiteness—is liberatory.

Education that enslaves uses its power to quietly reproduce class, race and gender inequalities that benefit the dominant group (Giroux, 1983). Education for enslavement is bolstered by a proclaimed blindness to power that neutralizes society and promotes the myth of meritocracy. Because schools that practice enslaving education rarely self-identify, their blindness to power is *the* characterizing feature of this conservative pedagogy. The Indian Boarding schools, for example, are a strong example of education used to enslave. Schools act as conduits of culture and were utilized in the 19th century by White Americans to commit a cultural genocide against the indigenous populations in

order to erase the challenge their alterity caused the nation. Founded in 1879 in Pennsylvania by Richard Henry Pratt, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was the first of many boarding schools formed across the country under Pratt's educational philosophy "kill the Indian, save the man" (Fear-Segal, 2007: 18). Although some Indigenous students were enrolled in these boarding schools by their families voluntarily, many were coerced into attending. Even in the so-called voluntary cases, there is no reason to believe that coercion was absent from the enrollment process (Adams, 1995). Like other institutions that promoted education for enslavement, Carlisle's rejection of education for liberation was less in its rhetoric than in the underlying acceptance of White culture and society as positive and superior. Education for liberation is born out of the understanding that institutions that have produced wealth and prosperity for many Whites are built on the enslavement of Blacks (Anderson, 1988; Ladson Billings, 2006). So, Black participation in American society, which is composed of these same institutions, must be grounded in awareness of the origins and functions of the White power structure in order to be considered emancipatory.

Education that liberates uses school as a site of rebellion against the existing social order in an attempt to promote what Freire (1970) called *conscientização* or "conscientization." Freire (1970) defined conscientization as "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (17) in order to resist blindly living through those contradictions and becoming a "being for others" (55). bell hooks (1994) expanded the notion of liberatory education to include the creation of classrooms and schools that act as safe spaces where students' and teachers' life experiences are honored. According to hooks (1994), liberatory

education must come from the wellbeing of the students. hooks' conception of education is marked by her belief that the vocation is "sacred," that her, "work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students" (13). Expanding on the concept of care, Angela Valenzuela's (1999), "caring theory addressed the need for pedagogy to follow from and flow through relationships cultivated between teacher and student" (21). Gloria Ladson Billings' (2005a, 2005b) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy codified liberatory education as curricula that pay explicit attention to the cultural dis/connection between the culture of students' homes and that of the dominant society.

The link between students' home cultures and that of White, middle-class America requires that teachers and schools recognize the culture of power. Lisa Delpit's (1995) writing on the culture of power speaks to the way power is coded in "linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self" (25). The culture of power identifies that dominance, whether in the classroom or at the doctor's office, is attached to particular modes of conduct and appearance. According to Delpit, "if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier" (24). Fluency in the culture of power, then, must become an additional literacy that students learn in the classroom. Culturally relevant pedagogies, which guide students of Color toward liberatory education, must act as intermediaries between students' home cultures and the culture of power. To address the specificities of students of Color's relationship to the culture of power, culturally relevant pedagogy must support and affirm their home cultures while explicitly acknowledging the culture of power and preparing students to be successful within it.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) observed teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy in many ways. In one classroom, students were given the opportunity to act as teachers and deliver a lesson to the class in their particular area of expertise, regardless of its relevance to traditional school subjects. Another teacher recommended that her students write in their home language, with which they were comfortable and knowledgeable, while they learned “standard” English. As Ladson Billings wrote, “They were then required to ‘translate’ to the standard form. By the end of the year, the students were not only facile at this ‘code switching’ but could better use both languages” (1995a, 161). Evidently, liberatory education can take many forms as long as it remains governed by a common set of ideological principles: (1) Pedagogy must validate the collective, local experiences of the students in the classroom; (2) pedagogy must dialogically challenge the students’ status quo by re-framing their reality as a question or problem to be investigated through multidisciplinary inquiry; and (3) pedagogy must perform holistic love and care for students through thematically organized instruction grounded in students’ experiences and concerns. By pathologizing Black students, Direct Instruction fails to explicitly recognize the culture of power and in doing so erases the reality that non-dominant cultures carry significant power that must be plumbed as indigenous sources of strength and knowledge for students of Color. The result of this pathologization is a subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) that degrades students’ home cultures and inadequately teaches them the culture of power, leaving them ultimately with less knowledge. So, unless education for students of Color is grounded in an understanding of and interrogation into the culture of power it will reproduce the status quo and continue the enslavement of people of Color.

The title of this paper comes from a bumper sticker produced by the Harbor Pedagogy Project that proudly states, “Thanks to DI my child can read.” My underlying belief is that education focused exclusively on the distribution of “valuable” skills, like reading, to Black and Brown students is criminally insufficient. Students of Color need education that identifies and challenges White supremacy. Literacy, as the ex-slave population believed (Anderson, 1988), may have been strong enough to break the visible chains of bondage, but it is insufficient to challenge the complex matrix of economic, political and social institutions that have protected White supremacy since emancipation.

In the first chapter I introduce Critical Race Theory, the central framework I use to delineate the mechanisms through which Direct Instruction pathologizes Black students. My focus is on the theories of colorblindness (Gotanda, 1991; Haney Lopez, 2007), interest convergence (Bell, 1980), and Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995). Taken together, these three theories create an analytic platform to understand how race controls our social interests, economic holdings and the process by which racial labels are manipulated.

In chapter two I draw upon the history of White-led educational reform efforts during the Reconstruction era to demonstrate how these programs, like Direct Instruction, established Black people as pathological. I introduce this history to contextualize DI within the greater history of Black schooling, especially White-controlled movements in Black schooling, by focusing on the Port Royal experiment and Industrial Education. The Port Royal experiment was the first Black education experiment carried out by White northerners in the South, which took place while the war was still underway. Industrial education, popularized by Booker T. Washington but developed by Whites, was a

pedagogical philosophy that focused on vocational instruction that prepared Blacks to enter the workplace and earn their citizenship through paid labor. This historical connection demonstrates how deeply entrenched pathologization is in our educational history in order to provide readers with the background needed to apply this critique to other curricula or educational policies.

In the third chapter I direct my attention specifically to Direct Instruction. I begin this chapter with an untheorized presentation of Direct Instruction as I have come to know it through document-based research and interviews with two members of the leadership team of the Harbor Pedagogy Project, the nonprofit operator of five DI schools in one major city. Then I apply a CRT lens to this depiction of Direct Instruction, using interest convergence, colorblindness and Whiteness as property to demonstrate three particular ways in which DI pathologizes Black students and families, thus promoting White supremacy via education that reproduces the status quo.

I am using Critical Race Theory as a language to speak about the pathologization of Black people through White-led education reforms throughout history, in which I see Direct Instruction as but one case study, because of the central role pathology plays in slavery. In order to protect my research participants and to highlight the fact that the pathologization of Black students is not limited to Direct Instruction, I have altered the names of the two DI operators I interviewed as well as the organization they run. The city where they work is intentionally anonymous as well. I believe that a degree of abstraction is necessary in order to convey that what I observe happening within DI is taking place within other White-led reforms across the country. The story I tell about DI, unfortunately, is not unique.

According to historian David Brion Davis (2006), the defining aspect of the slavery is not ownership, but the slave's "perpetual condition of dishonor" (31). Throughout history Whites have relegated Blackness to the dishonorable, impure, and evil for their own benefit (Fredrickson, 1971). Post-slavery, the maintenance of this conception of Blackness has been accomplished by pathologizing Blacks through numerous mechanisms that encompass law, pop culture, medicine, academia and journalism. Within this context, when individual Blacks are successful their achievement is individualized and restrained from reflecting upon the race generally. Black failure, in contrast, is liberally interpreted as "proof" of racial inferiority. Worse, successful Blacks are Whitenized so that achievement remains a property of Whiteness (Harris, 1995). As Ladson Billings wrote, Black students who succeeded in school were seen as "acting white" and "were ostracized by their peers" (1995b: 475).

The same phenomenon is encapsulated in a conversation in Spike Lee's (1989) film "Do the Right Thing." In this scene, Lee's character Mookie is talking with Pino, an Italian American character with strong racial prejudice, who has just called Mookie a nigger. Mookie asks Pino who his favorite athlete, musician and actor are and all the men Pino names are Black. Mookie tries to point out the irony that all of Pino's favorite people are Black, yet he always says "nigger this and nigger that" (Lee, 1989). In response, Pino explains,

It's different. Magic, Eddie, Prince are not niggers, I mean, are not Black. I mean, they're Black but not really Black. They're more than Black. It's different (Lee, 1989).

As Pino explains, successful Blacks lose their Blackness—or somehow transcend it—simply by virtue of being successful. The “acting White” and “more than Black” phenomena point out that in White-dominated society Blackness indicates failure. Drawing from Davis’ (2006) point, I believe that the pathologization of Blacks in modern society continues the permanently dishonorable status that justified slavery and normalizes the criminal mistreatment of Blacks resulting in the 21st century in soaring and disproportionate rates of incarceration (Pew Center on the States, 2006), school failure (Berlak, 2001; Ladson Billings, 2006), unemployment (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006), and execution (Amnesty International, 2010). By charting the historical continuity of educational efforts that pathologize Black students I challenge the societal degradation of Blacks that supports racism and restrains Black social, political and economic development as full humans, and citizens, in this country. White supremacy, like all hegemony, is predicated on untenable claims to “both moral and intellectual superiority,” as Brayboy wrote (2005: 432). These claims are constantly in crisis because they rely on the wide acceptance of objectively false premises that dehumanize people of Color and Whites. Paulo Freire (1970) explains that White supremacy, along with all forms of structural oppression, is “a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human” (26). As a challenge to White supremacy, I am exposing the machinations through which it naturalizes this underlying illogic in order to normalize dehumanization.

Chapter 1

Critical Race Theory: Language to Power

The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house

—Audre Lourde (1984)

To understand Direct Instruction's ideological position within the history of Black schooling I will use Critical Race Theory (CRT), supplemented by historical research on the history of Black education during Reconstruction, as my analytical framework. The application of critical race theories to Direct Instruction will render an in-depth understanding of the function of White supremacy within this particular pedagogical philosophy. I am supplementing Critical Race Theory with the creation of an historical context that problematizes the landscape of Black schooling through which I will also analyze Direct Instruction. My writing will contribute to the body of Critical Race Theory in education that examines the role our systems of schooling play in the oppression of women, LGBTs and people of Color.

In this chapter I will introduce Critical Race Theory's central concepts and tenets: counterstorytelling (Matsuda, 1995), the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992, 1995), Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993, 1995), interest convergence (Bell, 1980), colorblindness (Gotanda, 1991; Guinier, 2004; Haney López, 2005, 2006, 2007) and the critique of liberalism (Crenshaw, 1988). Critical Race Theory is an interdisciplinary field

in which the concepts speak to one another so I will spend time on each concept because I believe that they are mutually reinforcing and best function as a theoretical model through which to interpret the world when taken together. However, my analysis of Direct Instruction will focus exclusively on interest convergence (Bell, 1980), Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993,1995) and colorblindness (Gotanda, 1991; Haney Lopez, 2007). I will explain each of these concepts in detail, as well as why I have chosen to use them together to analyze Direct Instruction. To best explain these complex theories and the way in which they work together, I will apply them to contemporary events and actions.

To write about Critical Race Theory is to write about race, racism, White supremacy, and hegemony as they impact the social, legal, economic, scientific and popular spheres we live within. Race is a historically shifting, socially constructed classification system that determines who will be the owners and who will be owned (Guinier, 2004; Harris, 1995). Race, as it is imposed by White supremacy to affect control, establishes power by grouping people by arbitrary physical markers as well as by ancestry, history, and language to advantage the dominant group and disadvantage people of Color. Race is both an illusion—simply a social construction—and a reality: a lived experience with serious consequences (Ignatiev, 2008; Jacobson, 1998; Jefferson, 1785; Delgado & Stefaniec, 1997). Race, when not an instrument of White supremacy, is a vibrant collective, cultural and historical identity (Gotanda, 1991; Vaught, 2011). Racism, according to Guinier, is “the maintenance of, and acquiescence in, racialized hierarchies governing resource distribution” (2004: 98). Racism is not limited to individual hatred or acts of prejudice, but is the systematic disadvantaging of one group by another based on race for the benefit of the dominant group. As Guinier points out,

racism is not created by racist acts, but is “...an artifact of geographic, political and economic interests” (2004: 98).

White supremacy is the intended result of racism. White supremacy is distinct from White privilege, which, as Gillborn put it, is “the multitude of ways in which people who are identified as ‘white’ enjoy countless, often unrecognized, advantages in their daily lives” (2005: 319). Although important in its own right, work on White privilege often falls into uncritical, individualized analyses. As Zeus Leonardo observed, focus on privilege “conjures up images of domination happening behind the backs of whites, rather than on the backs of people of color” (2004: 138). In light of this, I focus on the nature of White supremacy. White supremacy, Gillborn writes, “is seen to relate to the operation of forces that saturate the everyday, mundane actions and policies that shape the world in the interests of white people” (2005: 320). Beyond the small and extreme organizations and political movements that assert White dominance, White supremacy refers to the institutionalized preferencing of Whites in all aspects of society. White supremacy could be measured by access to education, representation in government, access to affordable healthcare, home-ownership, land-ownership, representation on juries and across occupations in the workforce, wages earned, and depiction in popular and news media.

In addition to racism, White supremacy is reinforced by hegemony. Hegemony was coined by Antonio Gramsci to understand oppression in various contexts. According to Gramsci, hegemony is the ideological mechanism of oppression through which subordinate groups “consent” to their own subjugation by the adoption of tangible and metaphorical systems—like meritocracy—that reinforce their social location (Gramsci,

1971).

Background

Born in the 1970s out of Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory is a movement founded primarily by scholars of color whose work interrogates the function and operation of race and racism in U.S. society. Critical Race Theory emerged from Critical Legal Studies when a number of scholars began to critique CLS' failure to adequately theorize the relationship between race and hegemony. As Crenshaw wrote, "[because] racism is intimately connected to both coercion and popular consciousness, the Critics' failure to examine them undermines the utility of their critique in analyzing the oppression of Black people and in explaining domination and legitimation in society as a whole" (Crenshaw, 1988: 1335). Through the delineation of how racism functions to inscribe White supremacy in our world, CRT challenges systems of White supremacy and racialization as they perpetuate racialized hierarchies that control resource distribution (Crenshaw, 1988; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson 2004). Originally applied to legal studies, Critical Race Theory has expanded to become an analytical tool in education, feminism, cultural studies and other modes of socio-cultural inquiry (Brayboy, 2006; Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995; Roberts, 1995; Vaught, 2008; Wing, 1997). More than central methodologies, CRT is unified by the practicing scholars' interest in "how a regime of White supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America" (Crenshaw et al, 1995: xviii), with particular focus on how this phenomenon relates to the

professed ideals of our national mythology and its implementation through the law. Critical Race Theory has an inherent activist component wherein the scholars “desire not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to *change* it” (Crenshaw et al, 1995: xiii).

In exploration of these ideas, Critical Race scholarship has been guided by five concepts (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004): (1) counter storytelling (Matsuda, 1995); (2) the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992); (3) Whiteness as Property (Harris, 1995); (4) interest convergence (Bell, 1980); and (5) the critique of Liberalism (Crenshaw, 1988).

Central Concepts & Tenets

The first tenet of Critical Race Theory is the belief that racism is deeply rooted in American society. While individual acts of prejudice and hatred come and go with seeming irregularity, critical race theorists believe that these moments are symptoms of the structural and institutionalized racism on which our country was formed and continues to function. Bell (1992) states that “racism is a permanent component of American life” (13) as he builds towards a “realist” view of racism in U.S. culture. Centering the persistence of racism is simultaneously a critique of past racial conceptions, an explanation of the failure of racial reforms built on those conceptions, and a charge for future scholarship and action. Bell explains the inability of Civil Rights-era reforms to produce lasting change in part because of the legislation’s blindness to the permanence of racism and how it has infiltrated and emanated from the foundational legal documents of this country. In large part, Bell’s theory of the permanence of racism

requires holding our national ideology responsible for the racist society it has engendered, instead of relegating racism to individual prejudice thereby absolving the system.

Typical of Critical Race Theory, this reasoning has a legal illustration. Matsuda (2002) explains that the *Griggs v. Duke Power Company* (1971) decision represented a surprising victory of Civil Rights-era ideology as it determined “that if we see an end result of racial exclusion, we will presume that racism is there, and we’re not going to require proof that someone intended to get to this racist place” (395). In other words, if a school district chose to hire 50 new teachers and none of them turned out to be Black, the district’s claims that the exclusion of Black applicants happened “by accident” would be legally unsound. Accordingly, the disproportionate rates of incarceration among Black, Indigenous and Latino/a men and women (Pew, 2008) speak to racism of our policing and criminal justice systems just as the achievement gap (Ladson Billings, 2004) indicts the educational system.

To see the permanence of racism in U.S. society is to look deeper into our history and present than we are typically permitted to do. It requires rejecting the notion that slavery and democracy are contradictory themes in our history. Historical investigation of lynching in the South can serve as one example of the underlying permanence of racism in America. After the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870, Black men won the right to vote and new modes of social control were developed to politically disfranchise Blacks. Before hegemony was able to reconstitute itself and coerce Blacks into political impotence despite their constitutional right to suffrage, lynching served as an effective tool to control the Black vote (Anderson, 1988; Fredrickson, 1971; Hine, 2010).

After Union troops were removed from the South in 1877, leaving the recently freed Black population with even fewer defenders of their citizenship, Southern Democrats, without support from the Black community, regained political dominance in the former Confederacy. By 1892 the Democrats carried every southern state and 235 people were lynched, the most ever recorded in a single year (Hine, 2007: 356). As White political dominance continued in the South throughout the early 20th century there was a decline in lynching because the disfranchisement of Blacks was so complete that lynching became less necessary (Fredrickson, 1971). However, with the formation of the NAACP in 1909, after years of mounting Black political and social organization, there was a resurgence of lynching because Whites felt threatened by Black political development and economic competition (Hine, 2007: 363).

In the following decade nearly 400,000 Black men were recruited by the Selective Service system during WWI where they fought valiantly in a Jim Crow military that relegated them to the lowest ranks and confined them to the lowliest living conditions (Hine, 2007: 428). Even in praise Black troops were denigrated. In a statement typical of time, the Milwaukee *Sentinel* printed, “Those two colored regiments fought well, and it calls for special recognition. Is there no way of getting a cargo of watermelons over there” (quoted in Hine, 2007: 430). As Black soldiers returned home between 1917-1920 there was another recorded spike in lynching. Black soldiers were lynched in uniform and race riots sprang up in cities across the country.

These flares of violence, like those that preceded them, were reactions to the gains that Black people had made during the war-era. The race riots of this period and the lynching that preceded them were attempts to reinscribe the subordinate role of Black

people. Viewing lynching as a means of social control outlines the role that White supremacy plays in U.S. politics and the permanence of racism within that structure. From this perspective, lynching is not an aberration, but a physical manifestation of the racism that persists in American society at all times. Understanding the permanence of racism in American social, legal and economic history shows us that we cannot effectively combat institutionalized racism if we continue to exempt our Constitution from the racist society that drafted it. The Supreme Court, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence and other central doctrines and governing bodies of our country must not be excused from scrutiny. Social realism, as it pertains to racism, requires a paradigmatic shift in which we no longer relegate racism to individual prejudice or “misinterpretation” of non-racist laws. Bell (2004) asks us to hold our democracy, and the documents on which it was founded, accountable for the racist society they have engendered in order to combat racism.

Aside from centralizing the place of racism in U.S. society, Critical Race Theory attempts to name the particular mechanisms of White supremacy through counterstories. Counterstories are the narratives typically discounted by mainstream society and traditional academic inquiry. They are the memoirs of the “wretched of the earth” (Fanon, 1963) that recount the lived experience of racism, sexism, state violence, domestic abuse, torture or any number of the concealed aspects of our world. Counterstorytelling “aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001: 144). As Mari Matsuda succinctly put it, CRT’s methodological and epistemological privileging of counterstories “suggests that those who have experienced discrimination speak with a special voice to which we

should listen” (1995: 63). Counterstories disrupt the dominant narrative by desilencing voices marginalized by racialized othering while amplifying the traditional academic canon to include the lived experiences and histories of people of Color as an “epistemological source for critical scholars” (1995: 63).

To further illustrate counterstorytelling it is useful to analyze a situation in which a counterstory could have been told, but was not. In the new introduction to his 1995 memoir *Dreams from my father*, Barack Obama wrote,

...What strikes me most when I think about the story of my family is a running strain of innocence, an innocence that seems unimaginable, even by the measures of childhood. My wife’s cousin, only six years old, has already lost such innocence: A few weeks ago he reported his parents that some of his first grade classmates had refused to play with him because of his dark, unblemished skin. Obviously his parents, born and raised in Chicago and Gary, lost their own innocence long ago, and although they aren’t bitter—the two of them being as strong and proud and resourceful as any parents I know—one hears the pain in their voices as they begin to have second thoughts about having moved out of the city into a mostly White suburb, a move they made to protect their son from the possibility of being caught in a gang shooting and the certainty of attending an under-funded school (xv).

Obama mentions his young cousin-in-law’s perception of racism and power politics as a regrettable loss of “innocence.” From Obama’s short description of this boy’s family it would appear that the experience of discrimination provides little more than the

likelihood of becoming embittered. The experiences are degrading, useless; “They know too much” (1995: vx), Obama bemoans.

In contrast, counterstorytelling would reframe this instance as a source of strength and insight for the young boy, his family and Obama. Counterstorytelling, as a methodology, (re)frames these kinds of experiences as additive sources of knowledge and windows into the specificities of oppression. Du Bois (1903), writing about double consciousness, attested early on to the complexity of the Black experience in America as one of “looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (9) and the wealth of information this “second sight” could bring to sociological inquiry. Counterstorytelling rests of the belief that men and women of Colors’ unique view of America offer invaluable knowledge about our society from which we all must learn.

Crenshaw’s (1988) critique of Liberalism is another central concept of Critical Race Theory. The critique is threefold, including the liberal notions of colorblindness, the neutrality of the law and incremental change (McCuir & Dixon, 2004). Incrementalists believe that our society can move towards justice through collaborative social action that strives for the full expression of the rights our Constitution outlines to all citizens regardless of race, class, gender or any other factor. CRT scholars renounce incrementalism and critique dominant claims that the law is neutral by challenging the supposition that U.S. legal structures are somehow disconnected from societal racism and prejudice.

One way to assess the ostensible neutrality of the law is to interrogate its ability to treat all persons equally. The disproportionate application of the death penalty to Black people is a strong example of the racism endemic to our legal system. According to

Amnesty International's 2010 report on the death penalty, "the overwhelming majority of death row defendants have been executed for killing White victims, although African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims" (Amnesty International, 2010). A defendant is three times more likely to be sentenced to death in a murder trial where the victim is White, making race the most reliable predictor of whether someone will be sentenced to death (2010).

A comprehensive study of the death penalty by the University of Maryland corroborates these findings. In December of 2002 the study showed that, "all thirteen men on Maryland's death row were sentenced to death for killing Whites and in eight of these thirteen cases (62%) the offender was Black" (Paternoster & Brame, 2003: 3). These studies of the death penalty point to the fact that our legal system values White lives more than Black ones and that the converse (Black lives are valued less than White ones) is also true. The use of the death penalty in cases with White victims and not Black victims demonstrates the courts' commitment to protecting White lives with stronger and more drastic legal sanctions that it uses to protect Black lives. Secondly, the disproportionate sentencing of Blacks to death, even when severity of the crime and criminal background are equalized, shows that our courts are more willing to end Black lives than White ones (Pasternoster & Brame, 2003). Drawing on this and other legal trends, DeCuir & Dixson (2004) concluded that, "given the history of racism in the U.S. whereby rights and opportunities were both conferred and withheld based almost exclusively on race" the notion that the law is neutral is disingenuous "to redress its deleterious effects" (29).

The notion of incremental change must be understood within the context of a falsely neutral legal system. Incremental change is well developed in Obama's 2008 "A more perfect union" speech billed by his website as "Barack's speech on race in America" (Organizing for America, 2010) and commonly called "the race speech." From the opening line, a direct quote from the preamble of the Constitution, Obama affirmed the righteousness of our nation's foundational documents. However, unique to this speech was Obama's invocation of his own family history and racial identity. For the first time Obama spoke openly about his hybridity as a buttress to his faith in American Democracy. Obama's belief in our country's true commitment to justice and equality comes from, "[my] unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people. But it also comes from my own American story" (2008). The American "story" of slavery, racism and prejudice is reconciled with our commitment to democracy and freedom within Obama's own body. He contends: "It is a story that has seared within my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts—that out of many we are truly one" (2008). Obama's speech gets at the heart of incrementalism: a commitment to the notion that racism is a pathology that hinders the true expression of our democracy. Incrementalists view slavery, lynching, and the failure of our schools to educate students of Color (to name but a few moments of racism in U.S. history) as parallel phenomena, disconnected from the intentions of our founding fathers. Conversely, Critical Race Theory sees racism as an endemic aspect of U.S. democracy and thus criticizes incrementalist attempts to ameliorate race relations. Because racism is both permanent and internal to U.S. democracy, transformative actions taken against it must be directed at the foundations of White supremacy and therefore must be radical.

Crenshaw's (1988) critique of incrementalism is supplemented by her (1995) distinction between "expansive" and "restrictive" equality (105). Expansive equality, she says, is based on outcomes while restrictive equality is based on process. Integration, for example, is an incrementalist reform that exposes the ideology's susceptibility to White supremacy. In a well-crafted case by the NAACP, White dominance was linked, in part, to the superior education that Whites received (Bell, 2004; Patterson, 2001). Segregation was the enemy and integration promised educational equality. The 1954 *Brown* decision, which I will explore in detail later in this chapter, outlawed segregated schools. *Brown* was restrictively equal because Blacks and Whites were ostensible provided with the same educational opportunities. The reality, evidenced by the persistence of the racialized achievement gap (Ladson Billings, 2004), was that Blacks continued to be failed by the education system, only this time with White classmates and more far fewer Black teachers (Fultz, 2004). Restrictively, integration was an equal reform because it provided Black and White students with equal educational access. Expansively, however, the reform's inability to disrupt the under education of students of Color, contributing to their high incarceration rates and limited life choices (Meiners, 2007), points to how incredibly unequal it was in and of itself. Often, incrementalism focuses on restrictive equality (McCuir & Dixson, 2004), which ultimately benefits those with power because it does not force a drastic realignment of what is essentially an unequal playing field among Whites and people of Color.

Interest Convergence, Whiteness as Property and Colorblindness

Interest convergence, Whiteness as property and colorblindness best serve my document-based research on Direct Instruction curriculum. These theories compliment each other and, taken together, form a theoretical framework useful for historical and pedagogical analysis. Interest convergence (Bell, 1995) explains the developmental shifts that have taken place throughout history, but does not take racialized property into consideration. As Martin Luther King, Jr. pointed out in a 1967 speech, we live in a “thing-oriented society,” not a “person-oriented” society (Riverside Church, New York City). From the beginning, the Constitution has protected property rights over human rights. Property is the dominant interest in American politics and has shaped our legal codes and social mores. Thus, interest convergence is an insufficient social theory unless it is coupled with Cheryl Harris’ concept of Whiteness as property (1993, 1995). Taken together, the theories of Interest convergence and Whiteness as property analyze and examine the role that race plays in controlling our social interests and economic holdings but they fail to address the politics of racialization. The theory of colorblindness (Gotanda, 1991; Haney Lopez, 2007) demonstrates how the erasure of race *maintains* the “social, economic and political advantages that Whites hold over other Americans” (Gotanda, 1991: 3). The theory of colorblindness also provides a platform to observe the converse situation in which the selective hypervisibility of race can be used to reinforce White supremacy (Vaught, 2009).

Derrick Bell’s (2004) concept of interest convergence states that racial gains in this country are made when and only when they align with the dominant interests of powerful Whites. Historically, movements toward racial equality can be reconceived as we begin to view them as functions of interest convergence. From this vantage point, we

can see that historical advancements, especially those made during the Civil Rights movement, have not yet represented radical breaks in White supremacy. Instead, these gains were instances in which the national imperative momentarily aligned with Blacks', or other marginalized groups', demands for justice and equality (Bell, 1980; Bell, 2004). The concept of interest convergence bolsters Bell's social realist view of the permanence of racism in the United States and promotes a historical view that privileges the nature of hegemony to reconstitute itself. That is to say, interest convergence supports scholarship that uses history as a means to both contextualize and offer solutions to contemporary social issues.

Bell's theory does not seek to underscore the achievements of courageous and dedicated Black, Asian, Latino and Native American activists and their White allies whose strength and determination has forced unpopular issues, like widespread racial inequality and domination, into the socio-cultural spotlight. Instead, Bell suggests that these activists' power is evident in their ability to centralize issues like segregation within the national narrative, but challenges the notion that this tactic has produced lasting uplift for people of Color. His critique is that the inherent racism of our legal and political systems precludes them from producing solutions that exclusively serve the interests of people of Color. Therefore, these reforms have managed to maintain the thread of White supremacy throughout, and indeed have used it to stitch together, racial reforms.

Central to interest convergence is the concept of "silent covenants" (Bell, 2004). Silent covenants are legal agreements in which "policymakers recognize and act to remedy racial injustices when, and only when, they perceive that such an action will benefit the nation's interests without significantly diminishing Whites' sense of

entitlement” (2004: 9). In other words, silent covenants are laws or policies that fulfill an institution’s moral or ideological need to respond to racially formed inequality without challenging White social, political, and economic supremacy. Further, Bell explains that people of Color are objects of such policy and are not entitled to negotiate or challenge it. Within this context, people of Color benefit from the law exclusively by what Bell calls “racial fortuity” (2004). The benefits are based on the marginalization of people of Color that maintains the power to create and challenge policy within Whiteness, as such, these benefits are vulnerable and impermanent (Bell, 2004).

For example, during finals week at the end of my first semester at Tufts, the Primary Source, a right-wing student publication, ran a “satirical” Christmas carol titled “Come All Ye Black Folk,” that judiciously ran without a byline attributing the content to a particular author. The limerick went:

O Come All Ye Black Folk
Boisterous yet desirable
O come ye, O come ye to our University
...O come let us accept them,
Fifty-two black freshmen.

We will accept your children,
No matter what your grades are, F's, D's or G's
Give them privileged status; We will welcome all (The Primary Source, 2006).

I am intentionally not interested in the student response to this publication, because silent covenants take place at the institutional level. Institutionally, the office of the President released an open letter to the Tufts community deploring the actions of the Primary Source. The Committee on Student Life (CSL), in response to students' demands, held a hearing to determine whether or not the Source was guilty of harassment. Indeed, the CSL found the Source to be guilty and imposed a byline policy on the publication. This policy took away the journalistic freedom of all other on-campus publications and mandated that the Primary Source, in light of its use of author-less speech to harass specific students, must attach an author to everything printed in the magazine. However, the Dean of Undergraduate Education vacated this ruling. The President supported this decision, claiming once again that, "the appropriate response to offensive speech is more speech, not less" (Bacow, 2007).

President Bacow's response is a silent covenant because it rhetorically expressed solidarity with Black students but ignored the reality that Black students on campus are incapable of producing enough "speech" to respond to the Primary Source because of how vastly outnumbered Black students are on this campus. Racist hate speech "defines words or message that are mobilized to debase, humiliate, harm or threaten people of Color" (Vaught, 2011). By this definition, the "carol" produced by the Primary Source is undoubtedly hate speech, and President Bacow's belief that it could be countered with more speech denies the fundamental power of hate speech. Hate speech draws on a glut of historical and contemporary conceptions of people of Color as subhuman in order to reify their subordinate role in society. It is a controlling mechanisms that functions regardless of whether of not it is the majority of what is said, just as the terrorism of the

Ku Klux Klan controlled Black political behavior even though not every White person engaged in the physical act of lynching. Bacow denied the existence of hate speech and failed to make material efforts that might combat White supremacy on campus while proclaiming ideological and empathetic alliance with Black students. These actions promoted the fiction that Black students are supported by the university without curtailing the privilege of White students on campus in anyway. The former point is made abundantly clear by the administration's decision to overrule to CSL's punitive ruling on the Primary Source in favor of the affected students.

To further explain interest convergence Bell (2004) applies it to the 1954 case *Brown v. Board of Education*. On the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown* in 2004 Bell, Ladson Billings and Guinier all published material on the ideological, political, and social legacy of the landmark court decision that outlawed de jure segregation in the United States. Each of the three scholars critiqued the *Brown* decision, as well as its historical legacy. The theorists criticize *Brown* as an ultimately symbolic gesture towards racial equality that failed to implement successful legislation to ameliorate the unequal treatment of people of color. Guinier (2004) points to the achievement gap between Black and White communities as contemporary proof of the persistence of racism and the importance of race in determining the life chances and economic opportunities in the U.S. Ladson-Billings (2004) draws on Bell's theory of interest convergence and the two scholars agree that *Brown* reflected the specific socio-cultural context of the time. Ladson-Billings lent her voice to Bell's argument after being troubled "by the way *Brown* is taught in the nation's schools" (2004: 4). In classrooms across the country Ladson-Billings observed that, "*Brown* has taken on a mythic quality that actually distorts the way many Americans

have come to understand its genesis and function in the society” (2004: 3). Given this context, the theory of interest convergence can serve as a means to cut through the mythologized revisionism and engage with the true history and legacy of *Brown*.

The truth is that *Brown* was not just one case, but the culmination of decades of work by the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund aimed at toppling segregation across the country (Bell, 2004). Mostly located in the south, these cases contested the constitutionality of segregation through individual cases in which the plaintiffs claimed that the separate facilities they were afforded were far from equal. The NAACP eventually accumulated a number of these cases, namely *Belton v. Gebhart*, *Bulah v. Gebhart*, *Briggs v. Elliott*, *Bolling v. Sharpe*, and *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* to become the famous *Brown* plea. The NAACP’s earlier cases often resulted in the Court awarding some kind of relief to the plaintiff but always avoided the central unconstitutionality of the *Plessy* decision. Despite these successes the 1954 Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson* and declare the “separate but equal” doctrine unconstitutional marked a significant shift in Blacks’ legal rights.

Bell explained that the popularity of *Brown*’s present historical identity speaks to the widely held belief (or perhaps more accurately put, desire) that racial injustices “could be overcome through peaceful litigation” (2004: 6). However, close examination of the *Brown* ruling reveals that the decision was actually a product of interest convergence with great benefits to dominant U.S. society. *Brown* sanitized the U.S. national image by extending symbolic equality to Blacks but avoided action that would have fulfilled the promise of racial equality if ever that meant a loss of privileges for Whites. According to Bell’s social realist view of history, powerful Whites collected the

tangible benefits of *Brown*. The post-WWII period marked the beginning of the Cold War and the United States' struggle for global dominance over the USSR. Across the globe, decolonizing nations were driven to communism in part because of the failure of U.S. democracy to make good on its promises of liberty and justice for all, which were widely publicized around the world (Bell, 2004; Ladson Billings, 2004). *Amici* briefs received by the Supreme Court while hearing *Brown* speak to the immense international importance of the case. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's message to the Court exemplifies this position, stating,

During the past six years, the damage to our foreign relations attributable to race discrimination has become progressively greater. The United States is under constant attack in the foreign press, over the foreign radio, and in such international bodies as the United Nations because of various practices of discrimination against minority groups in this country...the undeniable existence of racial discrimination gives unfriendly governments the most effective kind of ammunition for the propaganda warfare (quoted in Bell, 2004: 65).

As Secretary Acheson's message shows, the importance of desegregation to the national imperative at the time of the *Brown* decision cannot be underestimated. What the nation needed was not to put an end to the institutionalized and systematic disenfranchisement of people of Color for the benefit of the White majority, but for that culturally entrenched and highly profitable system to longer adversely affect the U.S.' international campaigns. The 1954 ruling in *Brown I* unequivocally struck down the

practice of discrimination based on race and was in all senses a sound and moral decision. However, the ruling did not explicitly name how this new national edict, contrary to the past three hundred years of American history, was to be implemented. *Brown II*, the Court's second decision passed in 1955, rejected the NAACP's desired procedure to issue an immediate desegregation order and deferred its authority to lower courts that were put in charge of the administrative and compliance problems that presented themselves as each district attempted desegregation.

What the Court chose to ignore was the extreme backlash against the decision by most Whites across class and geographic lines which had the power to stall and halt the realization of the Supreme Court's decision on a real level to most Black people. The operation of White supremacy in the *Brown* decision shows how institutional voices can claim altruism and moral superiority while depending on the racist and prejudiced reality to protect White privilege. The relationship between the symbol of Supreme Court's decision and the experienced impact by Blacks is a silent covenant (Bell, 2004).

Looking at *Brown* fifty years later, its symbolic impact had an incredible international response that aided the White national interest to spread capitalism and defeat communism post-WWII. Unfortunately, the impact of *Brown* on the local level for most Black folks has been far less glamorous. As districts desegregated across the country Black schools were closed as Black students were bussed into White schools. The immediate impact on Black teachers and principals was disastrous (Fultz, 2004). Long seen as inferior educators, Black teachers were not hired in integrated schools to teach White children. In the first decade after *Brown*, 144 Black teachers and 21 Black principals completely lost their jobs (Fultz, 2004: 15). Many others were displaced

through demotion from high schools to elementary schools or full-time to substitute positions. Black principals were the most drastically affected. In Alabama alone the number of Black principals fell from 250 in 1967 to 50 in 1970. In even fewer years, between 1968-1970 over 250 Black principals were displaced in Mississippi, a trend that continued around the country (Fultz, 2004: 26). Despite significant absolute growth among Black teachers from 1954-1970, the growth of Black teachers in comparison to that of White teachers shows the impact of displacement on the Black teaching force. Black teacher growth rates fell from 1950 to 1970, despite steady increase earlier in the 20th century, while White teachers were hired in greater volume than before *Brown*. The displacement of Black teachers took a severe toll on Black education and the Black middle class. The impact of this dearth on Black students' development is difficult to evaluate, but the economic toll that displacement had on the Black community is clear. If schools had continued segregated, based on the increase in student population, there would have been 31,584 new teaching positions available for Black people by 1972. The loss of these jobs cost Black communities in the seventeen southern states nearly 250 million dollars for the 1970-1971 academic year alone (Fultz, 2004: 37).

Fifty years after *Brown* our schools are still separate and still unequal. In the year 2000, 40 percent of Black students attended schools that were 90 to 100 percent Black, an increase in the number of Black students attending all Black or nearly all Black schools since 1988 (Orfield & Eaton, 2003). Unfortunately, these "Black" schools now largely lack Black teachers (Fultz, 2004). As bell hooks (1994) writes of her own experience with schooling pre and post-desegregation, education for Black students in White schools was hostile and demeaning.

School changed drastically with integration... Knowledge was suddenly about information only... When we entered racist, desegregated, white schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now, we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racists stereotypes (3).

Half a century after *Brown*, race continues to be a strong indicator of who receives an adequate education in the United States. 2005 data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that an over 23-point gap existed between Black and White fourth graders in reading. For mathematics, the gap was over 26 points. Among eighth graders the gap persisted with 23 points difference in reading and 26 points in mathematics (Ladson Billings, 2006). Integration, as it was carried out after the interest convergence that brought about the *Brown* decision, appears to have succeeded most effectively in obscuring students of Color's calls for adequate education. With de jure segregation no longer in place, the system's failure to educate students of Color is seen as an indicator of Black and Brown cultural or familial pathology (Augustin, 1997; Yosso, 2005).

Interest convergence theory acts both as a critique and a prescriptive tool for social change. To effect change, interest convergence explains that people of Color must first identify their interests, then identify the interests of dominant society, identify the weakness in White supremacy that can be leveraged in order to create change, and finally re-craft their interest so that it may converge with the dominant imperative. In the case of

Brown, the NAACP had been working for years to dismantle Jim Crow segregation; this was their primary interest. Segregation, and the racial caste system it engendered, compromised America's international image as a free nation the damaged international campaigns during the fight against Communism at the close of World War Two. Aware of this ideological crisis, the NAACP recrafted its assault on Jim Crow as a crusade for integration that ultimately led to the landmark *Brown* decision. Clearly, interest convergence is not about an alignment of interests so much as a manipulation of hegemonic crises in order to benefit people of Color. As a perfect illustration of interest convergence, Bell tells the story of Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit.

In a bad situation he lacks the power to get out of, Brer Rabbit uses his wits. He doesn't waste any energy asking Brer Fox to set him free. He doesn't rely on his constitutional rights. Rather, he sets out pleading with Brer Fox that throwing him in the briar patch would be a fate worse than death. Convinced that the worst thing he could do to Brer Rabbit was the very thing Brer Rabbit didn't want him to do, Brer Fox threw Brer Rabbit right into the middle of the briar patch. And, of course, once in the brambles, Brer Rabbit easily slips off and escapes (Bell, 1992: 62).

The interests of Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit, like those of White society and people of Color, are opposed. The work of interest convergence is not to bring Whites onto people of Color's "side," but to skillfully recraft our interests so that they are met through Whites' actions to protect their supremacy.

Interest convergence theory is a powerful tool for historical, and especially legal historical, analysis but it fails to address how race and law formed one another in the U.S. The theory of Whiteness as property investigates the interplay of race and the law by racializing the discourse pertaining to property rights. Whiteness as Property is a tenet of Critical Race Theory based on Cheryl Harris' (1995) thesis that through the system of chattel slavery in the U.S. humanity was reconstituted as property. As a result, legally protected property rights, not human rights, became the means to full citizenship in the United States. As racial labels were invented to promote and sustain the slave system, Blackness became the mark of enslavability by which one lost all rights as a human being. As Harris argues, "the critical nature of social relations under slavery was the commodification of human beings" (1995: 279). Conversely, Whiteness also began to take on the characteristics of a property interest as its possession became analogous with freedom and liberty. By commodifying human beings the slave system made humanity, and its attendant rights, alienable. Whites could not be enslaved and thus Whiteness was transformed into a demarcation of access to rights, liberty and justice under the law. In Harris' words, "White identity and Whiteness were sources of privilege and protection; their absence meant being the object of property" (1995: 279). Concurrently, the social interpretations of race (Black, White or Indian) and property became increasingly intertwined. The human rights delineated by the constitution became secondary legal privileges accessible only through the possession of Whiteness, which was infinitely deniable to racialized others. Whiteness, like property, rests conceptually on the absolute right to exclude and has thus become a property, in that it is a tangible good that fulfills the legal criterion of property under the law, and a property interest: the widespread

support of Whites to maintain the economic and social privileges their Whiteness bestows. Theoretically, Harris' concept explains "the legal legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of White privilege and domination" (Harris, 1993: 1715).

Harris argued that Whiteness satisfies both theoretical and functional criteria of property. Classical U.S. legal theory postulated by James Madison claimed that property "embraces every thing to which a man may attach a value and have a right" (quoted in Harris, 1995: 279). Because Whiteness "defined the legal status of a person as slave or free" (280), White identity awarded its holders tangible and quantifiable benefits. Historically, Whiteness allowed citizens access to economically significant privileges and processes rendering it a "valued possession" that was "jealously guarded" (280). Nineteenth century British philosopher and legal reformer Jeremy Bentham claimed that "property is nothing but a basis of expectation" and the system through which one may "draw such and such advantage from the thing possessed" (quoted in Harris, 1995: 280). Drawing on Bell's social realist view of the world in which racism is conceived as a permanent aspect of U.S. society, Harris argued that White privilege became a nationally recognized expectation that was upheld through legal constructions of Whiteness as (1) an objective fact that could be identified in and bestowed upon select members of the citizenry via socially and scientifically supported processes; and (2) the "quintessential property for personhood" (Harris, 1995: 281).

Functionally, the law has afforded "holders" of Whiteness the same kind of protection that it lends to holders of other kinds of property. The liberal view of property grants "exclusive rights of possession, use and disposition," as well as "the right to

transfer or alienability, the right to use and enjoyment, and the right to exclude others” (Harris, 1995: 281). Resting on legal precedents, Harris explains how Whiteness satisfies each of the liberal tenets of property.

Harris’ explanation of the alienation rests on examples from legal history to refute the classical claim that alienability is an essential aspect of property. Although property is popularly conceived of as a tangible “thing” that one can dispose of, throughout legal history less transferable entities have been treated as property under the law. In divorce cases, for example, government entitlements like welfare payments and State-issued licensures as well as the status of educational degrees are considered as properties to be appraised and divided among the divorcees. Harris’ legal investigation identifies the large sphere of inalienable qualities that are nonetheless treated as propertied elements under the law.

The rights to use and enjoyment are relevant to Whiteness as it functions, according to Harris, “simultaneously an aspect of identity and a property interest, it is something that can both be experienced and deployed as a resource” (1993: 1734). This dual function of Whiteness encompasses both “passive...aspects of identity” (1993: 1734), as well as moments in which Whiteness performs actively to “fulfill the will and to exercise power” like other types of property (Harris, 1993: 1734). Unlike the conception of White privilege, Whiteness as property is structural and systemic in its explanation of the ways in which individuals draw on and reinforce White supremacy. White privilege is an explanatory tool of absolutism because it reframes White supremacy as a number of individual privileges that Whites are not complicit in manufacturing. Within this structural analysis, consciousness (which is the cornerstone of White

privilege) is irrelevant. The awareness of individuals as they act to reinforce White supremacy is not a consideration because Whiteness as property is a material, and not psychological, model.

Harris' discussion of the rights to exclusion and transfer begins with an examination of slave laws. Harris explains how the slave system codified human rights as the exclusive property of Whites and denied them from Blacks in all regards. In 1662, the Virginia colonial assembly decided that, "[c]hildren got by an Englishman upon a Negro woman shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother ..." (quoted in Harris, 1993: 1719). The decision to pass slave-status through the mother legalized breeding slaves through Black women's bodies. Socially, this codified the legitimacy of White masters raping Black women. The economic value of slave breeding at the heart of this decision was not lost on slaver owners. For example, in an 1805 letter Thomas Jefferson stated, "I consider the labor of a breeding woman as no object, and that a child raised every 2 years is of more profit than the crop of the best laboring man" (quoted in Harris, 1993: 1720).

The transfer of enslaveability exclusively through Black women meant that the transfer of Whiteness must occur exclusively through White women, as White men were implicated in the slave-breeding system. The transmission of "White blood" through these unspoken but socially and legally sanctioned practices engendered a number of "mixed" Blacks throughout the country whose status challenged dominant notions of racialization. The constant sexual mixing between Blacks and Whites throughout slavery wedded the idea of absence with the definition of Whiteness; Whiteness became a cleanliness of other racial influences. With the influx of "non-White" European

immigrants like the Italians, Irish and Jews throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries (Ignatiev, 1995; Jacobson, 1998; Roediger, 1991; Sacks, 1997), Whiteness further came to be defined as a lack of non-White elements, thereby solidifying the popular “one drop” rule and further aligning Whiteness with purity. The conflation of Whiteness with purity further entrenched Whiteness within the liberal definition of property as it became more exclusive and its transference more rarified.

Colorblindness amplifies interest convergence and Whiteness as property’s theorization of race by addressing directly the politics of racialization. As suggested by Gotanda (1995), Haney Lopez (2006; 2008) and Williams (1997), colorblindness is an ideological claim drawn from Justice Harlan’s dissent in the landmark 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson* in which he declared,

The White race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty. But in view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates class among citizens (quoted in Bell, 2004: 26).

Justice Harlan’s dissent was unpopular at the time it was drafted as it called into question the constitutionality of the Jim Crow segregation laws that had swept through the nation since the 1870s. However, Critical Race theorists argue that colorblindness actually

“fosters White racial domination” because it erases race from our socio-cultural understanding in order to naturalize social inequalities. When we, observers and critics of society, are denied the use of race as an analytical tool the social, economic and political advantages that Whites hold over people of Color are legitimated as individual successes and not institutionalized preferences (Gotanda, 1995).

Looking back at the history of Black schooling we can see how important colorblindness has been in manufacturing social and legal conceptions of race in the 20th century. The historical function of colorblindness begins with Justice Harlan’s dissent in 1896 during the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in which Harlan championed the non-racial values of the Constitution to prove the constitutional necessity of integration despite the given racial inequality between Whites and Blacks. Harlan’s acceptance of White superiority allowed him to accept segregation in the social sphere, but his commitment to colorblind constitutionalism clearly mandated an end to de jure segregation. In *Plessy* Harlan deemed that the civil and social arenas were adequately overlapping in so that segregated train cars stifled Black people’s right to participate as full citizens in U.S. civic life. (Haney Lopez, 2006). From 1896 until 1954 colorblindness served as a radical means to attack de jure segregation. Thurgood Marshall even cited Justice Harlan’s dissent to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as they built their case to challenge segregation nationally (Haney Lopez, 2006). However, during the civil-rights era, colorblindness did not take hold as an effective strategy to end racial apartheid and instead the Court prescribed desegregation methods that were focused exclusively on physical racial proximity and not on equal outcomes across race lines (Bell, 2004; Haney Lopez, 2006).

Since *Brown* colorblindness has been adopted by the Right as a “sword” (Haney Lopez, 2006) yielded by Whites to ensure that they do not lose any of the privileges White supremacy has bestowed upon them through people of Color’s, and their White allies’, efforts to create racial equality. The examples from the *Parents Involved* and *Jefferson County Schools* cases provide a shining example of this. In both cases, White families have filed suit claiming that their districts acted unconstitutionally after their children were denied entry into the school of their choice because of explicit racial quotas put in place in order to ensure racial heterogeneity. The invocation of colorblind rhetoric demonstrates its present function to maintain White supremacy by denying social reformers’ ability to explicitly mention race in remedy plans. Some may not see the necessity of naming race in social reforms, but in 2003 “the poverty rate was 24 percent among African-Americans, 23 percent among Latinos, and 8 percent among White people. That same year, an estimated 20 percent of African-Americans and 33 percent of Latinos had no health insurance, while 11 percent of White people were uninsured” (Haney Lopez, 2006). Discrepancies in incarceration are also telling. From the 2008 Pew report we know that while one in fifty-four men above the age of eighteen is in jail. Yet, one in thirty six Hispanic men and one in fifteen African-American men are currently locked up (6). Race continues to be an essential indicator of social position and, as demonstrated by Derrick Bell, reform efforts that ignore its centrality will always be susceptible to exploitation by our nation’s pre-inscribed White supremacist ideology (1980, 1992, 2004).

CRT and DI

Critical Race Theory's structural approach to social inquiry affords an understanding of Direct Instruction as a manifestation of larger institutional trends. Conceiving of DI this way allows me to make critiques of this one educational tool that highlight theoretical and epistemological flaws that operate in a number of curricula designed to educate students of Color. As Audre Lourde famously said, "The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house" (1984). However, in "post-racial," Obama America insistent upon ignoring race as a life-determining factor "the Master" has been concealed and the "the slaves" atomized and de-essentialized out of existence. We must now remind one another that we cannot dismantle the Master's house if we do not see it. Critical Race Theory is the language that makes the Master's house visible again.

Chapter 2

Critical Race Theory and Reconstruction

“La historia de América, de los incas acá, ha de enseñarse al dedillo, aunque no se enseñe la de los arcontes de Grecia. Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra. Nos es más necesaria.”

—*Jose Martí (1984:12)*

The history of America, from the Incas until now, must be placed at our fingertips, even if that of the Greek Archons is not taught. Our Greece is preferable to the Greece that is not ours. Ours is more necessary.

—(My translation)

I have chosen to use Critical Race Theory as my theoretical and analytical framework as I investigate Direct Instruction. I will supplement CRT with the history of White-initiated and controlled education reforms during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction period. In the following section I will piece together the history of schooling lead by the Freedmen’s Bureau and aid societies in the post-bellum South with attention to critical race theories and with the intention that this historical period will contextualize Direct Instruction. I believe Critical Race Theory’s commitment to the persistence of racism throughout U.S. history disposes the discipline to a historical view in which origins take secondary importance to shifts. Focusing on shifts promotes structural analysis that understands, and eventually dismantles, the systems through which power—and thereby racism—is produced and reproduced. When one views

history with the foreknowledge that racism is ever present, it no longer becomes singly important to point out the nature and impact of racist systems, but instead to deconstruct how they function and how they have been perpetuated by our social, legal and scientific institutions. My analysis focuses on the creation and promotion of power that enables White supremacy despite symbolic gains like school desegregation or the election of a Black president. I offer this history as a means to contextualize Direct Instruction and identify theoretical and epistemological trends within the history of Black schooling that explain the persistence of the racialized achievement gap almost 150 years after Emancipation.

Critical Race Theory is a contemporary discipline and its primary focus on legal studies, as well as its commitment to enacting social change, has resulted in relatively few strictly historical Critical Race Theory publications. However, according to William Tate IV (1997) a historical overview is of extreme importance to CRT scholarship. As evidenced in my earlier discussion of colorblindness, CRT analyses occasionally look back into history, especially legal history, in order to unravel the complicated social dynamics of today. However, most CRT scholarship published so far is focused on civil-rights era legislation, particularly *Brown v. Board of Education*, its antecedent *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and the landmark 1857 *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision famous for its precedent setting stance on Black citizenship and protection under the law (Bell, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Guinier, 2004; Haney Lopez, 2008; Tate, Ladson Billings & Grant, 199).

However, little CRT-guided analysis has been directed at the immense educational shifts that took place between Reconstruction, the period of time in which the public school system developed in the South (Anderson, 1988). In response to this gap in

scholarship I will use Critical Race Theory to understand the structure and function of White initiatives in Black schooling in the South in the years following the Civil War, with an eye towards the ways in which White supremacy was reinscribed as Blacks left the system of slavery and entered into a new plane of U.S. society that controlled their minds and bodies through different social practices. I will focus my analysis by exploring specifically the role of interest convergence, colorblindness and Whiteness as Property throughout the history of Black schooling in order to uncover the historical continuity that locates Direct Instruction within the larger narrative of Black schooling.

Conceptually, historical inquiry into the structural aspects of Black schooling makes a similar contribution as other Critical Race Theory scholarship. As Guinier (2004) argued, central to work of CRT is to forge a new “racial literacy,” that names and understands the “durable racial grammar that structures racialized hierarchies and frames the narrative of our republic” (98). On history, education historian Ronald Butchart wrote,

If history is to have value beyond a literary form of collecting antiques, it must provide a guide to action. For those struggling against oppression and for justice, history must appraise the past to suggest political, social, and economic strategies for the present and future.” (1988: 333).

Drawing on these scholars, I believe that there is a conceptual link between Critical Race Theory and the history of Black schooling in their mutual desire to expose the

machinations through which inequality has been manufactured with the intention of serving activists willing to challenge those very systems as they operate today.

Reconstruction

To best understand the White-controlled educational systems that developed under Reconstruction it is important to understand the larger socio-political trends of the era. Reconstruction refers to the years after the Civil War when the southern states were restored to the Union, Blacks were emancipated, made citizens and Black men given the right to vote (Foner, 1988; Hine, 2010). Formerly, Reconstruction was misunderstood as a time when the South accepted defeat and prepared to do justice to the ex-slave (freedmen) population (Burgess, 1902; Dunning, 1931). More recent scholarship (Anderson, 1988; Foner, 1988) has moved away from this stance and joined the dissenting voices, most notably those of Du Bois (1935) and Beale's (1940), who see Reconstruction as a continuation of southern struggles for political and economic control, at the center of which was Black bodies. Emblematic of Reconstruction, when the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865 the impact was unclear. "What is freedom?" James A. Garfield later asked, "is it the bare privilege of not being chained?...if this is all, then freedom is a bitter mockery, a cruel delusion" (quoted in Foner, 1988: 66). The debate over what freedom entailed: suffrage, land ownership, education, placement on a jury, and what the government could, would and should provide its "free" citizens was a central issue of Reconstruction.

The ex-slave population immediately called for land and literacy upon emancipation (Anderson, 1988). State and federal governments soundly dismissed land redistribution (Anderson, 1988; Hine, 2010; McPherson, 1964), but education, divested from ownership, was taken up by many White northerners as their moral debt to the freedmen (Butchart, 1990). Reconstruction, then, is a dynamic period in which ex-slaves' struggle against White supremacy, liberal Whites' empathetic support of racial equality, powerful southerners' attempts to protect and restore their dominion, and mainstream Republicans' commitment to restoring the Union played out on national and local levels (Foner, 1988).

After the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were the most important federal acts during Reconstruction. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, declared that all persons born or naturalized in the United States would be citizens of the country and the state where they lived (Foner, 1988; Hine, 2010). Further, the Amendment outlawed states' actions that "deprived any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law" (U.S. Constitution). The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, extended suffrage to Black men, claiming, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (U.S. Constitution).

Despite these promising acts of federal legislation that outlawed slavery and extended full citizenship and voting rights to Black men, American society remained a hostile place for Black people. The Ku Klux Klan, one of the most conspicuous enforcers of White supremacy, was founded in 1866 (Hine, 2010) and spread across the South and

Midwest murdering and terrorizing Black communities that exercised their citizenship and voting rights.

Less conspicuously, land was systematically denied to the freedmen, which suspended them in a dependent state wherein their labor was easily exploited. In 1865, plantation owners (planters) abandoned their land on the islands along the South Atlantic coast. Under Sherman's Special Field Order Number 15, the land was allocated to the ex-slaves left behind on those plantations (McPherson, 1964). However, committed to restoring the Union and appeasing southern landowners, later that same year President Andrew Johnson ordered the ex-slaves to relinquish their farms and work as paid laborers for their former masters (McPherson, 1964). The freedman and abolitionists were outraged. "To turn us off from the land that the Government has allowed us to occupy, is nothing less than returning us to involuntary servitude," said one freedman (*N.A.S. Standard*, Oct. 7, 1865). "This villainous effort to rob loyal men from the benefit of ruffianly rebels whose hands are red with blood of Northern soldiers, can succeed only through a breach of faith on the part of our government such as would be without parallel in history," wrote the *Commonwealth* (*Commonwealth*, Nov. 4, 1865). Along the Atlantic coast, and through most of the South, almost all of the land was given back to its pre-war owners and the Black residents were forced to lease smaller, less valuable pieces of land from the government (Foner, 1988; McPherson, 1964).

"Free," but denied access to land ownership, the ex-slaves' vulnerable position naturally lead to systems of peonage like sharecropping, tenant farming and the lien system that sprang up across the South. Although varied in their particulars, these systems maintained Blacks in a system of wage slavery. Typically, a wealthy planter or

general store provided Black families with land, tools and agricultural supplies in exchange for a portion of their coming crop (Foner, 1988; Hine, 2010; Kluger, 1974). Capitalizing on Black fear and political disfranchisement, these agreements typically resulted in net losses for the Black farmers who, unable to accrue wealth, had no choice but to remain “employed” under these systems as they had during slavery.

Black Schooling under Northern Benevolence

Unlike land redistribution, Liberal Whites voraciously adopted the freedmen’s call for education. Within Reconstruction-era educational history I have chosen to focus on schools founded by the freedmen’s aid societies and later the Freedmen’s Bureau. Education was an immediate priority of ex-slaves indicated by the valorization of literacy among the Black community during and after slavery (Anderson, 1988). School systems founded and operated by Black people pre-dated those formed by northern Whites (Anderson, 1988), but I have chosen to focus on the schools founded by northern benevolent societies because Direct Instruction is a curriculum designed and operated by Whites but applied mostly to students of Color, especially in the school district where I encountered it. These schools were the first schools for Blacks designed by Whites with the explicit intention of assimilating ex-slaves into American society. In fact, the centrality of the degraded position of Black people as they transitioned from slavery to freedom and the necessity of schooling to promote Black achievement is ideologically similar to the motivations underlying curricula designed to close the achievement gap *since* the 19th century. Direct Instruction, developed by a White man and operated in one

major city principally by a White woman, was first experimented with widely on “disadvantaged” students (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966) and was popularized through a national initiative to address the achievement gap (Grossen, 1996). So, a theoretical analysis of Freedmen’s Bureau and aid society schools uncovers many of the ideological underpinnings of Direct Instruction because of the similarities between their motives.

Given my limitations, the historical analysis here concentrates exclusively on the Port Royal experiment and Industrial Education. Additionally, I will include pertinent historical information on political and social developments of the era in order to contextualize these reforms. I have chosen to focus on these two aspects of Reconstruction era schooling because I believe that the function of and controversies surrounding them encapsulate the ideological underpinnings of the era. It is these ideological tenets, rather than their specific structural manifestations, that I find most applicable to my analysis of Direct Instruction. Finally, I will close this section by extrapolating the lessons we can learn from this period so that readers can most clearly see how Direct Instruction has and has not gained from past efforts to educate “disadvantaged” student populations, which I will cover in the next chapter.

Port Royal Experiment

While the Civil War was underway and Emancipation neared, White conservatives and abolitionists began to debate what to do with the Black population if freed. Conservative southern Republicans and Democrats did not believe that emancipated Blacks could live harmoniously with Whites and suggested a variety of

treatments including the continuation of slavery and the colonization abroad of territories for freed Blacks (McPherson, 1964). Lincoln himself supported a few colonization plans and even signed a contract with Bernard Kock to have almost five hundred freed slaves taken by night to a small island off the coast of Haiti (McPherson, 1964). However, Kock pocketed most of the money he was paid and set up the freedmen in shoddy homes with limited resources. Small pox and starvation ravaged the settler population as a result. In 1864, Lincoln admitted that the plan was a failure and sent a boat to collect the remaining Blacks on the island (McPherson, 1964). Unlike the liberal Republican sentiment, the Black response to colonization was clear: Robert Purvis said to one supporter of Negro colonization “this is our country as much as it is your, and we will not leave it” (McPherson, 1964: 155).

Liberal Republicans and Abolitionists favored absorption, meaning the assimilation of freed Blacks into American society. Aware of the large resistance to these policies, those in favor of absorption were acutely aware of the symbolic value that the success of the first groups of emancipated slaves, called “contrabands of war” (Foner, 1988) at the time, would have on the anti-Abolitionist lobby. In 1861, the Union military gained control of a sizeable enclave around Port Royal, South Carolina that remained under federal control for the duration of the war. White planters had abandoned the occupied territories, leaving their slaves behind with the rest of their property (Hine, 2010).

In 1862 the Port Royal experiment began when forty-one men and twelve women sailed from New York to Port Royal to teach the freedmen under the freedmen’s aid society. Freedmen’s aid societies were a collection of private, philanthropic organizations

that sprang up across the North during the war to “relieve physical suffering and finally to administer the religious and education needs of the Blacks and White refugees” (Jackson, 1923: 3). The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, commonly called the Freedmen’s Bureau, was established by Congress at the close of the war in 1865 as the government counterpart to the aid societies. The Freedmen’s Bureau, and the aid societies, many of which operated under the American Missionary Association, played the greatest role in shaping White educational initiatives during Reconstruction.

During the Port Royal experiment, about 2,500 children were taught in day schools and adults were hired to tend the cotton fields they had previously worked as slaves (McPherson, 1964). The Black men and women who worked this land during the Port Royal experiment were paid for their labor, but most were still not able to purchase property. It was not until U.S. Treasury officials came to Port Royal and auctioned off portions of the abandoned lands that the freedmen there were given the opportunity to buy the land they had spent their lives cultivating. However, very few Black families had earned enough money to purchase the farms they worked on so most of the land was purchased by White northern businessmen who hired Black people to raise cotton on it (Hine, 2010).

Glowing reports from the volunteer teachers at Port Royal received national attention and the aid societies won many converts. Published accounts from the teachers proclaimed that Black children, “...learned to read rapidly” (Quoted in McPherson, 1964: 164), and that Blacks were equal to Whites in ability at least in the “lower subjects” (McPherson, 1964) like reading and arithmetic. Abolitionists, drawing on the success at

Port Royal, concluded that freedman would be “as industrious as any race of men are likely to be” as long as they were “properly organized, and with proper motives set before them” (McPherson, 1964: 159). These reports by the aid society workers and the reality of the situation differed drastically because the workers could not report the truth—the incredible mental and physical degradation that slavery had wrought upon the freedmen—without *proving* the theories of those who saw Blacks fit only for slavery. In this way, the real injuries of slavery went unacknowledged and largely unaddressed, as Blacks were stewarded into free-labor systems without reparations for or accurate assessment of injury (McPherson, 1964).

This suppression of reality is a persistent theme in the education reforms lead by the Freedmen’s aid societies and the Freedmen’s Bureau. These groups desired to conceal the truth of the Black condition post-slavery in order to avoid confirming “the popular image of the shiftless, helpless,” (McPherson, 1964: 391) Black person. The Freedmen’s Bureau and the aid societies were not acting irrationally. In many areas of the South, travelers’ and other observers’ written accounts of the freedmen’s startling conditions “were gleefully picked up by the Democratic press and cited as proof of the Negro’s worthlessness” (McPherson, 1964: 396).

However, the policy of concealment was a double-edged sword. Josephine Griffing worked for the National Freedmen’s Relief Association in Washington, D.C. finding homes and jobs in the North for freedmen who moved to the area. Into her career, when the Bureau began to reduce funding to aid programs “to avoid encouraging pauperism and idleness” (McPherson, 1964: 391) she began to lecture on the destitute condition of many of the freedmen she worked for, but was criticized by Republicans and

other abolitionists for perpetuating the negative image of freed slaves. As illustrated by the story of Josephine Griffing, colorblindness is operating here to support the dominant class because it robs the freedmen and their allies the right to speak the reality of their condition in order to receive adequate aid. Without a direct connection to and challenge of White Supremacy, the “degraded, ignorant, and destitute” condition of the freedmen was immediately re-written to reflect the degeneracy of Black people. The viciousness of the freedmen’s former masters, and the system that treated them like cattle, went unexamined by the Freedmen’s Bureau and the aid societies and because of this their work engendered educational policies that perpetuated White supremacy.

The theory of colorblindness helps identify the failure of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the aid societies to name the freedmen’s oppression and its ills. However, colorblindness, as Haney Lopez (2006) says, also acts as a sword and as such is even more significant. The trenchant aspects of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the aid societies’ blindness manifested itself at the turn of the 20th century when virulent southern Negrophobia increased drastically. Although often ascribed to social Darwinism, these particularly derisive racist ideals pre-dated Darwin. Darwinist logic did not engender White notions of racial hierarchy in the South (Fredrickson, 1971). In fact, the rhetoric of turn of the century southerners had a long history in the region grounded in “what passed for direct, empirical and ‘common sense’” (Fredrickson, 1971: 258) perceptions of Blacks to which Darwinism only leant scientific language and codifying vocabulary.

Out of this ideology came a proliferation of racist social scientific scholarship that reified notions of Black degeneracy and criticized reform efforts (Avary, 1906). The “scientific” call for the withdrawal of aid to Blacks argued under the auspices that Blacks

were biologically inferior to Whites being one of the most prominent manifestations of this ideology. The reasoning went that if Blacks were a subspecies, then, “even if humanitarians had it in their power to reverse the accelerating rate of disease and death they should not do so” for in doing they were working against the tide of nature (Fredrickson, 1971: 257). In other words, this scholarship was a scientifically sound belief that helping Blacks actually hurt American society because the amalgamation of inferior Black people into the social fabric could only weaken it.

Immediately, the shameful conditions under which many Blacks lived—and had lived since arriving in this country—became proof of their inferiority. In 1907, Senator Benjamin R. Tillman of South Carolina suggested that the freedmen had entered, “in earnest,” (Fredrickson, 1971: 257) into a true competition of survival of the fittest, and that recent medical reports of high rates of tuberculosis and syphilis among the Black population pointed to a natural end for the race. Scientific racism successfully diverted public funds and attention away from the development and rehabilitation of the freedmen by casting the cause as an irrational act of sympathy toward an undeserving sub-species. The utter denial of the role that slavery—and the White men who controlled it—played in the degradation of Black people was erased, and the colorblind silence of the Freedmen’s Bureau and aid societies reified the erasure, maiming their ability to work in favor of the Freedmen.

Industrial Education

Although Booker T. Washington is the historical figure most associated with industrial education, his role was less significant than commonly thought. According to historian August Meier (1963), “Washington simply brought to a climax a trend well under way before the middle 1890s” (85). Industrial education was born out of European educational theories (Pestalozzi; Fellenberg) that stressed the importance of agricultural and industrial schooling. Meier (1963) argues that in the antebellum North these concepts were infused with “Yankee traditions of morality, thrift, industry, economic independence, and material success” (85) and so fused with colonial American ideology. Industrial education was viewed as wholesome and moralizing pedagogy that prepared students’ hearts and minds for lifetimes of diligent, skilled labor. The moralizing aspect of industrial education remained an essential aspect to the pedagogy in the post-bellum South.

Industrial education was an inflammatory concept from the start. The debate over industrial education in the early 1800s paralleled Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois’ famous debate at the turn of the 20th century. Early supporters argued that industrial education would help the laboring classes move up in the world, while critics viewed it as “a type of instruction suitable for adjusting them to their subordinate social role” (Meier, 1963: 86). In the post-Reconstruction era Washington (1903) decried education that developed “the mere performance of mental gymnastics,” and saw industrial education as a means to provide “knowledge...harnessed to the things of real life” (17) through which the Black race could rise to prominence. At the same time, Du Bois (1903), argued that “Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission,” and that industrial education, “practically accepts the inferiority of the

Negro races” (41). This important debate has received much historical attention (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1988; Du Bois, 1940; Foner, 1988; Hine 2010; Johnson, 1928), but my focus is on industrial education itself because of its underlying ideological parallels to Direct Instruction.

Industrial education emerged as a force in Black schooling when the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in 1868 by former-missionary Samuel Chapman Armstrong. Although the curriculum offered at Hampton was without a doubt industrial, it was founded as a normal school and its stated mission was the training of Black normal school teachers (Anderson, 1988). Students at the Hampton Institute were instructed in basic literacy and methods of low-level industrial and agricultural production. Little attention was given to critical thinking, historical investigation, or political science. As Anderson (1988) brilliantly argues, the Hampton Institute demonstrated its founder’s values, ideology and social class as much as any other school. The Sabbath schools, for example, were founded by ex-slaves without the help of northern philanthropists or volunteers to teach basic literacy at night or on the weekends to those who would not receive instruction otherwise (Anderson, 1988). These schools, as Anderson says, were part of ex-slaves struggle to “develop a social and educational ideology singularly appropriate to their defense of emancipation...that challenged the social power of the planter regime” (1988: 33).

Armstrong’s pedagogy, reflective of his social and racial location, avoided such conflicts and maintained a status quo that naturalized unequal distributions of wealth and power. Armstrong, and the doctrine of industrial education, did this by absolving White society of any responsibility towards the rehabilitation of the ex-slaves after enduring two

hundred and fifty years of the most brutal slavery the world had ever witnessed. By the doctrines of individualism and meritocracy Blacks were made singularly responsible for their social uplift, and given their degraded position post-slavery, had to enter society at the lowest ranks. By this reasoning, society is neutralized and Blacks become singularly responsible for their success. If they fail, the pathology will be of their own doing because the virulent hatred and ingrained racism of American society is ignored into supposed non-existence. From this vantage point, industrial education was the *only* suitable model because it taught Blacks the skills they needed to enter the workforce at the “appropriate” level.

Booker T. Washington, Armstrong’s most prized pupil, found himself at the center of the ideological collision between the freedmen and Armstrong’s concepts of education. In 1895 Washington, then working as a principle in Washington, D.C., was invited to speak at the Atlanta Exposition in place of Frederick Douglass who had recently passed away (Meier, 1963). It was at the Atlanta Exposition that Washington delivered his famous speech that thrust industrial education into pedagogical dominance in Black schooling. The rhetoric of industrial education that Washington espoused was not new, but the Black body preaching the ideology offered new opportunities to spread the doctrine of industrial education throughout the Black community.

To the existing rhetoric of industrial education, Washington added the promise of Black loyalty, the reaffirmation of segregation, and an adherence to what Meier calls “the gospel of wealth” (Meier, 1963). On loyalty, Washington called upon Whites to “cast down their buckets” and harness Black labor, for “you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-

abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen” (Washington, 1906: 100). On segregation, Washington famously accepted Jim Crow practices stating, “In all things social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all thing essential to mutual progress” (1906: 100). And, on wealth Washington proclaimed,

...In a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions, in a determination to administer justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of the law. This, this, coupled with our material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new haven and a new earth” (1906: 102).

The “Gospel of Wealth” was Washington’s solution to what was commonly called the Negro problem. This gospel conflates economic success with moral and social success, and conversely economic failure with moral and social defect. If Blacks could be trained in the moral spheres of hard work they would inevitably rise in stature and status and gain the respect of Whites. Failure to do so would eventually “prove” their racial inferiority. Washington’s support for industrial education in his famous speech in Atlanta makes numerous remarks to material prosperity that demonstrates his thinking. Like most social theorists of his day, including the early writings of his rival Du Bois (Butchart, 1988; Du Bois, 1903), Washington assumes the neutrality of society. He sees lynching, the rise of the Black codes, and the numerous inhibitors to Blacks’ full citizenship established by the explicit and implicit support of southern states post-war as aberrational acts of prejudice. Washington does not hold the states’ obstruction of justice as proof of their true intentions. Instead, he marginalizes the persecution of Blacks, and other people

of Color, as failures of a system that could, should, work in their favor. This is Washington's blindness to the permanence of racism (Bell, 1980).

Some historians argue that Washington's rhetoric was coded (Meier, 1963) and actually intended goals for Black people that would not have been acceptable to Whites. Despite valorizing Black people's need to "start at the bottom" Washington must have believed that Blacks would eventually arrive at the top. However, Meier argues, "Whites were impressed by his conciliatory phraseology, confused his means for his ends, and were satisfied with the immediate program that he enunciated" (1963: 101).

Washington's coded rhetoric convinced Black communities that their *interest* in emancipatory education converged with Whites' *method* of educating Blacks into the lowest ranks of the labor force. Black support for industrial education was fueled primarily by the economic reality. Because skilled labor positions were dominated by Whites who excluded Blacks from apprenticeships, the formation of Black industrial schools made logical sense to fill this educational void (Meier, 1963). Further, this ideology drew on the self-help and racial solidarity movements of the 1850s, during which Frederick Douglass argued for the formation of Black technical schools with the assumption that Blacks would be respected when they became economically valuable to society as laborers instead of beasts of burden. Many Black advocates supported industrial education because they believed in the necessity of racial solidarity for Blacks to ascend from slavery. They believed that industrial training would give them the tools to provide economically for each other within the American economy. In contrast, Whites believed that industrial education would teach Blacks the value of rugged individualism. The fact that industrial education was never applied to its fullest expression allowed

Blacks to forever see its potential to provide liberatory education and social uplift but garnered White supremacy's desired result: the education of Blacks into servitude.

(Anderson, 1988; Meier, 1963).

Liberal Whites, represented by the Freedmen's Bureau, supported industrial education because they believed they were teaching civility and values as much as they were teaching reading and writing. In fact, the educator's "duty" to inculcate prudent, diligent and moral values guided much of the Bureau schools' curriculum. According to the Second Annual Report of the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission (1865), Bureau schools included classes on sewing and shoemaking "to develop ideas of self-dependence and self-support, which have been crushed out by slavery" (87). Joseph A. Tillinghast, a liberal White man, praised the Tuskegee and Hampton curricula for "involving essentially the inclusion of morality rather than the teaching of skills" (quoted in Fredrickson, 1971: 270). Other praise for the schools included their ability to "build character" and inspire good manners (Fredrickson, 1971). However, the "industrial education" at these schools rarely exceeded basic domestic arts and janitorial training.

Southern White support was garnered by industrial education's emphasis on uplift. Industrial education focused on the *preparation* of Black minds for the complicated role of citizenship and deferred true rights, as Meier said, "to a distant and hazy future" (1963: 88). Washington's leaning toward the value and necessity of Black industrialism and integration into the American economic structure from the bottom appealed greatly to powerful Whites who feared Black take over and struggled to maintain White supremacy legally and illegally (Kluger, 1975). The denial of material equality under industrial education meant that Whites would not suffer any immediate or

direct challenges to property by Blacks for many years, which made industrial education an acceptable reform.

White northern capitalists were fed up with the disorders of Reconstruction (Meier, 1963; Harlan, 1969) and were drawn to industrial education as a tidy way to place Blacks into the free labor system quickly so that business could move forward. Additionally, the laissez-faire underpinning of industrial education that wealth bred social and moral uplift appealed to northern capitalists' social ideology.

Incredibly, Washington's words coalesced these disparate groups and constructed the notion that all of their interests could be met through the same pedagogy. Drawing from Bell's theory of Interest Convergence (1980), it is clear that educational reform for Black students could not have come about another way, but the reality of industrial education demonstrates that the interests of the dominant group played the greatest role in shaping Black schooling. Washington's aim was clear: "I plead for industrial education and development for the Negro not because I want to cramp him, but because I want to free him" (1903: 19). Concurrently, Washington was a fervent supporter of Black-White alliance. As Washington remembered his speech at the Atlanta Exposition ten years later in his autobiography he wrote, "the thing that was uppermost in my mind was the desire to say something that would cement the friendship of the races and bring about hearty cooperation between them" (1906:99). Washington's strategy is not a true interest convergence because it does not abide by the central rule that people of Color must transform their interests in order to mold White self-interest into a force for productive change.

Unfortunately, it was Washington's commitment to "friendship" between the races that blinded him to the reality that his goal to liberate Black people through education was diametrically opposed to White society's desire to re-enslave the freedmen. Further, Washington could not have become the iconic and influential figure he was if he had eschewed alliance with Whites and denied the value of interest convergence. Still, criminally under-funded (Kluger, 1975) industrial education became yet another institution that reproduced Blacks' position at the bottom of the social order instead of the mechanism for social uplift that Washington believed it could be. It was Washington's faith in American (read: White) society that lead him to believe in industrial education and the blindness that his faith required that rendered his pedagogy harmful to Black educational development. This is the corrosive effect of White supremacy on interest convergence.

Contextualizing these Reforms

To better understand how potentially revolutionary ideas, like Washington's concept of industrial education and the Freedmen's Bureau, developed into such a reactionary reality we must understand the socio-political context during which these reforms were enacted. The passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments during Reconstruction paints a rosy picture of state support for the freedmen postwar. However, the emergence of Jim Crow segregation, the Ku Klux Klan and the Black codes, a series of laws enacted in most southern states that denied Blacks full access to freedom and enjoyment of citizenship, had a much greater impact on the

lived experiences of Black people after the war than the better-known, dramatic federal reforms of the era. In this section, I offer lesser known, but in no way unique, historical examples that contextualize the educational movements of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction period.

The *United States v Reese* case set an important precedent for post-Reconstruction America that sheds lights on how federal reforms were manipulated across the country to subjugate Black people. In 1876 a Black man in Lexington, Kentucky was denied the right to vote and took case to court. The court ruled against him, asserting that the 15th amendment was not a positive ruling that granted Blacks suffrage, but a negative one that outlawed the rights of states to deny suffrage to any person because of his race. As such, the plaintiff had to prove that he had been denied the right to vote “specifically because of his race (Kluger, 1975: 60) in order to question the constitutionality of the state’s actions.

In a related incident in 1879, West Virginia legally limited grand jury service to White males, a practice that was eventually challenged in court as a breach of the Fourteenth Amendment. But in Virginia, where Blacks continued to be tried and convicted by all-White juries, no law was explicitly made or enacted (Kluger, 1975). In this state, Blacks were denied even the limited legal recourse available in Kentucky as the process could only be recognized as a breach of their civil rights if the defendant could prove that “officials in charge of the jury-selection process had discriminated against prospective, qualified Negro jurors” (Kluger, 1975: 63).

After the 1890 constitutional convention in Mississippi, a new suffrage law was enacted that required voters to pay a two-dollar poll tax and pass a literacy test (Kluger,

1975; Hine, 2010). Similar restrictions were enacted in South Carolina and Louisiana in the same period. When challenged in Court, these restrictions were sustained based on the *Reese* decision because they did not specifically name the exclusion of Black citizens. The disproportionate impact of these decisions on Black people was not taken into consideration, just the colorblind language they employed.

Colorblindness is in full force in these scenarios. From this case we can see how the declaration of race has been strategically used throughout history to protect White supremacy. This is a complicated case of colorblindness in which a Black person is stripped of legal recourse unless he can prove that race, and only race, was the cause of his discrimination. The scope of racism is falsely limited and forced exclusively into the causal stage instead of the result. Think, as a counterpoint, of the *Griggs* ruling, mentioned earlier, that proclaimed racism would be assumed in cases where racial inequality proliferated (Matsuda, 2002).

This ruling proves is that in order to make change through the legislature, amendments cannot rely on language that names or omits Blackness. Instead, legislative language must name White supremacy and the varied means by which it reproduces itself. Imagine if the amendment read, “It will now be deemed unconstitutional for any man working for or on behalf of the federal government to use his power and authority, drawn from privileges including but not limited to his employed position, to limit or infringe upon the civil rights of any other U.S. citizen.” That kind of a ruling would outlaw the machinations of White supremacy, which is what must be called for if the goal is to create an equal society. Expansive, not restrictive equality must be the goal and their (in)equal outcomes must evaluate our policies.

Lynching played an essential role in the socio-political landscape of the postbellum South that cannot be ignored, especially when discussing education. As Carter Woodson said, “There would be no lynching if it did not start in the school room” (1933: 3). The emergence of new laws and social mores that disfranchised Blacks post-slavery was coupled with the violent, physical degradation of Black bodies to reinforce the racial caste system. From 1883-1903, 30,000 lynchings were reported in the country (Kluger, 1975: 68). Despite the proliferation of lynching, no federal action was ever taken to directly combat it. The passive stance taken by the federal government set a troubling precedent that buttressed lynching during the era. While Whites continued to kidnap Blacks from town and county jails in order to torture and kill them, the Supreme Court did not force states to respond these gross breaches of justice. Blacks were left without political recourse or social protection (Kluger, 1975).

In the midst of the rise in lynching came a resurgence of colonization or deportationist thinking. The revival of “solutions” to the so-called Negro Problem by shipping the ex-slave population out of the country demonstrates the widespread White fear of Black development. Deportationists aligned with anti-immigrant, Nativist groups in the North to become a powerful lobby post-Reconstruction (Fredrickson, 1971) when eugenicist notions of racial hierarchy affected federal legislation resulting in policy like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Takaki, 1993). Republican President William McKinley even claimed that, “our duty to expel alien races is as clear as the duty to exclude them” (Quoted in Fredrickson, 1971: 265). The deportationists’ calls never came to fruition, but they were not intended to. The desire for deportation was more about frightening and de-centering the Black community; further alienating southern Blacks

and outlining the degree to which they were and would be excluded from true citizenship. The reality, though, was that the South was unwilling and unable to end its addiction to exploited Black labor (Fredrickson, 1971).

Lessons from the Reconstruction Era

The most relevant themes from the Freedmen's Bureau and aid societies schools, and the socio-political context from which they emerged, are the role and function of northern benevolence, and liberal White's impossible conception of education as a means to prepare Blacks for citizenship without disrupting the status quo. Northern benevolence, a White ideological and moral commitment to racial equality mediated by optimistic faith in American democracy, continues today. I will examine further the nature of development of northern benevolence and its impact on Direct Instruction in the next chapter, so here I will focus on the lessons we can glean from Reconstruction on the nature of this benevolence and the centrality of education to it.

Essential to understanding the work of northern benevolence groups like the freedmen's aid societies is the conservative response to them. All across the South, the hard work of northern benevolent societies and abolitionists groups was called in as proof of Blacks' inferiority and inability to care for themselves (Fredrickson, 1971). The easy appropriation of these reformist actions by conservative is an important window into the underlying significance of liberal reforms. As a critical race historian, I reject the notion that the White northern "aid" and Southern conservative vitriol are separate phenomena.

Instead, I question how Reconstruction liberals' aims were complicit in sculpting this argument for conservatives.

Liberal and conservative Whites joined, ideologically speaking, at the issue of Black incapacity. J. Miller McKim, president of the American Freedmen's Aid Commission in 1865, defended the teaching his organization carried out claiming, "Universal suffrage without universal education would be universal anarchy" (quoted in McPherson, 1964: 393). In comparison, conservative southern planters opposed Black schooling based on the belief that "learning will spoil the nigger for work" (quoted in Anderson, 1988: 21). Although politically different, these two sentiments share a common belief about Black inferiority. McKim, the reformer, focuses on the potential for Blacks to be civilized (read: Whitened) while the planter is less hopeful. Both, however, see the necessity of White training and control over Black minds and bodies to create and maintain order, what they differ on is the mechanism by which to do so.

Northern societies' reification of paternalism demonstrates that aid societies essentially agreed with the planters regarding the (in)ability of Blacks to be self-determined (Anderson, 1988; Fredrickson, 1971; McPherson, 1964). Thus, their work shared the same ideological tenets of paternalism, Black inferiority and stewardship that guided conservative southern rhetoric. The central problem was that the difference between these groups was not one of ideology, but of approach. While White liberals chose sympathy and aid, White conservatives preferred enslavement or extinction justified by unsentimental logic and buttressed by contemporary scientific interpretations (Fredrickson, 1971).

However, as we can see from the deportationist and colonizationist rhetoric mentioned earlier, southern (as well as northern) White society relied on cheap Black labor (Anderson, 1988; Douglas, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004). White impositions of segregation have never been about separation but rather about control. Real segregation in which Blacks were permitted to retreat completely into separate communities “beyond the reach of White surveillance” (Fredrickson, 1971) inspired true fear in southern Whites. In 1891 one White Baltimore lawyer cautioned that the existing segregation in his city might lead to a scenario where Blacks, isolated from the “direct influence of Whites,” would become “more and more aggressive” (quoted in Fredrickson, 1971: 268). As Du Bois said, “the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line” (1903: 3) and for Whites during Reconstruction the key to this problem was *how* to perpetuate White supremacy in a post-emancipation society.

Education became the essential area for achieving what Fredrickson called, “a proper balance between racial separation and White control” (1971: 269). Southern education reformers who believed in the inherent inferiority of Blacks also clung to the hope that industrial education, in the style of Booker T. Washington, could “bring a measure of discipline to the Black character” (quoted in Fredrickson, 1971: 269). Eventually, the favored educational system was one in which a rudimentary primary education was offered, to permit Blacks the basic skills of literacy, and then preparation of Blacks for useful positions in the labor and service industries. Only the most militant racists favored the complete denial of education (Anderson, 1988; Fredrickson, 1971), while most sensible ones saw schooling as an opportunity to inculcate inferiority and bolster White supremacy.

The appropriation of educational rhetoric into dominant ideology that supports racialized hierarchies disfigured schooling. No longer did education alone have the liberatory potential that it did in the Sabbath schools run by the ex-slaves (Anderson, 1988). Instead, Black schoolhouses became sites of social reproduction that educated Black children into servitude (Giroux, 1983). Before the Civil War, it was illegal for Blacks to learn to read and write (Mee, Hammerton & Innes, 1909) as well as own property. After the war these regulations were officially struck down, but while land was consistently denied to the freedmen literacy was provided (Anderson, 1988; Foner, 1988; McPherson, 1964). The reason was not, as many claimed, for the advancement of Blacks (Butchart, 1990; McPherson, 1964) or the imposition of justice, rather the old laws were abandoned in favor of new systems of education that could protect White supremacy while placating Blacks. These critiques are not new ones. Black scholars and activists were acutely aware of Reconstruction's shortcomings. Frederick Douglass criticized the paternalism of the freedmen's aid societies. To Douglas, freedmen needed "rights more than training to enjoy them," (quoted in McPherson, 1964: 397), which speaks to the function of the aid societies as they upheld White Supremacy by delaying Blacks full material access to equality by "educating" them, perhaps indefinitely, on how to use their rights when they arrived in the proverbial tomorrow. In the meantime, 85% of the population of southern Blacks remained in rural areas (Washington, 1903) bound to land that was not theirs through various systems of peonage. The lesson from liberal White educational efforts during Reconstruction is that education, divested from power, enslaves.

Chapter 3

“Thanks to DI my child can read”: Pathologization in the 21st century

Thanks to DI my child can read

—Bumper sticker produced by the Harbor Pedagogy Project

Drawing on my historical analysis of the White-led educational reforms in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras, I argue that Direct Instruction functions as an instrument of White supremacy by pathologizing Black students and families. I will begin this argument with an untheorized presentation of Direct Instruction (DI) as I have come to know it through document-based research and interviews with Dr. Tally Clarke and Dr. O. Wegner. Dr. Clarke is the President of the Harbor Pedagogy Project (HPP), the non-profit operator of five Direct Instruction schools in one east coast city. Dr. Wegner is the HPP’s Director of Academics who previously worked as the Director of Training for the National Institute for Direct Instruction. I will follow this representation of DI with a critical race theory analysis that employs colorblindness, interest convergence and Whiteness as property to see how specific aspects of the curriculum demonstrate DI’s underlying pathologization of Black students and families.

Schooling that pathologizes Black people does not serve the Black educational goal of education for liberation (Anderson, 1988; Freire, 1970). Black schooling that does not consciously prepare its students to challenge the culture of power (Delpit, 1995) assimilates them into its lowest ranks by divesting them of their home cultures (Adams, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). This assimilation ignores the reality that society is racist and

White supremacist. Assuming the neutrality of society denies the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992) and erases the very real racialized barriers that Blacks face. This erasure reduces success and failure to individual merit, and consequently *group* success and failure to *group* merit. The systematic undereducation of Black students is then framed as a “cultural” disinterest in schooling and not an institutionalized desire to limit Blacks’ economic, political and social opportunities through undereducation. My analysis of DI focuses on this underlying ideological tenet because its presence in the history of Black schooling demonstrates the lasting impact of this White supremacist educational policy and its ability to form new mechanisms that produce and reproduce racialized inequality.

DI According to its Makers

“Many educationally influential people are ignorant and/or mislead about DI, and biased against it”

—*Dr. Tally Clarke (interview via email, December 2, 2009)*

The “achievement gap,” which refers to disparities between standardized test scores of Black, Latino, and recent immigrant students and White students, is one of the most discussed and debated issues in education. In her 2006 American Educational Research Association presidential address, Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings called the achievement gap “a crossover hit. It has made its way into common parlance and everyday usage...and few argue over its meaning or import” (2006). In one large district

on the West coast, over 70% of white students were passing a tenth grade test tied to graduation while 92% of African-American students were *failing* the same exam (Vaught, 2008: 550). According to national statistics from 2005, the eighth grade gap between Black and White students was 23 points (Ladson Billings, 2006). In hundreds of districts students are leaving school, with or without diplomas, barely literate or able to perform simple math. Nationwide, Black and Brown children are being failed by our educational system (Berlak, 2001).

The racialized achievement gap has been a central focus in educational studies reaching back to the 1960s (Hess & Shipman, 1965; Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Deutsch, 1963). Typical of the scholarship of that era, one study by Hess & Shipman (1965) at the University of Chicago responded to the “well-known” phenomenon in education wherein “children from deprived backgrounds score well below middle-class children on standard individual and group measures of intelligence (a gap that increased with age)” (871). Hess & Shipman’s study argued that past speculation on the difference in performance between Blacks and Whites had formerly been taken as a sign of White genetic superiority above other races, but that this study (in keeping with contemporary scholarship) ignored that debate in favor of analyzing “the mechanisms of exchange that mediate between the individual and his environment” (1965: 871) that Hess & Shipman believed cause the achievement gap. In other words, the achievement gap was being re-examined in cultural, instead of biological, terms.

For their study, Hess & Shipman interviewed 163 Black mothers from four different social classes: college-educated professionals, skilled “blue-collar” occupational levels, “unskilled” or semi-skilled occupational levels, and unskilled or semi-skilled

occupational levels “with fathers absent and families supported by public assistance” (1965: 873). The researchers asked the mothers how they would verbally prepare their children for the first day of school and then asked the women to come to the university with their children. At the university, the mother’s were taught four simple sorting and grouping tasks and then asked to teach the same tasks to their children. Based on their observations, Hess & Shipman concluded that the deficient verbal and behavioral patterns in mother-child relationships among poor Black families produced a child “who relates to authority rather than rationale, who, although often compliant, is not largely reflective of his behavior, and for whom the consequences of an act are largely considered in terms of immediate punishment or reward rather than future effects of long-range goals” (1965: 885). It is this conditioning, the men argued, that preempts the child’s eventual failure in school. The understanding of poor Black people’s predisposition to failure, whether it conceived of as culturally or biologically determined, ignores the myriad factors that have protecting and supported the stability of the White family, the most important of which is the dissolution of the Black family. Hess & Shipman’s inattention to the relationship between White success, familial or otherwise, and Black failure reduces both to their collective merit. Absent from their understanding of the Black condition is the reality that White racial dominance has been achieved through the enslavement of Black people.

While studies like Hess & Shipman’s were pointing to poor Black culture as the cause of the achievement gap (Deutsch, 1963; Goldberg, 1963; Strom, 1965), Siegfried Engelmann was working with a small group of pre-school students to discover “how many T.V. ads it would take to hook children on a particular chocolate bar” (M. Clarke,

interview via email, December 4, 2009). Engelmann, a White man, was born in Illinois and had no academic training in Education or Child Development. To this day, his only degree is a B.S. in Philosophy (Nadler, 1998). Surprised by the lack of information about children's cognitive development that he found while doing market research, Engelmann turned his attention to early childhood education.

Using his twin sons as case studies and test subjects (M. Clarke, interview via email, December 4, 2009), Engelmann developed a pedagogical philosophy focused on “skills communicated with logical precision in discrete, child-sized bits; careful measurement of mastery; rapid correction of mistakes; strict schedules; an early emphasis on phonics and computation; and incessant review to integrate old skills with new” (Nadler, 1998). Engelmann's philosophy would later develop into Direct Instruction (DI), a scripted curriculum renowned for its success teaching reading in low-income and under-achieving schools across the United States.

Engelmann's work with his sons in the '60s produced remarkable results: the two boys began to count, perform simple arithmetic and within a year were already solving basic algebraic equations. Engelmann video taped his sons and shared the footage with education researcher Carl Bereiter who was a Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana's Institute for Research on Exceptional Children. Like Engelmann, Bereiter subscribed to the cognitive school of psychology, which states that “an individual's achievement in life depends very largely on what he has been helped to learn before the age of four and that millions of children are irreparably damaged because they do not learn enough during this crucial period” (Phi Delta Kappan, 1967). Bereiter was working on educational models that would close the

achievement gap between the disadvantaged students he worked with and their peers who did not come from “culturally deficient” families. Bereiter was impressed with Engelmann’s methods and together the two men created a pre-school program that attempted to close the achievement gap with programs “designed to induce logical thinking and clear speaking” (1967), skills that Engelmann believed were both essential to academic success and underdeveloped in disadvantaged students.

In 1966, Bereiter & Engelmann drew on their experience working with students at the University of Illinois and explained their pedagogical philosophy in *Teaching disadvantaged children in the preschool*, which contains the early teaching models and pedagogical style that would become Direct Instruction. The first fifteen children to receive instruction following Bereiter & Engelmann’s model “were selected with the assistance of teachers in a predominately Negro school district in a community where the Negro population has, by northern standards, an exceptionally low per-capita income” (1966: 52) Additionally, all the selected students had older siblings who had trouble in school and came from homes that their teachers judged “especially unfavorable educationally” (1966: 52). Although Direct Instruction would go on to be implemented in White classrooms and in private schools with wealthier student bodies (M. Clarke, interview via email, December 4, 2009), the curriculum emerged through research on Black students.

Teaching and learning follow distinct principles in DI schools. Bereiter & Engelmann explain that,

Teaching in an academically oriented preschool is a highly skilled, intellectually

demanding job, requiring the highest standards of professionalism. There is no use looking around for “wonder” teachers who possess all the requisite skills as natural gifts. Such a teacher does not exist. The skills have to be learned, and a reasonably intelligent, open-minded, and determined teacher can learn them. (1966: 104).

Following this conception of teaching, Bereiter & Engelmann (1966) offer scripted guidelines for teachers of Direct Instruction to follow. The two men explain that they do not desire to stamp out teachers’ individuality, but rather to discourage “a sort of misplaced individualism that is indulged at the expense of the children’s learning” (1966: 104). To further illustrate their point they compare teachers to doctors, saying,

We can expect a physician to be an individual, but we do not expect the kind of medicine he prescribes or the size of the incision he makes to vary with his mood. Teaching new concepts to naïve children is often as delicate a task as making an incision (1966: 104).

The scripts in the 1966 book are rudimentary, but those developed later by the National Institute for Direct Instruction are expansive guides that teachers use to lead entire class periods.

Students in Direct Instruction classrooms receive small amounts of information verbally from their teacher. The information is then repeated and practiced to the teacher (and her script’s) satisfaction. The repetition is typically performed in large groups, with students responding in unison at the teacher’s signal. As Bereiter & Engelmann (1966)

explain in their scripts, the signal can be a snap, clap, or stomp used to indicate that it is the students' turn to speak. Students are introduced to concepts through simple statements that require an ascending amount of participation and understanding. These levels are broken down clearly by Bereiter & Engelmann,

- 1.) Require the child to point or *locate* the instance of the concept nonverbally. "Show me which truck is bigger"
- 2.) Require the child to *answer* (with one word) *yes-no* questions about the presentation. "Is the truck bigger?"
- 3.) Require the child to *repeat* the basic statements; present questions that require these statements as answers. "Tell me, is this truck bigger than this truck? Give me the whole answer. *Yes, this truck is bigger than this truck*"
- 4.) Require the child to *identify* the relationship by producing the appropriate statement without the support of a directed question. "Tell me about this truck" (1966: 111).

Bereiter & Engelmann promote this kind of student-teacher interaction because it responds adequately to the "language-deprived child," with whom they believe to be working. Teachers are told to avoid varying sentence structure and to "adhere to a rigid repetitive presentation pattern" (1966: 111) to avoid confusing and frustrating their students.

In their book, Bereiter & Engelmann's (1966) critique of dominant teaching practices and recent educational scholarship dialectically outlines three central qualities

that characterize what the authors called “direct teaching,” the precursor to Direct Instruction (DI). Aside from scripted lesson plans and repetitive learning, DI is guided by Bereiter & Engelmann’s beliefs that teachers should “use unison responses whenever possible” (112); “never work with a child individually in a study group for more than 30 seconds”; (113) “phrase statements rhythmically” (113); “require the children to speak in loud, clear voices” (113); “not hurry children or encourage them to talk fast” (114); “clap to accent basic language patterns and conventions” (114; “use questions liberally” (115).

Observers of DI classrooms, especially kindergarten classroom, will quickly notice the implementation of these principles. The teacher is speaking from a scripted lesson plan, evident in her clear and uniformly worded instructions to the class. The structured, regimented environment of the classroom is displayed in the students’ placement at individual desks where their posture is monitored. Finally, there is little variety among the materials available to the students. Whereas more traditional kindergarten classrooms may have a variety of play areas, a small library, and many kinds of visual and tactile stimulation the DI classroom is hyper-focused on verbal communication and interpretation above other means of expression and consciously excludes nonverbal modes of inquiry and expression.

Bereiter & Engelmann’s conception of the achievement gap is in line with most other studies of the same time period that identified the experience of a childhood in poverty as the cause of various forms of cognitive underdevelopment that take place before kindergarten. While Bereiter & Engelmann do not explicitly racialize “disadvantaged,” “culturally deficient,” or “naïve,” their terms for students at the low end of the achievement gap, the authors consistently draw upon case studies of “Southern

Negroes,” Puerto Ricans, and immigrant children that conflate the students underdevelopment with their Otherness (1966). When these children enter school, Bereiter & Engelmann claim, their developmental delays become amplified and the gap between them and their “advantaged” classmates steadily increases. However, the authors do not interpret this phenomenon as proof that disadvantaged students cannot learn. Bereiter & Engelmann compared disadvantaged and advantaged students’ IQ test results from subsections that did not rely on prior knowledge and found that in these categories, except in extreme cases of cognitive disability, students from disadvantaged backgrounds scored on par with advantaged ones. From this the authors determined that “what disadvantaged children lack is learning, not the fundamental capacity to learn” (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966: 5). The focus on disadvantaged children’s cognitive potential for learning, if taught appropriately, led to DI’s intense focus on the equal importance of the nature of the instruction as the material selected to be taught. In short, it was Engelmann’s attention to instruction led him to develop a scripted curriculum.

Drawn from Bereiter & Engelmann’s understanding of disadvantaged students is their concept that the education of disadvantaged children suffers from a perpetual deficit of time as students entering school from “disadvantaged” families must be taught more material in less time in order to catch up to their classmates and close the gap. Bereiter & Engelmann believed that the best way to close the achievement gap, while respecting the limitation of time, was to focus instruction on certain learning goals and areas in which students may progress rapidly (1966: 10). The need for “selection and exclusion” in choosing what material is taught is contrary to the “whole child” approach to early childhood education.

The whole child philosophy, alternately called enrichment, states that children are best served in the early years of their education by exposure to a wide range of mental and physical exercises that develop their minds and bodies and expose them to numerous venues in which they may be successful (Hart & Burts & Charlesworth, 1997).

According to Bereiter & Engelmann (1966), teachers who prescribe to the whole child model falsely see it combating the achievement gap by exposing disadvantaged children to the kind of experiences and environments “typical” of middle class upbringing. This increased exposure, often called enrichment, is intended to mitigate the stifling impact of an impoverished childhood.

Bereiter & Engelmann’s critique of the enrichment model shaped DI’s focus on a structured, regimented and verbally focused teaching environment. According to the authors, enrichment programs aim to fortify the preschool with the “maximum quantity of experiences believed to contribute to the culturally privileged child’s superiority in learning” (1966: 8). Bereiter & Engelmann argue that the traditional preschool’s emphasis on visual instead of verbal information, peer instead of adult interaction and freedom instead of limitations actually creates a “lower-class” atmosphere. This atmosphere positively stimulates the intellectual development of middle class children who, Bereiter & Engelmann presume, receive the opposite kind of instruction outside of school where their lives are governed by parental relationships and structured activities that rely heavily on verbal communication. The authors argue that disadvantaged children need a preschool environment where the opposite values are stressed so that they may develop sophisticated verbal communication skills and internalize structure and limits not

directly connected to punishment in order to be successful in school (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966).

Engelmann's partnership with Bereiter garnered his unique method national attention because of its success fostering early literacy and math skills in the students with whom he worked. While Engelmann was refining his process, President Johnson's War on Poverty was well underway. In response to growing research on the correlation between education and wealth, the Johnson administration and the Department of Education launched Project Follow Through in 1967 (Grossen, 1996). Aimed to lift children born into poor families out of poverty, Project Follow Through is one of the world's largest education experiments, which was directed explicitly at the achievement gap (Grossen, 1996). Project Follow Through provided school districts across the country with funding to implement a variety of new curricula and pedagogical philosophies, including Direct Instruction.

Since 1967, Engelmann and his DI team have researched and refined their curriculum. Direct Instruction still rests on Engelmann's foundational theories developed by practice with his children, but is presently coupled with,

Homogeneous and flexible [student] grouping, appropriate student placement within the instructional sequence, daily practice and application of skills and strategies, scheduling that allows for cross-classroom grouping and provides sufficient daily instructional time, instructional activities that motivate, engage, and interest students (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2006).

The current manifestation of Direct Instruction is implemented in schools across the country and was recently hailed by the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center and the American Institutes for Research as one of thirteen effective school reform models. However, supporters of DI believe that the program's potential has been stunted since Project Follow Through, where "DI was clearly the most effective program evaluated...but those results were buried, probably because influential backers of the other programs were embarrassed by the results" (M. Clarke, interview via email, December 4, 2009).

In 1996, Dr. Tally Clarke was awarded a \$400,000 grant from The Abell Foundation to found the Harbor Pedagogy Project (HPP), a non-profit charter school operator that focuses on transforming "underperforming, high-poverty schools into high-performing charter schools by implementing research-based instructional methods and providing customized professional development, performance monitoring, and other key program supports" (Harbor Pedagogy Project, 2009). Dr. Clarke and the newly formed HPP were in search of a "Calvert-like"¹ curriculum that could be implemented in her city

¹ Calvert is a private school founded in 1896. The school serves mostly White and upper class students in kindergarten through eighth grade on their thirteen-acre campus at the heart of the Canterbury-Tuscany neighborhood. Like the "charming," "hidden," and "European-style" (Jones-Bonbrest, 2008) of the neighborhood where it sits, Calvert is small, selective and based on traditional German-style kindergarten. The Calvert curriculum focuses on a solid grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic wherein extensive writing exercises are the central means for students to express their comprehension (Calvert School, 2009). Perfection is the goal and children begin each day correcting the mistakes in their writing from the day before (Janofsky, 1995). A \$100,000 grant from the Abell foundation allowed the Barclay public elementary school to adopt the Calvert curriculum with great success (Janofsky, 1995). Carter G. Woodson elementary, a mostly Black title I school, was chosen as a second test site for the curriculum, but the "dilemma" according to then-Headmaster Merrill S. Hall III, was how to export the Calvert curriculum "and maintain the integrity of the Calvert name" (Janofsky, 1995). The curriculum was eventually withdrawn from Public schools.

when she “bumped into DI” while looking through results data from Project Follow Through (M. Clarke, interview via email, December 4, 2009). Besides DI, Dr. Clarke also looked into Success For All (SFA), another curriculum that had strong results from Project Follow Through, but was skeptical of SFA’s feasibility “in the poorest urban neighborhoods” (M. Clarke, interview via email, December 4, 2009).

The HPP began implementing Direct Instruction in 1997 (Harbor Pedagogy Project, 2009), and although Direct Instruction is also implemented at Roland Park elementary-middle school, a wealthier public school with a higher percentage of White students on the north side of the city, the current manifestation of Direct Instruction serves mostly low-income and African-American students as Engelmann & Bereiter did in Illinois. The HPP currently operates five schools within the same urban district. At three of those five schools, the student body is between 99 and 100 percent Black. Only two of the HPP schools do not have a plurality of African American students. At the whitest of the HPP schools, 60 percent of the student body is White, 23 percent is African American, 8 percent is Hispanic, 7 percent is Native American and 2 percent is Asian. At the other school without a plurality of Black students, nearly 50 percent of the student body speaks Spanish as a first language, and at all five HPP schools over 81 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch (Harbor Pedagogy Project, 2009).

DI & The Pathologization of Black Students

Like the education reforms led by the Freedmen’s Bureau and the freedmen’s aid societies, Direct Instruction mobilizes assumptions about Black inferiority that ultimately

reinforce White supremacy by pathologizing Black student and families. Using the theories of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993, 1995), interest convergence (Bell, 1980), and colorblindness (Gotanda, 1991; Haney Lopez, 2007) to expose the machinations of White supremacy within DI, I will examine how particular aspects of the curriculum pathologize Black students. Drawing on data from my interviews, I use colorblindness to interrogate how DI's selective race consciousness pathologizes Black students. Using interest convergence, I show how DI erases community development's material importance and transforms this aspect of Black schooling into a means to *highlight* the failure of the community, further pathologizing Black families. Whiteness as property provides the analytical frame to lay bare how the atomization of Black students within the educational system reinforces racialized property in which Whites *own* high quality education and Blacks own only individual participation.

Dr. O. Wegner, curriculum developer for the HPP, repeatedly asserted a disconnection between Black educational achievement and Black community development that reveals the underlying distinction between Black self-ownership and Black systemic-ownership. Blacks, he asserted, owned themselves, but Whites, we know from Harris (1995), owned the right to educational success. Operating under the guise of educational advancement, many aspects of Direct Instruction work insidiously to expand and protect the notion that Black people and Black communities are sources of pathology. This message is harmful not only because it marginalizes Black people, and all people of Color, but because in doing so it obscures the structures and institutions that are responsible for the terrible conditions of low-income, urban populations across the United States.

Colorblindness

Dr. Clarke is the president of the Harbor Pedagogy Project (HPP), an organization responsible for schooling over 1,600 students (Harbor Pedagogy Project, 2010) using Direct Instruction in five schools. Of the 1,649 students in HPP schools whose race is reported, 1,324, or 80%, of the pupils are Black—a fact difficult to ascertain through Dr. Clarke’s colorblind language (Harbor Pedagogy Project, 2010). The reality is that DI was developed at a center for educating “disadvantaged” students (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966) and that the initial test group for the curriculum was drawn from predominately Black schools, indicating that “disadvantaged” was (and continues to) stand in for “Black” in DI rhetoric (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966). However, when I asked Dr. Clarke, in light of DI’s apparent connection to the Black schooling, to comment on how DI is particularly suited for Black students she said, “I do not know that African-American students have specific needs” (interview via email, December 2, 2009). Dr. Clarke’s colorblindness erases the positive role race plays in her students’ home lives, and could play in their school lives, thereby reducing it to a hindrance or pathology.

Dr. Clarke’s denial of the role that her students race plays as a significant factor to determine the kind of instruction they receive is troubling enough, as it refutes a body of scholarship on the importance of students’ race and home culture in the educational process (Delpit, 1995; Ladson Billings, 2005-A; Ladson Billings, 2005-B; Ladson Bilings & Tate, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). However, the reality of her position is more complicated as it employs the selective sight typical of colorblind policy and rhetoric in

which race is ignored in the language of the law, policy and other public discourse, but persistent in its application and the distribution of resources (Haney Lopez, 2006). Haney Lopez (2007) describes colorblindness as both as “sword” and a “shield.” As a sword, colorblindness erases racial markers thereby divesting communities of Color of the right to benefit from race-specific policies, which are re-classified as discrimination. As a shield, colorblindness defends the existing unequal distribution of resources along racial lines by denying the continuing importance of race and racism in power brokering U.S. institutions like schools and courtrooms (Haney Lopez, 2006). Despite erasing race as a relevant aspect of her students’ education, she nonetheless continued to see them as “different” or somehow Other. This aspect of her colorblindness is visible in comments on how she came to DI. Searching for a “Calvert-like” curriculum, Dr. Clarke was attracted to Success for All (SFA) and DI,

...but SFA required hiring part-time tutors. The places to which we were directed to see the effectiveness of SFA were working class communities where there were non-working moms happy for the part-time tutoring opportunity. We wondered how feasible finding part-time tutors would be in the poorest urban neighborhoods (interview via email, December 3, 2009).

Apparently, Dr. Clarke is not blind to the reality that her students’ geography and class affects their education, she is just blind to its real importance. Searching for a “Calvert-like” curriculum, the underlying force behind the HPP’s adoption of DI, demonstrates Dr. Clarke’s belief that what is good for rich, White students is good. Period. Although Dr.

Clarke acknowledges that poor, “urban” or “disadvantaged” students may be “different” than the students at the Calvert School, she does not assert that this difference has a positive influence. Instead, her students’ difference represents a deficit and presents only a hindrance. Curricula, like SFA, may be rejected on the basis of “poor,” “urban” students’ condition, but not created out of it. Colorblindness was operating in Dr. Clarke’s decision-making process as she did acknowledge that the group she was trying to educate was different (read: Non-White, non-middle class), but she was unwilling to seek out a curriculum designed explicitly *for* (let alone *by*) the community she was trying to reach. Dr. Clarke’s colorblindness reduced her idea of how her students could learn. Instead of identifying their difference and then using it as a source of knowledge through which curricula could be created, she erased the positive reality of her students’ Blackness and sought a curriculum that would undo the damage race had already caused her students.

One of the essential implications of Dr. Clarke’s colorblind reasoning is the conceptualization of her students’ difference as deficit. Dr. Clarke’s underlying awareness—or sight, at the very least—of her students’ race and class does not lead her to design of choose a curricula based on their condition, but, as is evident in the SFA example, she is willing to reject options based her perception of the *limits* the students’ location yields. Dr. Clarke’s colorblindness reinforces her belief that her students’ race and class locations are detriments to their education and not essential factors in their lives—with both positive cultural and negative structural impacts—that carry significant knowledge to which a curriculum could respond. Dr. Clarke’s marginalization of non-White and lower-class cultures and epistemologies excludes their inclusion in civilizing,

reforming or uplifting education, which pathologizes the members of that community and establishes schools as institutions that educate students of Color's home cultures *out of* them.

The way that Dr. Clarke's colorblindness pathologizes Black students and their families is an extension of colorblindness' affirmation of the status quo. As Haney Lopez (2007) writes, historically, colorblind policy has "preserve[d] racial hierarchy, by upholding facially neutral but nevertheless deeply oppressive state action" (995). According to Haney Lopez (2007), colorblind policy must be properly identified as a means, not an end, that "takes on political and social significance only by virtue of its instant application" (995). In terms of education, colorblindness erases the socio-cultural and epistemological wealth that students of Color's racial identities carry and leaves intact only the historically constant belief in the normativity of Whiteness (Giroux, 1983; Harris, 1995; Kaomea, 2003;) and the endemic failure of Color (Sacks, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Colorblindness, in its most rich complexity, is the conceptual erasure of Whiteness and its attendant power structures. Post-raciality, the contemporary zenith of colorblindness, does not erase the racialized barriers that people of Color face in the US, but the reality of those barriers as they are constructed and reinforced by Whiteness. In the end, Dr. Clarke is right when she says, "DI is less connected to disadvantaged students than is often assumed" (interview via email, December 3, 2009). Indeed, nothing about Direct Instruction explicitly addresses the particular needs of the student population it was designed to reform, and because of this it perpetuates racialized inequalities by (mis)educating low-income Black and Brown students into the role that our racist society has prescribed for them.

Interest Convergence

Despite the large number of Black teachers who volunteered in the Freedmen's Bureau and aid societies' schools (Butchart, 1990), White-led education reforms require the participation of White people. Illustrative of schooling trends in the U.S., the survival of these reforms was based on their ability to attract White participants. Bereiter & Engelmann, both White men, were attracted to teaching "disadvantaged" students, and all three members of the Harbor Pedagogy Projects "leadership team" are White (Harbor Pedagogy Project, 2010). The proliferation of White teachers and administrators working in Black schooling demonstrates that White's interests are somehow met through the teaching of Black students. In this section, I examine how the convergence of White interests in Black education can lead to the pathologization of Black students.

Aid societies in the 1860s recruited heavily for White teachers. A 1964 magazine advertisement calling for volunteers to teach in one aid society's schools read,

ABOLITIONISTS! Dyed with pure dye—men who dare face this miserable, wheedling conservatism and do something to merit at least the prevalent epithet 'nigger on the brain' (McPherson, 1964: 386)

This advertisement centers the teacher himself in the act of teaching ex-slaves in the South. What knowledge the teacher disseminates, the students, and the impact the teacher has on those students become secondary—almost like props—in what is essentially a

personal crusade for the volunteer teacher to prove his worth. The New York City Teaching Fellows, a highly selective program that recruits elite college graduates to teach in struggling New York City schools, advertises to potential applicants with the catchphrase,

There are a million kids in NYC who could use your talents. Think outside the cubicle. (NYC Teaching Fellows, 2008).

When I asked Dr. O. Wegner, Director of Academics for the HPP, why he was invested in the education of underperforming students, and why he thought Engelmann was, he told me,

Because of the challenge. It's not hard to teach more advantaged kids, but you have to be a really good teacher to teach disadvantaged students. Zig mostly thought his efforts were more needed there than with the gifted... (interview via email, December 4, 2009).

The persistent trend is that teaching Black children, whether recently freed from slavery or currently living in the inner city, has become a means for Whites to prove themselves. Liberal Whites, abolitionists, idealists and education reformists, have been enticed to prove their nobility through teaching like the fairytale prince who proves his worth by slaying the dragon. For the prince and the volunteer, the act is for his own accolade because it protects the "civilized" society that he dominates. In fact, the life of

the rescued princess—the symbol of civilization—becomes in itself a testament to his greatness. Education of the freedmen and “disadvantaged” students acts as a service to Whites while reinforcing people of Color’s position as outsiders who threaten White society (Fredrickson, 1971).

The incorporation of White interests in the education of Black students demonstrates the complexity of interest convergence theory, especially the way it straddles the line between critique and prescription. The theory of interest convergence (Bell, 1980) suggests that if people of Color can line up their interests with those of the dominant, White, group than sufficient power can be leveraged towards structural change. Bell (2004) explains the failures of Civil Rights reforms via interest convergence, but also posits it as the means by which they, and all other legislation aimed at Black people (beginning with Emancipation) came about. In fact, given the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992) interest convergence is the *only* way for these reforms to come to be. So, the use of interest convergence as a tactic rests on the understanding of its faults and the fore knowledge that it *is* a tactic, and not a solution.

For example, in 1963 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) headed by Bob Moses recruited college students from the North to come south and work on voter registration in Mississippi (Hine, 2010). The project, later called Freedom Summer, mobilized large numbers of White college students with the knowledge that they would attract press to SNCC’s work in Mississippi. SNCC was an interracial group that consciously invoked interest convergence by appealing to White liberal sensibilities to further their political goals of developing the African-American voting block in Mississippi. As Carson Clayborne (1995) writes, SNCC struggled with the pros and cons

of including Whites in their movement. “Although the presence of the volunteers helped create a more favorable climate for change, white workers could unwittingly hamper the efforts of local black leaders to create enduring black-controlled institutions...” (1995: 111). In a true invocation of interest convergence as a tactic Bob Moses shouldered this risk for the benefit that White students “bring the rest of the country with them. They’re from good schools and their parents are influential. The interest of the country is awakened” (Moses, quoted in Clayborne, 1995: 112). Moses acknowledged the value of working with Whites and the disadvantages it brought. He accepted and maximized their benefits while consciously and actively diminishing the harm that White volunteers could inflict. For example, potential volunteers were screened so that anyone deemed “dangerous to the movement” (quoted in Clayborne, 1995: 111) would be excluded. Interest convergence describes how non-dominant groups can leverage social crises in order to make racialized gains otherwise unattainable in White dominated society. In this case, SNCC attracted White student volunteers by leveraging the brutal reality of Jim Crow in contrast to the “ethical” and “moral” principles of idealistic northern Whites in order to publicize the group’s actions nationwide. The crisis of White ethics under Jim Crow was the White interest that met the non-dominant interest to publicize voting suppression in Mississippi.

The fault of the 1864 advertising campaign, Dr. Wegner’s motivation and the educational ideology they imply is that there is not true interest convergence. True interest convergence, meaning that which creates structural changes that benefit non-dominant groups, must involve a leveraging of crises between the affected parties. Interest convergence is not about an *alignment* of interests among Blacks and Whites.

Instead, the theory speaks to a *convergence* of ends in which White actors (whether allies or enemies) are not necessarily *aware* of Blacks' ultimate goals. In fact, tacitly central to Bell's theory of interest convergence is that need to avoid overt alignment in order to avoid White appropriation of Black goals for their own ends.

From these advertisements it is clear that Whites are operating purely on self-serving assumption that is not in dialogue with Black people's exploitation of a social, economic or political crisis. As my history chapter demonstrated, Black people *had* schools and other educational institutions founded and controlled by the Black community (Anderson, 1988). What Black people lacked was land (Anderson, 1988) and the freedmen's schools were formed by Whites in response to the fabricated crisis of Black incivility, the "fact" used to perpetuate the existing distribution of land. In other words, Black pathology was drawn upon as *the* crisis to which White society must respond before the freedmen could become full citizens. The aid societies did not engage the freedmen directly and craft schools together, nor did Dr. Clarke and Dr. Wegner choose a curriculum developed by the Black community. Instead, they assumed that their literacy and cultural capital more than qualified them—indeed, justified them—as teachers of Black children. The 1864 advertisement reveals that the flaw in freedmen's schools was not interest convergence, but false empathy. As Richard Delgado (1996) writes false empathy, born of blindness, is a situation in which "a white believes he or she is identifying with a person of color, but in fact is doing so only in a slight, superficial way" (70). So, interest convergence often operates on an axis of false empathy because it rests on people of Color's ability to steer Whites' desire for self-preservation away from efforts that degrade non-dominant groups. In this case, the blindness is the White

teachers' inability to understand that the freedom and privilege they hold as the source of their qualification to teach is the same force that has caused the freedmen's illiteracy or the urban student's "disadvantage."

I do not mean this figuratively. As Ladson Billings (2006) points out, the common schools movement in the North that established systems of public education was made possible by New England's burgeoning textile industry. "What is omitted from this history," Ladson Bilings reminds us, "is that the major raw material of those textile factories, which drove the economy of the East, was cotton—the crop that depended primarily on the labor of enslaved Africans" (2006: 6). Therefore, it was the denial of education to enslaved African-American children that yielded the system of free education for White children in the North, some of whom would later come South in a noble fury to civilize the freedmen through education. This dynamic is the practice of education for enslavement, and its deployment is best understood through the analytical frame of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) which I will cover in the next section.

In the contemporary educational landscape, Kozol (2005) and Vaught's (2009) work on funding inequality within urban school districts and between urban and nearby suburban ones demonstrates that the wealth and luxury of schools that serve primarily White, middle class students is directly connected to the under funding of schools with poorer, Blacker student bodies. In Vaught's (2009) article, she describes Differential Student Funding, a citywide initiative that attached more dollars to students the district recognizes as requiring more services in school. However, the extra dollars stopped following students when they enter their particular school and are pooled among the entire student body. As a result, Medgar Evers High School was able to use the

additionally monies it received from a sizeable population of students of Color enrolled in a special education program to fund and expand an elite, college prep program within the school that benefited White students almost exclusively (Vaught, 2009).

Blind to this reality, White adults are enticed to work in Black education as an altruistic service. By and large, the White freedmen's teachers, called the "army of civilization" (Butchart, 1988) did not move south to repay the debt they owed to Black children. Instead, like Dr. Wegner, they came to "volunteer," to oppose conservatism and make a heroic gesture that was really about them. Had these men and women acknowledged the debt they owed to the freedmen, perhaps they would have been able to move closer to providing education for liberation rather than schooling for social reproduction.

Within this context, the structural and institutional barriers to Black student and community achievement are erased and Black failure is reduced to level of individual, or familial, pathology. Indeed, the pathology is taken as a given when White reformers like Dr. Wegner consider their work a "challenge" and success an unlikely reality. The danger here is that Black failure becomes normalized, expected even, as educational efforts are severed from community development and students' potential move into higher socio-economic strata. Emblematic of this pitfall are Dr. Wegner's comments on community development.

Halle-Erby: Is community development a part of the HPP's mission?

Dr. Wegner: Not so much, but everyone loves it, it's easier to do, and there's more grants available to support it.

Halle-Erby: What do you mean by “it’s easier to do”?

Dr. Wegner: Almost any community development activity is deemed a success just because it happens. And lots of people want to volunteer to do them. Teaching behaviors happen but it’s not a success unless the students actually learn and lots of people can’t make that happen. There’s little in the way of outcomes that are expected from community development—in my mind anyway. So that makes it easier to do (interview via email, December 4, 2009).

Dr. Wegner’s concept of community development is completely distinct from his understanding of teaching, which hints at the underlying truth that for Dr. Wegner teaching is about his own success with individual learners and not the advancement of a community. As told by many historians, education has been, and continues to be, a Black cultural value (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1988; Douglas, 2005) tied intimately to dreams of racial uplift and development. The incredible importance of this aspect of Black schooling is evident in the foundation of clandestine Black schools in the antebellum south (Anderson, 1988) and the push for public schooling by free northern Black communities that predated the White common schools movement (Douglas, 2005). Education, most broadly conceived, is a fundamental value and practice in Black communities. The connection between schooling and community development continued beyond the Civil War and Reconstruction into the Civil Rights movement (Muse, 1964) and persists today. However, Direct Instruction, like the White-lead educational efforts during Reconstruction, erased this aspect of schooling to court falsely empathetic White interests that transformed Black schooling into individualized moments of success and

failures. Because these programs obscure the structural factors that affect Black schooling they pathologize Black students and naturalize failures so that Black students' achievement becomes a measure of the teacher's ability and their failure a further indicator of their deficiency.

Whiteness as Property

Extending from Dr. Wegner's understanding of community development is the fiction that schooling affects students autonomously when in fact schooling is a community resource that impacts families and neighborhoods. As Jean Anyon (2005) argues, "education policy as historically conceived has not been adequate to the task of increasing urban school achievement to acceptable levels" (66). She argues that educational policy works in a matrix with housing, employment, labor unionization, and political districting policy and reform. Education aimed at closing the achievement gap must pay special attention to Anyon's research as it refutes the idea that education alone can reverse the racialized underdevelopment that characterizes the gap (Ladson Bilings, 2004). Education must be contextualized within the matrix of public and private institutions that create and maintain power (Foucault, 1978) to be used as an instrument to close the achievement gap. However, Dr. Wegner's thoughts on community development, the relationship between DI and parents and DI's connection to other social programs demonstrates his belief that students are autonomous actors whose development is not connected the broader development of their communities. Using Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995), I examine how this forced disconnect is a manifestation White's

ownership of the educational system, and specifically education success, and Blacks' exclusion from this racialized property. Additionally, I use Harris' (1995) principle of alienability to describe how Direct Instruction enslaves its students through oppressive pedagogy that operates under the guise of extending knowledge and expanding the citizenry.

Harris (1995) demonstrates that Whiteness carries with it the ownership of rights. The atomization of Black student development from Black community development is a manifestation of whiteness as property as it is essentially a denial of Blacks' right to own the educational system. Instead, Black families can only be responsible for motivating themselves within the system as-is, which establishes a false neutrality that erases the central place of racism within our society. Think, for example, of the recent rise in college attendance among women. At many institutions, young White women now make up a larger percentage of the college-going population than young White men, and across the board White women make up the largest applicant group (Anderson, 2002). The shift has drawn national media attention, including front page articles in the New York Times (Anderson, 2002), that call for systemic investigations into the cause of this change. Unlike the failure of Black students, when White boys' dominance appears to be waning, regardless of reality, our attention is immediately drawn to larger social, political and economic factors. The differential treatment of Black and White student failure demonstrates the degree to which Whites own educational success and Blacks do not. Instead, Blacks own only individualized effort, not the systems through which merit is established and doled out. As such, Blacks' effort is all they have a right to, so when they fail the onus is on them, further proof of their pathology because they do not own enough

of the system to hold it accountable for their position within it.

Dr. Wegner's distinction between teaching and community development, quoted above, demonstrates his belief in student's autonomy from their families and neighborhoods and a denial of the connection between education, prison, healthcare, and employment programs. When asked about similarities between Direct Instruction and other social programs targeted at underserved families Dr. Wegner said, "Other than wanting to be a help or be a resource, I can't quite imagine any similarities." Further, when commenting on the particular relationship between DI schools and the families they serve, Dr. Wegner said,

Schools don't relate to parents and communities. Sorry to sound flip, but...parents are happy to put their children in a school where they are assured of success and where they make steady progress. So parents like DI. DI philosophy does not blame parents or expect that parents will teach the material to the students at home in the evenings. DI is predicated on the notion that the teacher in the classroom is responsible for learning—not the parents (interview via email, November 30, 2009).

Dr. Wegner's comments specifically, and the atomization of Black students generally, promotes a false notion that underachieving students of Color must be educated at the expense of their families and communities, and not in conjunction with them. Wegner's dismissal of his students' parents as important transmitters of knowledge demonstrates DI's belief that the students they teach come into the classroom, at best, without existing knowledge. At worst, the curriculum demonizes the families they work

with to such an extent that they conclude that what the students learn at home is subtractive; a corrosive force against the instructive (read: civilizing) knowledge transmitted in the classroom. The pathologization of Black students demonstrates the disturbing reality that, as Anderson (1988) wrote, “both schooling for democratic citizenship and schooling for second-class citizenship have been basic traditions in American education” (2). Education that conceives of students home cultures as deficient and devoid of knowledge is subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999), and ultimately divests students of Color of the resources they need to participate consciously in a society that benefits from their failure.

Whites’ assumed qualification for teaching Black children, whether in the Freedmen’s Bureau schools or DI classrooms, comes from their racialized ownership of humanity (Harris, 1995). As Harris (1995) demonstrated, through the system of slavery Whites came to own the exclusive right to be human, which carries with it ownership of intelligence, virtue and morality. Humanity as a property right bestows the holder with the exclusive right to transfer, what is called alienability. In regards to knowledge, another racialized property of Whiteness, alienability refers to teaching. Direct Instruction is not a means of alienating, or transferring, the racialized property of humanity (in the form of knowledge) to Black students. The alienation of Whiteness as property requires the extension of its rights and privileges to others. In education, alienation is the essential factor of liberatory education because it bestows upon students the right to succeed, to earn, to become fully human. Although its founders and operators claim the opposite, the underlying pathologization of Black students within DI demonstrates that the curriculum actually controls and limits knowledge under the guise

of extending it. Direct Instruction holds knowledge hostage to Whiteness by withholding the right to humanity—protecting it as an exclusive property of Whiteness—and teaching Black inferiority.

Decoding

The goal of the people who develop DI tools is to help teachers and students be more effective, that is to help teachers teach as efficiently and effectively as possible and to help each student learn as much as possible as quickly as possible.

—*Dr. Tally Clarke (interview via email, December 2, 2009)*

The pathologization of Black students runs through the core of Direct Instruction, albeit in coded terms. In Bereiter & Engelmann’s (1966) argument for Direct Instruction they argued that the “lag” between disadvantaged and advantaged students begins in the home and is exacerbated during the schooling process, eventually manifesting itself in a wide achievement gap. Their solution is a curriculum that teaches disadvantaged students all that they have not learned in the home—and that their advantaged students presumably learned before entering the classroom—during the school day. In their words, “if the lag is to be made up during the school years, then schools for disadvantaged children have to provide higher quality and faster-paced education than that provided for advantaged children” (1966: 6). Under the guise of rigor and cultural responsiveness, Direct Instruction actually promotes widespread notions of the culturally determined limitation of Black families’ ability to *know* what is important in life and to *teach* those

skills and lessons to their own children.

Conclusion

Racism, Resistance and Moving Forward

Come celebrate
with me that everyday
something had tried to kill me
and has failed

—Lucille Clifton (1993).

Pathologization is a means of othering people that justifies, and in fact defends, their irreprehensible treatment. Pathologizing the oppressed allows the dominant group to depoliticize their success and sever their privilege from the oppression it is built upon. The pathologization of Black students is so deeply embedded in the ideological foundation of Direct Instruction that it has been practically erased. DI's architects and operators ignore the underlying damage they do to their students and reconstruct their positions as altruistic, empathetic and scientific. To challenge this revision, I have employed Critical Race Theory in order to decode the foundational principles and rhetoric of Direct Instruction, revealing the ways in which it pathologizes Black students thus promoting education for social reproduction, or the perpetuation of slavery, instead of that for liberation.

This paper is about one of the many things that try to kill people of Color, as the poet Lucille Clifton put it. Clifton points out that these attacks are waged daily upon our

bodies and minds and, for the most part, we survive. Survival is a rightful cause for celebration, however this paper is not a celebration of self-preservation and resistance. The purpose of this paper has been to focus intensely on one particular way that people of Color are attacked through education, but it must be read in the context of survival and resistance. Taking the text of this argument out of the larger context of Black resistance struggles runs the risk of reifying the same conceptions of Black people that I argue against. So, investigation into the contemporary legacy of historical mechanisms through which Black people were pathologized must be read as inherently aberrational because they are perpetually met with Black resistance.

Speaking to the theoretical role of resistance, Giroux (1983) explains that recent scholarship has “attempted to demonstrate that the mechanisms of social and cultural reproduction are never complete and always meet with partially realized elements of opposition” (259). In other words, individual agency cannot be discounted in institutional studies of power. The role of the dissenter undeniable shapes our socio-cultural landscape, even in the face of persistent racial domination. Black students and parents have always been active participants in the history of Black schooling, under both Black and White-led educational movements. In many scenarios, Giroux writes, students “participate through oppositional behavior in a logic that very often consigns them to a position of class subordination and political defeat” (260). However, student resistance takes many forms, not all of which eventually reproduce the status quo. In addition, Black students’ and parents’ ability to maneuver through oppressive and degrading systems of education in search of skills and ideas that promote emancipation demonstrates the incompleteness typical of movements toward absolute subordination.

Living, as Freire (1970) argued is the fullest expression of humanity. Slavery, because it denies the true vocation of human life, is ultimately untenable and perpetually in crisis because it denies this cardinal principle.

However, despite the ultimate illogic of racism and structural domination—the inhumanity of it all—I do not suggest that the underlying pathologization of Black students in White-led reforms, like DI, is somehow less important, or disturbing, because it has not annihilated Black people. Nina Simone’s refrain “ain’t got no/I got life” (1968) unravels these seemingly antithetical points. Simone’s lyrics are a testament to survival and the importance of life above material wealth—and even social equality. Like Giroux’ writing on resistance theory, Simone speaks to the agency of the individual and the inestimable importance of survival as a political act. Simone celebrates resistance and tells her audience what a victory it is just to *be* Black in America. I recognize this point and, like other people of Color, am nourished by it. However, as Eduardo Galeano (1973) said in response to the historically entrenched wage and race disparities over the last five centuries in Latin America, “poverty is not written in the stars; underdevelopment is not one of God’s mysterious designs” (17). The normalization of inequality by the ruling class does not make the subordinate group’s exploitation acceptable. We must celebrate the courage and strength of our ancestors and our peers to make it though this world with their lives, but we must not be satisfied by those gains alone.

In the spring of 2010, the Insight Center for Community Economic Development released a troubling report on the state of the racialized wealth gap. Currently in the U.S., the median wealth for single Black men is \$7,900, \$9,730 for Hispanic men, and \$43,800 for single White men (Insight Center for Community Economic Development, 2010: 4).

The median wealth for single Black women is \$100, \$120 for Hispanic women, and \$41,000 for White women (Insight Center for Community Economic Development, 2010: 4). According to the Center “wealth, or net worth, refers to the value of one’s assets minus debts” (1). Wealth is what protects individuals and families from slipping into poverty immediately following job loss, health emergencies, or economic downturn. Without wealth, people Color, when able to beat the odds and move into the middle class, are precipitously placed on the ledge of poverty. The Insight Center’s report demonstrates that although progress has been made, the gains we have made allow people of Color, especially Black women, little more than the chance to momentarily occupy the middle class: to live, insecurely and in fleeting moments, with more than just life.

At this point in history, we must demand more. I believe that a collective demand for material equality does not run contradictory to the celebration of Black survival. Simone does not have life because she’s “got no.” It is the time, has always been the time, to push for both life and all the things Simone was denied. Where once the right to life was a noble rallying cry, we must now call for a right to education, healthcare, and home-ownership. In order to expand these rights, which have been the racialized property of Whiteness (Harris, 1995) we must deconstruct what Foucault (1978) called the “grid of intelligibility,” or the network of systems and institutions that create power and solidify it into the hands of the elite.

Deconstruction requires research. For investigation into the ways that schools pathologize Black students, I recommend inquiry into the industry of under-education. Like mass incarceration, I imagine that the mass under-education of students of Color has tangible and material benefits for certain people. Identifying how the achievement gap

functions as a profitable business, and for whom, would be an essential milestone towards dismantling the institutions that fail Black and Brown students.

I offer no answers, except that we must continually strive for sophisticated and nuanced understandings of power and the particular methods through which it protects the wealthy, the White and the male at the expense of the Black and Brown, the female and the poor. We must maintain the courage to see the brutal reality our society has created for what it is, and to carve out of it spaces and relationships where success is not a zero sum game. In these niches we can rest, think, and savor the struggle that nurtures us, even as it leaves scars on our skin.

I'm a blues man. A blues man is a prisoner of hope, and hope is a qualitatively different category than optimism. Optimism is a secular construct, a calculation of probability...hope wrestles with despair, but it doesn't generate optimism. It just generates this energy to be courageous, to beat witness, to see what the end is going to be. No guarantee, unfinished, open-ended.

—Cornel West (2007).

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