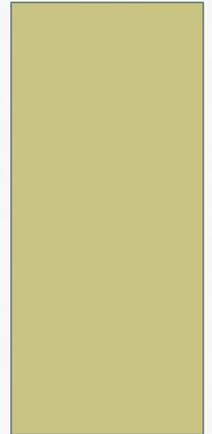


HEARING STUDENTS' VOICES ABOUT MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION PRACTICES

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BACKGROUND

- Many scholars argue the importance of teaching about culture and developing critical consciousness in youth
- Students who perceive more opportunities to learn about different cultures have greater interest in school (Tan, 1999) and higher grades (Chang & Le, 2010)



- Limited research on students' perspectives regarding multicultural curriculum (Howard, 2001; Martell, 2013)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do students report learning about race, culture, and diversity?
2. What understandings about race, diversity, and culture do students show?
3. What are the implications for multicultural education?

CURRENT STUDY

- 21 Black high school students
- Predominantly Black, urban school
- Students participated in a focus group and individual interview
- Analysis based on 14 interviews
- Names are pseudonyms

Interview Questions

- How do you define race?
- How do you define culture?
- How do you define diversity?
- Where did you learn your definitions?
- What do you learn about race, culture, and diversity in school?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Critical Race Consciousness (Carter, 2008)
 - Have an awareness of race and racism as a potential barrier to educational and life outcomes
 - Understand the historical and current impacts of racism on people of color
 - Have a positive racial identity

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006)
 - Racism and race privilege no longer exercise the power they once did
 - Operates under the assumption that we are living in a society that is 'post-race'
 - Minimization of racism
 - "Biologization of culture"

FINDINGS

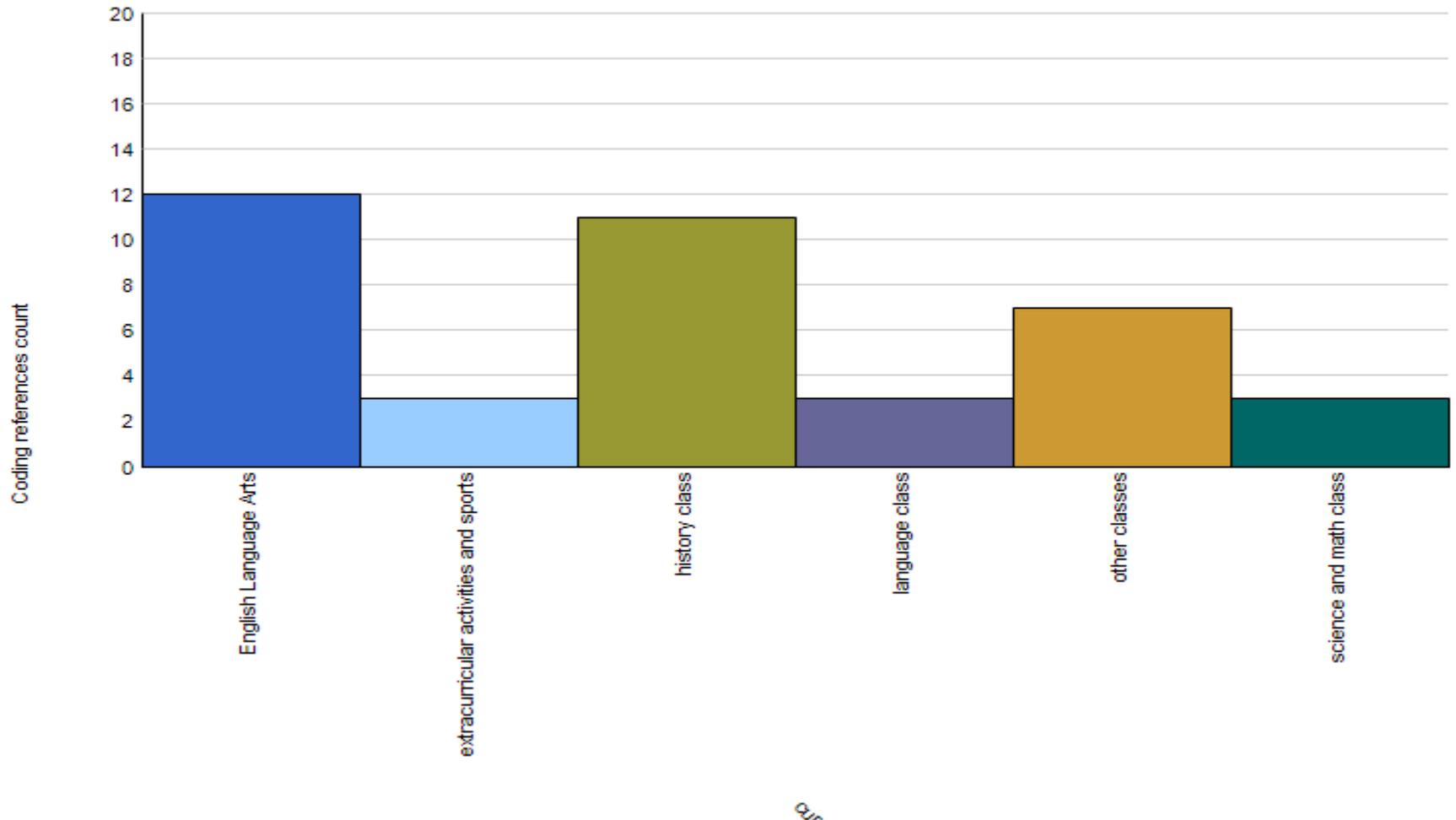
- Students have some exposure to curriculum on race and culture, but overall students desire more focused attention to these areas in their schooling
- Some students embody a critical race consciousness while others embody aspects of colorblindness/colorblind ideology
- Curricular activities that are designed to teach awareness may not

LEARNING ABOUT RACE AND CULTURE

- Jerome: We rarely even talk about race in this school.
- Jesse: We hardly even cover it. This is really catching us off guard because we don't really...we don't—we don't discuss it. It's like the elephant in the room.
- Tee: They don't talk about race here at school.
- Antonio: Yeah, they don't, um, I can say that like last year--they don't celebrate Black history month cause it's a lot of different races in this school--Black, Mexican, stuff like that.

WHERE DO THEY LEARN?

Where Students Learn about Race, Culture, and Diversity



MULTICULTURAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Cinco de Mayo
- Black History Month
- St. Patrick's Day
- Diary of Frederick Douglass
- Olaudah Equiano's slave narrative
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- Dance class
- Intolerance class
- Discussions about stereotypes

EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

Jesse: I--I think we are pretty much getting along as a school without it. But...it's just for the enrichment of education, we could elaborate on something other than, you know--sometimes we do talk about slavery and racism and discrimination. I've heard a lot about that, but we don't talk about it...we talk about it on a national scale. Just like how it used to be in America. We don't talk about how it still is...or how if you go to a different country--if I was to go to like...if you go somewhere else--stuff that I have to learn on my own. If I just learned it in school...it would be easier.

HISTORICAL RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

I: Mmm hmm. Um, so, some of these definitions that you all have about race, where did you get them from? Some of you have talked about what people have told you. What about you, Jamie? Where did you get your definition from?

Jamie: I get it from experience. Um...from other people saying specific things about race and doing specific things because of their race. And...the news, and...most importantly, history. **Because...back then, a lot of things were going on that weren't fair because of race, like for example, slavery.** Mostly you would hear that black people were slaves. It was very few white people as slaves but mostly black people were slaves and...black people and white people back then weren't treated the same for like, a long time.

I: Do you think some of those things affect us today? Like, some of the stuff that happened back then? Tee's shaking her head yes.

Jaime: [laughs] **Well...it's not as heavy as it used to be back then, but I definitely believe that it's still here.**

COLORBLIND PERSPECTIVES-ANTONIO

Antonio: I mean race is just something in life. It's not really a problem...so. I can't really find a good definition for race besides black, white, African, Hispanic. I mean we all get along now, so...

Tee: Not--not everywhere.

Antonio: Almost everywhere. Detroit.

Jamie: I agree with Tee. Not everybody gets along and I feel that race is divided by color of your skin.

Antonio: ...It's not a problem as much as it was last--I mean, not last but...back in the day.

I2: How far is back in the day?

Antonio: Like, around the what, 70s? 60s?

I: And so you don't think those problems that were happening back in the day still exist today?

Antonio: Oh no, they exist just not--they exist in certain areas. Like, I think it's New York or something? It's like real racist out there. ...Like...um, my cousin. They just moved up there and like, they can't have loud music or nothin' playing and it's like no black folks at all. They see a black folk in a car, they will pull them over, instantly. And like, they will basically try to run them out of town. And that's not only in New York, it's in, um, like down South and everywhere else. It's like...mainly up here it's not much of a race problem.

I: So you feel like in the Midwest there's not a race problem like in other parts of the country?

Antonio: Right.

COLORBLIND PERSPECTIVES-JASON

Jason: It's like this. I mean, um, race isn't basically color, but like, as a human being, like human race, something like that. I wouldn't go by skin tone or color. I wouldn't discriminate anybody because of color, because at the end of the day we all got two eyes and nose and we all the same, humans. **So I don't go by color for race.**

I: Ok. And where did you learn that definition of race? Or how you think about it?

Jason: Uh...numerous experiences with, like, Black History Month stuff and watching documentaries and...just experiencing life.

I: Ok. And um you said, Black History Month stuff. Is that Black History Month--did that happen here at this school or at previous schools, or...?

Jason: It was like, really at this school, when like we seen the Martin Luther King speech, and that was like, in like 5th or 6th grade. At the other building. **So it was around that time that I realized that, you know, there's no such thing as colored race, but you know, like as human beings.**

COLORBLIND PERSPECTIVES-JASON

I: Ok. Have you ever been discriminated against?

Jason: [short pause] I could say that, but I--you know like, it's so hard to tell nowadays. But...I want to say yes and no, at the same time. So it's kind of hard to like, you know, point that out about myself. Um...**I really think I haven't been but I probably have been in the past but I haven't realized it.**

I: Ok. Can you give me an example of what you mean by you could have experienced—been discriminated against?

Jason: Like, I could have--when...ok. I was walking down the street one day and a cop pulled me over and said, "Hey you, lift your shirt up." I said, oh, ok, well, not going to hear that everyday. [chuckles]

I: Right.

Jason: He said "ah, nah, nah, nah, you fit the description of like this man running around town." I said "oh, ok, that's understandable." He was Latino officer, of course, I did what the officer told me to do, took off my jacket, showed him, like, what I was wearing. He was like, "oh, look, you're perfectly fine, my bad man." I said "it's cool." And he drove down the street. Or I go to the store and the man in there is Arabic and he'll just be speaking gibberish sometimes. **And, you know, but like, I haven't had--never been discriminated against.**

DEVELOPING RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

Little Dog: Oh, okay. At first when I was younger, I really didn't know that much about racism. I really didn't learn that much about it until like 12 and I actually started experiencing different racial things. And like a few weeks ago, when I did the first interview, I thought that like ... I didn't think that racism was out there that much anymore. Oh, they identify us by our skin colors, okay, but now my mindset has changed. I think that that is completely wrong. **After seeing that video, I really think ... I have understood that racism is still out there completely and people are accepting it, when I don't think they should.** I just really think it's wrong, and I really think we shouldn't be identified by our skin color.

DEVELOPING RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

Little Dog: I was thinking that for me too there has only been one race that I have received racial slurs and racial like (short pause)... just like different types of racial things from. **Then I was like, as much as we want to say like racism is still really alive lately.** Nobody really did anything about the videos, about them bashing Mexicans. Nobody did anything. If anything, they had a lot of good comments on it. I'm just thinking like for everybody, for the government to say that racism is not here anymore, it's really alive a lot still. That makes me upset.

Speaker 1: (Both laughing) Do you feel like ... so you say like the government says that racism doesn't—like, is gone.

Little Dog: They are like, "It's gone, racism doesn't exist. It was extinguished like 40 years ago," but it isn't. **It's still here, and it's still ... it might not be people getting lynched and whipped anymore, but they found different ways to take it out.**

SUMMARY

- Varying levels of race consciousness
- Little evidence of school's impact on consciousness
- Some students talked directly about opportunities to learn about racism but the impact is not clear

SHONTAE

Shontae: I had a class last year, called Intolerance. It taught about different cultural races, and it was like Asian, they can only have one child in the household.

Shontae: Like, I learned about...how blacks were like...like stereotyped, like you said, and called each other out their names. Like, like white people did...**It was basically like a history class, it was more on racism instead of the world, more like.**

SHONTAE

Speaker 1: So...what were some things that you got out of that class?

Shontae: About Chinese, how they home system set up. About the Aztecs and different, like, cultures and racism. Basically like this.

Speaker 1: Like this, kind of how we're talking here?

Shontae: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1: Okay. Did that class change how you thought about anything?

Shontae: Yeah then. But I don't really think too much about it now.

Speaker 1: What do [inaudible] it changed?

Shontae: How we here in America, we could have how many people we want to live in our house. In China you can only have a husband, a wife and only two children. If you have more than two children they will either kill it or put it up for adoption. So it's like different here than there.

SHONTAE

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. So you like learned about some new things? [affirms] Did it change how you felt about sort of what it means to be a black person?

Shontae: No.

Speaker 1: No. Did you learn about black people at all in that class?

Shontae: No. We never really talked too much about ... well we did talk about black people; about how we discriminate against ourselves. Like we call each other out of our names, like that stuff. But really, not really.

SHONTAE

Speaker 1: So would you recommend that class to other people?

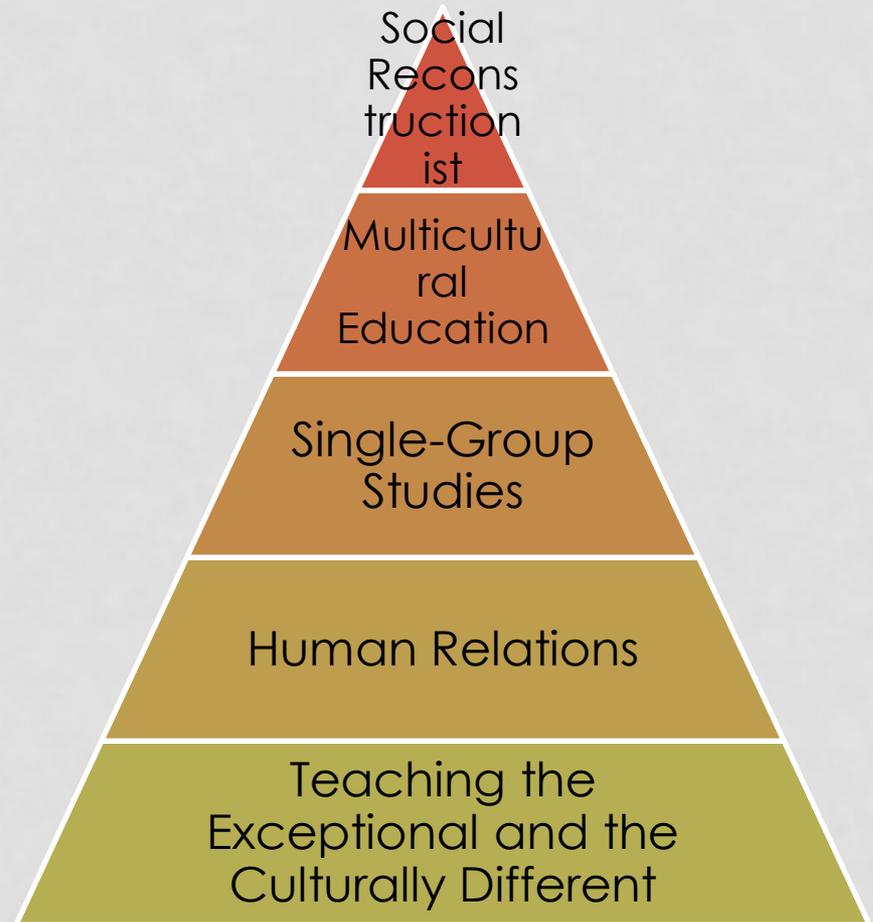
Shontae: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1: Yeah, why is that?

Shontae: Because it actually like, teach you about the world. It don't just teach you about the United States. It teach you about the United Kingdom, Brazil, different places. I think it would be a good thing for other people ... for people to know about the history and where they come from or about how stuff is going on in different cities, like, countries, and everything is not just based off here. It's based everywhere else.

CONCLUSIONS

- Schools should try to develop a critical race consciousness in youth
- Use a transformative curriculum
- Assess impacts on thinking



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can schools help deconstruct colorblindness?
2. Is it enough to talk about diversity in the curriculum or do students need diverse peers as well?
3. How do we assess changes in critical consciousness in an era of high-stakes testing?

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PARTICIPANTS!



THANK YOU!

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