

## Interrogating Classroom Relationships and Events: Using Portraiture and Critical Race Theory in Education Research

by Thandeka K. Chapman

This article explores the use of the methodology of portraiture and the analytic framework of critical race theory (CRT) to evaluate success and failure in urban classrooms. Portraiture and CRT share a number of features that make the two a viable pair for conducting research in urban schools. In combination, portraiture and CRT allow researchers to evoke the personal, the professional, and the political to illuminate issues of race, class, and gender in education research and to create possibilities for urban school reform as social action.

**Keywords:** critical race theory; methodology; portraiture

Even before Mrs. Williams read aloud the poem “Lineage,” by Margaret Walker (1983), a discordant tone was set by the opening activity. Mrs. Williams asked her students to write down their heritage or lineage. The students were unfamiliar with the terms, so Mrs. Williams said they should write down their family tree. As an example, she verbally traced her roots through three generations of German and English immigrants on both sides of her family. The students were interested in her story and asked her quite a few questions about her family and childhood experiences. They laughed at the image of Mrs. Williams as a platinum blond whose hair color had changed to deep brown, and now gray, as she grew older.

However, when it came time for them to put their pens to paper, the respectful and playful tone of the class abruptly changed to one of frustration and anger for some.

While the majority of the students (12 Whites, 1 South Asian, and 4 Latino/as) enthusiastically began the assignment, the 7 African American students in attendance furrowed their brows, looked around the class and at each other, and sucked their teeth. They did not put pen to paper. Three African American students loudly exclaimed that they did not know any of their family histories. One student heatedly stated, “I don’t know that Africa stuff.”

Brittany, an African American girl, challenged, “Everybody I know has a grandmother named Big Mama. What do I put for Sadie [her grandmother’s name]?”

The level of anger among the African Americans rose as they continued to assert, “I only know one side of my family.”

To show their resentment and frustration, two African American students folded their arms and put their heads on their desks and refused to complete the assignment.

Mrs. Williams, visibly shaken by the students’ abrupt change toward her, opened her arms wide and slowly replied, “Write about your mom’s mom or your dad’s dad.”

Two White students and Dina, the only Latina in the class, tried to help nearby African American students by whispering, “Just put down your family,” or “Tell her your grandparents.”

Although all the other students wrote about their family trees, none of the seven African American students attempted to trace their family heritage. During the 5-minute free write, some African American students simply wrote, “I don’t know” and “somewhere in Africa.” For his entry, Alvin, an African American student in the focus group, wrote, “I’m an African American. I originated in Africa where my ancestors lived.”

At the end of the activity, Mrs. Williams asked, “Would anyone mind sharing his or her family tree?” Her question was answered by silence and tension. There were no volunteers (field notes,<sup>1</sup> March 20, 2001).

• • •

In education research on urban schools, scholars are inundated with stories of failure and disappointment that appear on the surface to read much like this story. In contrast, a portraiture methodology and critical race theory (CRT) analysis can help researchers interrogate teachers’ interactions with students of color in urban settings and provide a more complex analysis of what happens in these learning spaces. Most educators would agree that the story of Mrs. Williams’s “Lineage” activity is not one of successful practice. If told as a majoritarian tale that reinstates the status quo and captures students of color primarily through negative images, this story would highlight the disruptive voices of the African American children; their inability and unwillingness to comply with the teacher’s assignment; their dismissal of other students’ assistance; Mrs. Williams’s failure to use additional language, such as “Granny” and “Big Mama,” to

validate student experiences; and the students' silence at the end of the activity. Those particular themes are in the story and must be examined as part of a rigorous analysis. Portraitists and critical race theorists, however, reveal a different story, knowing that the majoritarian story is usually the default story.

Although many majoritarian tales may be realistic depictions of events and practices in urban environments, there are also stories uncovering the structural and institutional conditions behind those behaviors and showing student perseverance (Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano, & Parker, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Rich portraits of the same events provide preservice teachers, veteran teachers, and researchers with an alternate lens for viewing students, their families, and their teachers. As researchers explore new methodologies and theoretical frameworks in education research, portraiture and CRT should be viewed as tools that can illustrate identifiable strengths of teachers' pedagogy and student learning in classroom settings.

Portraiture is a research methodology that blends the aesthetics of various art forms (music, literature, visual art) with the rigor of science to "document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 13). Portraiture captures the voices, relationships, and meaning making of participants, as individuals and community members, in one fluid vision that is constructed by researchers and participants. Moreover, in portraiture, "the person of the researcher—even when vigorously controlled—is more evident and more visible than in any other research form" (p. 11).

CRT is a theoretical framework that allows scholars to interrogate social, educational, and political issues by prioritizing the voices of participants and respecting the multiple roles held by scholars of color when conducting research. Data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted through a race-based epistemological lens rather than through critical or feminist methodologies or theories that first privilege class and/or gender (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Tate, 1997). CRT focuses on how people of color transcend structural barriers and create successful moments for themselves and others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Portraiture and CRT allow the researcher to evoke the personal, the professional, and the political to illuminate issues of race, class, and gender in education research. The combination of CRT and portraiture is unique in that portraiture uses events and societal contexts to build a composite of an individual and group, whereas CRT uses the individual or group to highlight broader issues of society.

After a brief overview of CRT and portraiture, I will explore the importance of context, the role(s) of researchers, and the use of interdisciplinary approaches. I will also define and explore the concepts of goodness and counterstory.

### Critical Race Theory

The body of CRT scholarship is an outgrowth of critical legal studies, which grew from legal theory. CRT decenters the prominent position of class and socioeconomic status found in critical legal studies and repositions race as the primary lens for exploring legislation and its political enactments. Education researchers using CRT have critiqued and expanded notions of the "good" student and the "involved" parent (Auerbach, 2002; Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004; Lopez, 2003; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

They have explored the intersections of race, gender, and class identity to advocate for antiessentialism and the power of contextualized research (Cammarota, 2004; Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002; Lynn, 2004). CRT scholars defy stereotypes of students of color by highlighting how they critically negotiate schools and communities (Fernandez, 2002; Villalpando, 2003). In addition, several ethnographic studies use CRT to interrogate the policy legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), in teacher practices, parent actions, and student behaviors (Lewis, 2003; Lipman, 2004; Montoya, 2000; Prendergast, 2003; Saddler, 2005).

### Portraiture

Unfortunately, less information is available on portraiture in education research. Created by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986) to document the components of effective schools and articulated by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997), the portraiture methodology is used when a researcher wishes to produce a full picture of an event or person that tells as much about the subject as it does about the researcher, or portraitist. Dixson (2005) researched African American female educators who taught in racially diverse pre-K–12 school settings. Her work expanded current conceptions of multicultural teaching and underscored the challenges that African American teachers face in multiracial classrooms. Hill's (2005) work portrayed many of the same challenges for African American women in higher education. Newton (2005) investigated the unique difficulties facing Arab American preservice teachers after the 9/11 tragedy. These studies counter the overwhelming number of stories that focus on White female teachers in racially diverse classrooms. Some scholarship, such as that by Chapman (2005a) and Harding (2005), details the teaching practices of White women in urban classrooms with racially diverse students and relates individual teacher practices to other social, political, and community contexts that affect classrooms.

### Using Portraiture and CRT to Examine Classroom Events

#### *The Importance of Contexts*

In portraiture, a researcher investigates and presents the multiple contexts and interactions that surround participants. In CRT, these contexts take into account political events, personal histories, societal norms, and laws and policies that affect the primary setting. Using portraiture and CRT, a researcher connects participants' experiential knowledge as racialized subjects to the multiple ways in which people of color understand and navigate their communities, schools, and professional lives (Dixson, 2005; Harding, 2005). These contexts include, but are not limited to, family, peer group, classroom, district, city, state, and federal influences that affect what students learn and are willing to do, their perceptions of themselves, and their reflections on their educational experiences.

For example, the classroom story I presented earlier was excerpted from a research project that explored how a White teacher, Mrs. Williams, used multicultural texts with a racially diverse group of students in a classroom functioning under a recent court-ordered desegregation reform.<sup>2</sup> The desegregation order was a temporary victory by parents of color in a 30-year war with

the district school board (Chapman, 2005b). The teachers and students alike were the casualties of structural and curricular battles to promote equity that were reported in the local papers and on the radio. The students in the class were the third generation of children to bear the brunt of racism in the partially desegregated schools and the first generation to attend all their years of schooling under the new district guidelines.

Structural issues such as teacher knowledge, curricular reforms, and school contexts significantly affect the classroom milieu. At the time of the study, these ninth graders had experienced 8 years of poorly assembled and poorly taught content. The teachers' minimal level of substantive professional development was a major reason for their poor curricular choices and their limited methods of instruction. Mrs. Williams explained,

I think most of us probably could have done with classes. I don't know if they [English teachers] would have felt uncomfortable having them [students] talk about it [race], but I would. Because they [the teachers] don't want to be judgmental or promoting stereotypes of African Americans in this country. (field notes, March 19, 2001)

Mrs. Williams believed that the homogeneous White English department ignored issues of race from fear of reprisals by students, parents, and the administration. Mrs. Williams wished to confront the subject with her students, but she was conscious of her lack of training in multicultural education and feared further marginalizing her students of color. The excerpt provided earlier is one of many examples that validate her anxiety.

### *Roles of the Researcher*

Given anxieties such as those experienced by Mrs. Williams, the question of who should teach and conduct research with students of color remains a highly debated topic. CRT posits that scholars of color have a unique vantage point for conducting and interpreting research that focuses on the experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In portraiture, the role of the researcher has a personal dimension that cannot be severed from the researcher's professional interests or personal identity. Denzin (2003) stated that methodologies such as portraiture and theories such as CRT represent the newest stage of qualitative research that continues to move away from postpositivist notions of research, those that adhere to formal relationships in the field and espouse researcher objectivity and detachment. The decisions made, the relationships formed, and the narratives that represent people's lives are deeply connected to the past and present experiences of researchers and their epistemologies concerning the research topic and participants. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) explained,

Thus CRT asks the critical qualitative researcher to operate in a self-revelatory mode, to acknowledge the double (or multiple) consciousness in which she is operating. My *decision* to deploy a critical race theoretical framework in my scholarship is intimately linked to my understanding of the political and personal stake I have in the education of Black children. All of my "selves" are invested in this work—the self that is a researcher, the self that is a parent, the self that is a community member, the self that is a Black woman. (p. 272)

As in CRT, the researcher is central in portraiture, which likewise involves recognition of the unique qualities that researchers of color bring to their research and recognition of a researcher's "self" as inseparable from the research. In portraiture, the researcher is the primary tool for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). Like a critical race theorist, a portraitist is keenly aware of his or her many roles in creating narratives that move readers to ponder their understandings of the world. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) asserted,

Her dispositions, experiences, relationships, and professional knowledge all come to bear on the research. By contrast, the portraitist seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience of place, hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it, trusting that the readers will feel identified. (p. 13)

The necessity of embracing the multiple selves of the researcher is an unseen, but pivotal, aspect of portraiture and CRT. Researchers become vulnerable to criticism that may strike at their personal beliefs and experiences and their professional articulations of research. Portraitists who use CRT must explore their own race, class, and gender roles in explicit ways that other methodologies and theories do not readily embrace.

As a former English teacher at North High,<sup>3</sup> my multiple past and present roles in the field were beneficial to the project (Tyson, 2003). During my teaching tenure there, I was one of 3 certified African American teachers and the youngest of the more than 40 teachers in the school. Because of my race, youth, and position as a teacher of students who were at risk for failing their freshman year, often staff members, administrators, and students called on me to mediate crises and advocate for individual students.

When reentering the school, my past affiliation was an advantage. I knew things about the school and the teachers that an outside researcher might never discover. My school experience facilitated my relationship with Mrs. Williams, an experienced teacher who was well liked by students and respected by colleagues. My former students, who were then seniors, advocated for me with Mrs. Williams's freshman class and vouched for me as a student advocate so that the students in the focus group would volunteer their time. The focus group members were Susan and Chris (White students), Dina and John (Mexican American students), and Brittany and Alvin (African American students). The focus group students were chosen by race, gender, attendance, and variations in student achievement as a reflection of the racial and academic backgrounds of the larger class of 26 students.

### *Use of Interdisciplinary Approaches*

Because a critical race theorist counters majoritarian stories of success and failure, often with substantial legacies of research, he or she must use all appropriate epistemologies to analyze the data. Critical race theorists seek theoretical frameworks beyond their own to shed light on issues of race in ways that have not been embraced or explored in education research. Gender studies, cultural studies, ethnic epistemologies, and queer theory are a few interdisciplinary tools that CRT has used to express how oppressive structures deny or permit the progress of racial groups (Crenshaw, 1995; Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004). For example, Dixon (2005) used the metaphor of jazz to connect

portraiture, CRT, and Black feminism to her work with Black teachers, while Hill (2005) wrote original poems to represent the Black female professors in her study.

The finished portrait is a composition of aesthetic elements and scientific rigor (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005). Although borrowing from the arts is not unique to CRT or portraiture, aesthetics in research remain positioned in contested spaces. However, the use of artistic expression and interdisciplinary approaches to interpret data, combined with the centralization of race, is specific to CRT and portraiture as newly created spaces for research.

In this instance, I use literary theory to analyze Mrs. Williams's pedagogy. When teaching "Lineage," Mrs. Williams veered from the commonly used approach of New Criticism, which focuses on teaching literary analysis without personal response or a social context. She approached the text using reader response theory, which allows readers to respond by using their own experiences as sources of discussion. Her comments from the interview illustrate her desire to incorporate other forms of literary criticism, such as cultural studies. She reflected, "I also don't know if [the students] can relate to the ruralness of that poem. These are people in the fields who smelled of soap because soap was very strong smelling back then" (field notes, March 23, 2001). This reflection on her practice led Mrs. Williams to rethink her pedagogy to better teach the lesson to future students.

### *Commitment to Social Justice*

The ability to help teachers change their practice to better serve students of color and the attempt to address negative perceptions of people of color by sharing their stories of triumph and failure are ways that CRT scholars and portraitists demonstrate a commitment to social action. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) explained,

We engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation, we create opportunities for dialogue, we pursue the silences, and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility. This is provocative work that can disturb the natural rhythms of social reality and encounter; this is exciting work that can instigate positive and productive change. (p. 12)

In portraiture, our ability to provoke readers, participants, and ourselves into reevaluating our respective points of view is a small but meaningful form of social justice. In CRT, these provocations extend beyond the individual or unit that is the focus of portraiture to stir the audience to consider altering unjust structures and institutions (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2002).

Together, portraiture and CRT can move participants toward a more collective agency and understanding of each other. Asking students from various backgrounds to participate in the focus group discussions encouraged a dialogue that allowed the students to learn from one another and form alliances or new friendships. During our four meetings, Dina, John, Brittany, Alvin, Chris, and Susan shared solicited and unsolicited information with each other that they did not share during class discussions. The students had this to say about the "Lineage" assignment (field notes, April 4, 2001):

*Brittany:* I told her I didn't know my family tree.

*Researcher:* Why did you tell her that?

*Brittany:* Because I didn't feel like writing it down [focus group students laugh]. I don't know. My granny, she lives Down South and her name is Sadie.

*Researcher:* So why not share that?

*Brittany:* [Shrugs her shoulders].

*Dina:* Because it's personal.

*John:* And it's embarrassing.

Dina and John rescued Brittany when she discontinued the conversation by shrugging her shoulders and taking a bite of her lunch. Even though both John and Dina completed the assignment, they recognized how painful the assignment was for the African American students. The formation of these relationships in which students, who were not previously friends because of racial and social stratifications, could talk and defend one another is an outcome of portraiture and CRT as tools of collective agency and as an effort to erode the status quo.

Moreover, as a form of empowerment, in which students and teachers take responsibility for their choices and decisions, CRT and portraiture can be used to explore the racial conflicts inherent in this assignment. Critical race theorists highlight notions of Whiteness and privilege that influence students' behaviors and perceptions (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Yosso, 2005), which the White students upheld by providing specific Scandinavian, German, and Italian origins in their written responses. CRT suggests that Whiteness acts as a form of property in the United States that constructs race in the classroom on a continuum of Whiteness (Lewis, 2003; Lipman, 2004; Prendergast, 2003). The White students' responses differed from the other students' responses because the White students catalogued the ethnic groups in their families and their histories as part of those communities that settled the town.

The different racial groups in the class took different approaches to the assignment and fell along the continuum of Whiteness. The Mexican American students with recent histories of immigration followed Mrs. Williams's example and described the origins of their grandparents and their family legacies. To demonstrate their own racial worth and align themselves with majoritarian tales of immigration, several students wrote not only about their family origins outside the United States but about property and awards their families had received. For these students, the activity gave them the opportunity to highlight family strengths and pride. For example, in his individual interview with me, John, who is Mexican American, gave me an unsolicited extended version of his family history in the city (field notes, March 23, 2001):

*Researcher:* So, when we were talking about heritage the other day, what did you put? For ethnicity or race?

*John:* Where we came from. Well, my great grandpa was from Mexico and my great grandma was from Mexico also. And after that, my great grandpa, he was a very, very good gardener. And usually it went the other way. The female loves it. Well it did go the other way, my great grandma, she loved farming—she had a little acre or so. Then my great grandfather got a letter from JFK [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] saying that he was one of the best [gardeners] in the state.

*Researcher:* What state was this in?

*John:* This was here.

*Researcher:* [The state]?

*John:* Yeah.

*Researcher:* Wow.

*John:* We can't seem to find the letter anymore. Somebody seems to have filed it away.

*Researcher:* So your family has been in [the city] for 30-, 40-something years?

*John:* A little bit longer.

Similarly, Martinez, a Mexican American student who had more recently immigrated to the United States, wrote that in Mexico, his father had been a respected property owner of an eight-acre ranch and a store. Martinez also wrote about his grandfathers and their lives in Mexico as property owners and store owners before migrating to the United States.

The White and immigrant students' genealogies that traced their families to other countries sharply contrasted with the narratives of the African American students, placing them at the opposite end of the Whiteness continuum. The African American students resisted the activity to keep to themselves what they perceived to be deficient family histories. What started as a "color-blind" attempt (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rousseau & Tate, 2003) to bond students through their individual lineages erupted into an understandable race-conscious, self-defeating act of resistance (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) for the African American students. Because they thought Mrs. Williams was asking them to trace both sides of their family to a country beyond the United States, several students did not attempt the assignment; some became belligerent when other students offered help; and some shook their heads and mumbled to themselves as they wrote in their journals.

Yet when I spoke informally to several of the African American students outside class, they articulated extensive family trees and stories about family reunions and origins from various southern states. Deron, an African American student, talked about his granny with long silvery blue hair that hung down her back at night when she combed it. The farm she lived on had chickens, pigs, and one very old horse. He had fond memories of family reunions, at which all the cousins would take turns riding the horse around the yard. He emphasized that all the family members were from his mother's side. I asked why did not he write or verbally share the story he had told me about his granny. He shrugged his shoulders and quietly said, "I only know one side of my family."

Deron did not write down his history because he felt that his inability to complete the model given by Mrs. Williams made his experience less valuable than that of other students. CRT suggests that counterstories such as Deron's and Brittany's were there, waiting for a highly skilled teacher to reach them. Thus the failure to do the assignment was the teacher's failure, not a failure on the part of the students, as it would likely be portrayed in a majoritarian tale of the event.

### *Counterstory and Goodness*

Counterstories and "goodness" are means to examine elements of strength and possibilities for success in various educational settings. Counterstory is

both a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and a tool for

analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power, . . . whose story is an ordinary part of the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 32)

The counterstories do not exclude the negative realities of urban classrooms but instead demonstrate the complexity of people's lived experiences, which are steeped in social and institutional structures. Moreover, counterstories provide alternate ways of viewing people of color and how they successfully negotiate the world.

In portraiture, demonstrating how people work together to create moments of success and triumph is called "a search for goodness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 23). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997) explained, "Portraiture resists this tradition-laden effort to document failure. It is an intentionally generous and eclectic process that begins by searching for what is good and healthy and assumes that the expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections" (p. 9). The portraitist consciously explores the strengths of the research site and the ways in which challenges are approached and handled, but it does not exclude the messy, contradictory nature of human experiences and behaviors:

As a matter of fact, I think that one of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 9)

Researchers who choose to conduct research with portraiture and analyze data with CRT embrace these conflicting actions to present an overall picture of determination and agency. Such complexities are plentiful in this classroom account. Yet it is this picture of determination and agency that may eventually overtake majoritarian tropes of identity.

In this example, the goodness and counterstory lie in the fact that all the students were interested in Mrs. Williams's personal story at the beginning of the lesson. The focus group students stated that the poetry unit, regardless of the themes in the poems, was one of their favorite units of the semester. Furthermore, the results of this lesson should be cross-examined to show different dynamics. Mrs. Williams chose "Lineage" and other poetry by people of color because earlier African American students had enjoyed them. With this lesson, she made inroads with her Latino, Southeast Asian, and working-class White students by connecting the literature to their experiences in a positive and meaningful manner.

Although the African American students felt marginalized by this particular approach, the lesson could be conducted again with better results. Mrs. Williams accepted responsibility for the reaction from the students and reflected on ways to improve the lesson. The students gave Mrs. Williams the tools to better teach the lesson. They were speaking to power when they shouted "Granny" and "Big Mama" as options for referring to grandparents. The confusion over the lesson made Mrs. Williams understand the importance of acknowledging and validating the different pathways that brought people to the United States. Listening to students gives the teacher and the researcher the ability to reconstruct this assignment, build on the strengths of the

event, and replace the mistakes with a more culturally relevant approach that creates opportunities for empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

## Conclusion

Combining the methodology of portraiture with CRT analysis transforms how educators view the interactions between teachers and students of color and expands teachers' practices. The focus on deficit notions of students of color and the simplification of classroom complexity does very little to empower teachers and students. Through portraiture and CRT, elements of effective instruction and positive ethos can be illuminated and replicated in ways that deficit research cannot cultivate.

Arguably, CRT and portraiture are not tools to be superficially applied to scholarship. Using a portraiture methodology takes considerable time and requires relationship building that is not always possible with research projects. Researchers have critiqued the usefulness of portraiture in education research on the basis of its focus on the researcher and connections to participants (English, 2000; Hackmann, 2002). CRT has also been critiqued concerning the epistemological stance of the researcher (Duncan, 2005). In addition, portraiture and CRT call on researchers to "know thyself" to counter personal bias and sustain rigor. Because the researcher's influence is prominent in postpositivist education research, there has been considerable opposition to the final portraits and CRT analyses that emerge from researchers' wide-ranging field notes. In response, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) observed, "There is never a single story; many could be told" (p. 10); there will always be someone who wants the researcher to tell another story.

To share new, possibly untold stories of practice and perseverance, the methodology of portraiture and the analytic tool of CRT become an extension of education research. The focus on goodness, on situating the data in various contexts, and on the role(s) of researchers, together with the social justice component, can lead to balanced research findings about students of color in complicated urban environments, rather than conclusions that merely reinstate notions of pathology and otherness. In portraiture and CRT, researchers move beyond depictions of the half-full or half-empty glass to interrogate the students' perceptions and behaviors that are floating around in the water.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>All field notes are part of the information collected for Chapman (2002).

<sup>2</sup>I conducted this study at an urban liberal-arts high school in the Midwest. The school was racially and socioeconomically diverse (approximately 50% White, 20% African American, 5% Asian American, and 25% Latino/a), with the largest English-language learner population of the five district high schools. The English-language learner population consisted of Lao and Mexican American students. The teaching population was 98% White. The student demographics matched those of the city, where most of the White people lived on the more affluent east side and most people of color lived on the west side.

Over the course of a semester, I conducted formal group interviews with 15 White English teachers at the high school. I also conducted numerous interviews with Mrs. Williams: a 90-minute life history or career interview at the beginning of the project, nine weekly semistructured interviews, and a 2-hour interview at the end of the project. The individual interviews with Mrs. Williams spanned her personal and professional

background, her perceptions of the changes, and reflections on her current teaching practice.

I conducted a 45-minute individual initial interview and a 30-minute concluding interview with my six focus group students. I completed a student focus group interview after the end of each of the four literature units, each interview taking one lunch period.

Data from the interviews were coded for themes related mainly to issues of race, gender, class, and institutional barriers that affected student learning. To present a full portrait of classroom and school culture, and to ensure trustworthiness, I used multiple data sources for triangulation beyond the interviews and observations conducted at the site. I collected curriculum papers and formal directives from the district and the classroom, students' in-class work and homework assignments, and newspaper articles about the integration court battles and policy implementations.

<sup>3</sup>All names are pseudonyms.

## REFERENCES

- Auerbach, S. (2002). "Why do they give the good classes to some and not to others?" Latino parent narratives of struggle in a college access program. *Teachers College Record*, 104(7), 1369–1392.
- Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 347 U.S. 483 (Supreme Court of the United States, 1954).
- Cammarota, J. (2004). The gendered and racialized pathways of Latino and Latino youth: Different struggles, different resistances in the urban context. *Anthropology and Education*, 35(1), 53–74.
- Chapman, T. (2002). *Teaching secondary literature: A White teacher in a diverse classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- Chapman, T. K. (2005a). Expressions of "voice" in portraiture. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 27–51.
- Chapman, T. K. (2005b). Peddling backwards: Reflections of *Plessy* and *Brown* in the Rockford Public Schools de jure desegregation efforts. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8, 29–44.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed a movement* (pp. 357–383). New York: New Press.
- DeCuir, J. T., & Dixon, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33, 26–31.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Law Review*, 68(4), 555–582.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 105–126.
- Denzin, N. K. (2003). Performing (auto) ethnography politically. *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies*, 25(3), 257–278.
- Dixon, A. D. (2005). Extending the metaphor: Notions of jazz in portraiture. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 106–137.
- Dixon, A. D., Chapman, T. K., & Hill, D. A. (2005). Research as an aesthetic process: Extending the portraiture methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 16–26.
- Duncan, G. A. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: Narrative, inequality and the problem of epistemology. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 93–114.
- English, F. W. (2000). A critical appraisal of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture as a method of educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 29, 21–26.

- Fernandez, L. (2002). Telling stories about school: Using critical race theories to document Latina/Latino education and resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 45–65.
- Hackmann, D. G. (2002). Using portraiture in educational leadership research. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 5, 51–60.
- Harding, H. A. (2005). “City girl”: A portrait of a successful White urban teacher. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 52–80.
- Hill, D. A. (2005). The poetry in portraiture: Seeing subjects, hearing voices, and feeling contexts. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 95–105.
- Knight, M. G., Norton, N. E. L., Bentley, C. C., & Dixon, I. R. (2004). The power of Black and Latina/o counterstories: Urban families and college-going processes. *Anthropology and Education*, 35(1), 99–120.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–489.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (Vol. 2, pp. 257–278). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2005). The evolving role of critical race theory in educational scholarship. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 115–120.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47–68.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1983). *The good high school*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1986). On goodness in schools: Themes of empowerment. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 63(3), 9–28.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections of portraiture: A dialogue between art and science. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 3–15.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Hoffman-Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lewis, A. (2003). *Race in the schoolyard: Negotiating the color line in classrooms and communities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lipman, P. (2004). *High stakes education: Inequality, globalization, and urban school reform*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Lopez, G. R. (2003). Parent involvement as racialized performance. In G. R. Lopez & L. Parker (Eds.), *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (pp. 71–96). New York: Peter Lang.
- Loutzenheiser, L. W., & MacIntosh, L. B. (2004). Citizenships, sexualities, and education. *Theory Into Practice*, 43(2), 151–158.
- Lynn, M. (2004). Inserting the race into critical pedagogy: An analysis of race-based epistemologies. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36(2), 153–165.
- Lynn, M., Yosso, T. J., Solorzano, D. G., & Parker, L. (2002). Critical race theory and education: Qualitative research in the new millennium. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 3–6.
- Montoya, M. (2000). Silence and silencing: Their centripetal and centrifugal forces in legal communication, pedagogy, and discourse. *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*, 5, 847–911.
- Newton, R. M. (2005). Learning to teach in the shadows of 9/11: A portrait of two Arab American preservice teachers. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 81–94.
- Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What’s race got to do with it? Critical race theory’s conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 7–22.
- Prendergast, C. (2003). *Literacy and racial justice: The politics of learning after Brown v. Board of Education*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rousseau, C., & Tate, W. F. (2003). No time like the present: Reflecting on equity in school mathematics. *Theory Into Practice*, 42(3), 210–216.
- Saddler, C. A. (2005). The impact of Brown on African American students: A critical race theoretical perspective. *Educational Studies*, 37(1), 41–55.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308–342.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471–495.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 23.
- Tate, W. F. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22, 191–243.
- Tyson, C. (2003). Research, race, and an epistemology of emancipation. In G. R. Lopez & L. Parker (Eds.), *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (pp. 19–28). New York: Peter Lang.
- Villalpando, O. (2003). Self-segregation or self-preservation? A critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory analysis of a study of Chicana/o college students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(5), 619–646.
- Villenas, S., & Deyhle, D. (1999). Critical race theory and ethnographies challenging the stereotypes: Latino families, schooling, resilience and resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 29(4), 413–445.
- Walker, M. (1983). Lineage. In J. W. Johnson & M. G. Forst (Eds.), *Literature: Orange level* (p. 18). Evanston, IL: McDougall, Littell.
- Yosso, T. J. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 93–107.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–92.

#### AUTHOR

THANDEKA K. CHAPMAN is an assistant professor of urban education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin, Enderis Hall, P.O. Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53210; [tchapman@uwm.edu](mailto:tchapman@uwm.edu). Her research interests include multicultural education and desegregation reforms.

Manuscript received June 29, 2006

Revisions received November 2, 2006, and February 7, 2007

Accepted February 10, 2007