



## APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Dissertation: Depictions versus Reality: Countering the television mediated narratives of  
Black teachers in Baltimore.

Name of Candidate: Sedrick Smith  
Doctor of Philosophy, 2020

Dissertation and Abstract Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kimberly Moffitt  
Professor and Chair  
Language, Literacy and Culture

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

Depictions versus Reality: Countering the television mediated narratives of Black teachers in Baltimore.

Sedrick Levern Smith

This dissertation explores the stories of twenty (20) Black public-school teachers (K-12) from the Baltimore City public school system and their perceptions of the mediated images of their teaching experiences found in local television news segments. Media platforms such as the local television news help to shape public perceptions of and discourses about teachers (Goldstein, 2011). These interactions and framings may also play a role in shaping public policy related to teachers and public-school education (Garcia, 2015). This research project sought to counter the framings put forth about public-school teachers in the media by gathering the real-life experiences of actual teachers from a cross-section of schools in the district.

This multi-method qualitative case study relies on a critical race theory (CRT) framework to highlight the experiences of Black teachers in the school system in an attempt to counter the mainstream narratives of public-school teacher experiences that too often rely on white teacher voices. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each teacher participant, all of which were informed by critical ethnography (Carspecken & Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2005). Data analysis consisted of an open coding of interview transcripts (Creswell, 2013) with a thematic analysis conducted across interviews (Roulston, 2010). A qualitative descriptive research methodology (Sandelowski, 2000) was used to provide straight descriptions of the phenomena captured in the interviews in order to allow for the study participants to speak for themselves.

This research project revealed that narratives of Baltimore city public school teachers put forth by WBFF Fox 45's "Project Baltimore" series of teachers working in inherently violent schools, lacking resources/materials/conditions to teach successfully and teachers lacking integrity in student academic outcomes often does not align with the narratives put forth by Black teachers in Baltimore about their own experiences. These teachers contend that much of the necessary context needed to inform public perception of teacher experiences is missing from the local news framings and that they have many positive teaching experiences daily that are purposefully not included in media broadcasting.

This dissertation argues that Black teacher voices must be included in any public discussion of public-school experiences. The study highlights the need to use media platforms to uphold CRT's "voice of color thesis" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), which seeks to put forth the experiences of people of color, often unheard by white people. This study offers implications for Black public-school teachers, strategies to shape public perception of public-school teacher experiences and implications for public school education policy as well as suggested future research related to the topic.

Depictions versus Reality: Countering the television mediated narratives of Black teachers in  
Baltimore.

by

Sedrick Levern Smith

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Kimberly Moffitt, Chairperson

Dr. Keisha Allen

Dr. Pamela Bennett

Dr. J. Kevin Eckert

Dr. Kindel Nash

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Language, Literacy and Culture, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

2020

© Copyright Sedrick Levern Smith 2020  
All Rights Reserved



## Acknowledgements

I ain't no perfect man  
I'm trying to do, the best that I can,  
With what it is I have  
I ain't no perfect man  
I'm trying to do, the best that I can,  
With what it is I have  
- Yasin Bey, "Umi Says" (1999)

As I try to do with all of my endeavors in life, this project is a reflection of my effort to put forth the best version of myself at this particular time in hopes of making the world a little bit better for those around me and those who will come after me. The completion of the project would not have been possible without the support of many people. To my advisor, Dr. Kimberly Moffitt, I thank you for your forthrightness, your clarity and your wisdom. You poured into me and for that I am grateful. You reminded me to "Walk in your brilliance" and I carried those words with me throughout this project. I thank you for your friendship.

To the other members of my magnificent committee, I sincerely thank you for sharing your expertise. Dr. Nash, I thank you for taking me on without knowing me or having taught me. You taught me so much about Critical Race Theory and challenged me to dig deep in my readings. Dr. Allen, I thank you for your clarity and calmness. Your work on culturally relevant pedagogy inspired my own work and your example of being a working academic mother and wife let me know that this journey was possible. Dr. Eckert, I thank you for all that you taught me about qualitative methods. To be such a renowned expert and yet be so humble and open, is truly a gift. Dr. Bennett, I thank you for your courses connecting race to local communities. Your classes brought theory into real-life practice and set the tone for what I wanted my own work to look like. I thank you for that.



I would like to thank the LLC community of students and professors. I felt like I found a home on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Sherman Hall. Discussions around the oblong table challenged my thinking and shaped me into becoming a scholar. I am grateful to cohort 18 and my adopted cohort 19 for the laughs and sharing of wisdom. I wish you all a lifetime of success and happiness.

None of this would have been possible without the love and support of my family. To my children: Kaleb, Noah, Audrey and Abigail, my only hope is that this project may serve as an example to you that whatever you set your mind to is possible. Speak your truth into the universe and do the work to make it happen. My love for each of you is never-ending. To my darling wife, Asha, I don't know that I have the words to fully express my love for you. I know that you will defer and say that you played no role in helping me with this; that I deserve all of the credit, but nothing could be further from the truth. You have supported me every step of the way, listened when I complained, given me hope when I became discouraged, poured energy into me when I was depleted. My successes are our successes. I thank you for being with me "shooting in the gym".

I am thankful to my mother, Gloria, for setting the foundation for my education at a very young age. Thank you for reading to me and always taking my schooling seriously. I have always carried that with me.

Finally, I dedicate this project to the loving memory of my father, Silas Levern Smith. My father struggled to read. His eyesight was terrible. He did not graduate high school on time and went back to night school to get his diploma. And yet and still, he cared so much about my education and cheered me on until his demise. I miss your hugs more than anything and I am grateful to have had a father who told me he loved me every day.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Rationale.....	9
Theoretical Frameworks.....	10
Purpose and Aims of the study.....	12
Research Question(s).....	15
Study Significance.....	16
Organization of the Study.....	19
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	20
Why media portrayals matter.....	20
Framing in Television News Media.....	23
Media Portrayals of Black Folk – History of Caricatures and Stereotypes.....	25
Media Portrayals of Public Schools Systems and Policies.....	27
Media Portrayals of Teachers.....	33
Media Portrayals of Black Teachers.....	41
Origins and Relevance of Critical Race Theory in Education.....	44
Critical Race Theory Ideologies.....	46
Key Elements of Critical Race Theory.....	46
Critical Race Theory in Education.....	49
Bringing CRT in Education to Action: Counter-Story Case Studies.....	52
Enacting CRT to counter media framing of Black public-school teacher experiences.....	63
Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	65
Using a Multi-Method Qualitative Case Study Approach.....	65
CRT Methodology – What is Counter-Storytelling? .....	68
Research Context and Demographics.....	72
Selection and Description of Participants.....	74
Interview and Video Selection Protocols.....	76
Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	80
Trustworthiness, Credibility and Reliability.....	80
Ethical Issues and Considerations.....	82
Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality.....	83
Chapter 4: FRAMINGS VERSUS COUNTERNARRATIVES: STUDY FINDINGS.....	88
Framing 1 - BCPSS is inherently violent.....	89
Teachers Respond – Black teacher counternarratives of dealing with violence in BCPSS.....	91
Counternarrative 1 – Black teachers do not fear teaching in BCPSS.....	92
Counternarrative 2 – Portraying BCPSS as violent is offensive and insulting.....	94
Counternarrative 3 - Violence <i>is</i> a problem in schools but context is important.....	99

Framing 2 – BCPSS teaching conditions are untenable.....	107
Teachers Respond – Black Teachers counternarratives of poor teaching conditions in BCPSS.....	109
Counternarrative 1 – Spending on supplies is an expectation of being a public school teacher.....	110
Counternarrative 2 – Resources and conditions do not prevent high quality teaching from occurring.....	113
Counternarrative 3 – One teacher cannot speak for all teachers: not all BCPSS schools are in poor conditions or lack resources.....	117
Counternarrative 4 - Context matters: Poor school conditions reflect an underfunded/ impoverished city.....	120
 Framing 3 – Teachers fear speaking out against deplorable academic standards.....	122
Teachers Respond – Black teachers counternarratives of academic standards framing.....	124
Counternarrative 1 - Don't blame teachers: the BCPSS grading policy does not serve student interests.....	125
Counternarrative 2 – Grading pressure does exist in some places, but teachers hold the line of integrity.....	129
Counternarrative 3 – Context matters: student academic performance is not just about teachers.....	132
 Chapter 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	140
Discussion of Findings.....	142
Media Framing Theory and Episodic Framing.....	142
Critical Race Theory and the Voice of Color Thesis.....	144
Summary of Findings.....	147
Implications for Black Public-School Teachers.....	149
Implications for shaping public perceptions of Black public-school teachers.....	151
Implications for public school education-related policy.....	153
Study Limitations.....	155
Recommendations for Future Research.....	157
Concluding Thoughts.....	160
 APPENDICES	
Appendix A – Study Solicitation Flyer.....	161
Appendix B – Interview Questions.....	162
Appendix C – Participant Informed Consent Form.....	164
Appendix D – Study Participants.....	167
Appendix E – List of additional Project Baltimore Segments.....	169

REFERENCES .....	174
------------------	-----

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Now if I were a teacher in this school, or any Negro school, and I was dealing with Negro children, who were in my care only a few hours of every day and would then return to their homes and to the streets, children who have an apprehension of their future which with every hour grows grimmer and darker, I would try to teach them - I would try to make them know – that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal. I would try to make each child know that these things are the result of a criminal conspiracy to destroy him. I would teach him that if he intends to get to be a man, he must at once decide that his is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make his peace with it. And that one of his weapons for refusing to make his peace with it and for destroying it depends on what he decides he is worth. I would teach him that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man's respect. That it is up to him to change these standards for the sake of the life and the health of the country. I would suggest to him that the popular culture – as represented, for example, on television and in comic books and in movies – is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he must be aware that these are fantasies that have nothing to do with reality.

-James Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers", October 16, 1963

Since the advent of the television, media have been used to depict the real-life experiences of the American public-school system. Classic movies such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *Stand and Deliver* (1967), and *Lean on Me* (1989) set the tone in portraying public schools as unruly spaces for both students and teachers. While usually fictional, these movies are often taken as accurate representations of urban education. Brown and Kraehe (2011) define representation as "a particular image or likeness that reflects key attributes found in the larger group in which the image exists" (p. 74). Media depictions or representations of urban education are important because as Scull and Peltier (2007) note, "films contain patterns of meaning that hold explanatory power" (p. 13). As Keroes (1999) suggests "by looking at these images we can come closer to understanding just what it means to be a teacher in this culture and how our culture views being taught" (p. 1).

The media often act as tools to control the flow of information in a society (Gerstl-Pepin, 2015). This is significant as this information, or depictions of it, can help to shape public perceptions of education. As Gerstl-Pepin (2007) notes, “media outlets can be conceptualized as controlling the flow of information about issues such as inequity and potentially controlling participation in terms of whose perspectives are represented and how policy issues are defined” (p. 6). With few exceptions, actual teacher voices are often left out of media portrayals of urban school experiences despite the fact that so many movies and television shows focus on teachers and their experiences in public schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Beginning with the NBC crime drama *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (1993) and continuing most famously in season four of the critically acclaimed HBO drama series, *The Wire* (2006), a variety of media sources have sought to depict the state of Baltimore City public schools (BCPSS). Like many of the movies mentioned previously, depictions of BCPSS continue the theme of a school system in disarray with rowdy students, nefarious administrators and incompetent teachers who do little to solve large scale educational problems.

While there is much research on the experiences of teachers who teach in predominately urban public-school systems, there still exists a major gap in research that allows for the voices of teachers, and in particular Black teachers, to be shared about mediated depictions of their experiences. Foster (1995), in his work on African-American teachers and culturally relevant pedagogy, found that much of the existing literature on teachers and the teaching profession largely ignores the lives and practices of Black teachers. Knowledge about teaching and teachers in general is accepted as “natural” and “fixed” and not in need of

questioning (Lynn, 2002). But from where does this “knowledge” of teachers come? Where does the public get its information about the experiences of public-school teachers and more specifically, Black public-school teachers?

As is true of many professions, public perception of teachers and what it is like to teach in urban public schools is largely shaped by media. Despite the increasing move to digital platforms, over half of all Americans still receive the bulk of their news information from local broadcast television (Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013). The information the public is given about teachers is based on the interests of those who control media messages and their construction (Goldstein, 2011; Wallace, 1997). As Goldstein (2011) points out, “people’s interactions with visual images and text, regardless of medium, contribute to the socially constructed discourses about teachers, teaching, and public education” (p. 548). All media messages are socially constructed and therefore must be critiqued for agendas and biases that seek to push forth narratives that serve the interests of those in power. This brings about several important questions such as: How does the media frame the experiences of teachers in urban public schools? Which teacher voices are highlighted and why? Which teacher voices are left out and why? And lastly, do Black teachers who teach in public schools see the media portrayals of teachers in urban public schools as being accurate representations of their lived experiences? As has been acknowledged, the mainstream media play a large role in how the public views the state of public education (Goldstein, 2011; Wallace, 1997). It therefore is a necessity that we seek to unpack these media messages by giving voice to the people being depicted: the teachers.

Black teachers teaching in predominately Black and low-income school communities such as Baltimore undoubtedly experience unique circumstances that should be valued and must be told. Nationally, Black teachers only comprise about 6.5 percent of all public-school teachers (Strauss, 2017), while white teachers make up over 80 percent. As a result, white teachers are largely seen as the image of teachers in mediated depictions. While over 79 percent of students in Baltimore are Black (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2018), BCPSS has seen a steady decline in the number of Black teachers over the past decade, down to 38 percent in 2015 (Teachers Democracy Project, 2018). This study sought to better understand the experiences of Black public-school teachers in Baltimore City and how accurately these teachers feel their experiences are depicted in the local television news media. This is extremely significant as the television news media is a powerful tool that has the ability to be highly influential in shaping public opinions about professions such as teaching (Morgan et al., 2009). As Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2001) describe it, television is today's major storyteller, helping to shape the "pictures in our heads about the larger world..." (Lippman, 1922). The majority of Americans still rely on television to gather information and to find news (Nielsen, 2014). This becomes especially dangerous when these news stories are shaped for political purposes by media conglomerates such as, Sinclair Broadcasting, that frame public education as being in a perpetual state of crisis with the goal of critiquing public-school systems. Berliner and Biddle (1996) in their work, *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Frauds and Attacks on America's public schools* provide an important insight into the relationship between news media and public education. The authors posit that many of the news stories have agendas set to undermine the public education system and fail to examine the larger systemic issues that cause problems



which public school teachers are unfairly called upon to solve. As Garcia (2015) reminds us, “The media’s coverage of education plays a pivotal role in shaping, reinforcing, and normalizing contemporary discourses of education policy, particularly around school reform and teacher quality, including merit pay and what accounts for teaching and learning” (p. 2). Garcia (2015), attests that it is critically important for teacher educators to engage with popular culture depictions of their reality in order to identify and counter both the hidden and overt messages in media that work to build consensus for the neoliberal agenda<sup>1</sup> for education (p. 3).

While there exists a plethora of studies on the depictions of teachers in both dramatized and news media sources, further research is needed that includes actual teacher voices in response to these depictions. Providing opportunities for teachers, especially Black teachers, to respond to the depictions that they find to be both most accurate and most harmful, helps to give voice to a group that has been largely ignored in both the media depictions of the field and in the researched explorations of those depictions.

Shannon and Crawford (1998) call for a variety of methods to be used to combat negative public perceptions of teaching including displaying student work throughout local communities, educating students in media literacy so that they can combat images

---

<sup>1</sup> I borrow from Garcia’s (2015) definition of the neoliberal agenda for education as seen through media in which he describes it as a “distortion” which aims to “shape the ideology of debates on education policy and practice by hiding such reality under the overtly exaggerated and unrealistic expectations placed on the teachers that are bound to elicit a laughter rather than a critique of the conditions that lead to such expectations. The viewer, after having a good laugh, might turn off the TV and simply accept that these are in fact the conditions of contemporary education, and at the end of the day the teachers carry on with their lives within the neoliberal agenda for education as there is no alternative for another sort of education in the horizon” (p. 4).

of teachers seen on television programs, and having teachers create web pages so that the public can see more of what happens inside of the classroom. More directly related to teacher images in media, the authors call for teachers to write about their experiences, be it in book form or in local newspaper columns. Also, significantly, the authors suggest teachers engage more directly with parents and their communities by inviting parents into classrooms and asking for parental involvement in school-based projects. Ultimately Shannon and Crawford (1998) encourage teachers to reshape negative public perceptions of themselves by becoming more active members in the communities around the schools they teach in.

If we choose to represent ourselves as teachers...we will put forth a variety of images for the public to consider. We will display the complexities of our jobs and the sophisticated ways we have developed to address those complexities. We will fight the stereotypic representations that others provide for us, broaden the memories that each citizen has about being taught, and will complicate legislators' attempts to standardize all teaching practice (p. 262).

This study sought to answer that call by countering the stereotypical images put forth about Black public-school teachers and their experiences in Baltimore, seen on local television news media, by gathering the real-life experiences of actual teachers from a variety of schools in the district. Here I sought to complicate the public narrative that all schools and schooling experiences for teachers are the same and that teaching in an urban school district is a dangerous, unenviable practice and a universal experience for Black teachers.

Swetnam (1992) echoes this charge for further research on the impact of mediated teacher portrayals on public perceptions of the profession, and he takes it a step further by asking researchers to also examine the impact these portrayals have on the recruitment and retention of teachers as well as on the support that teachers receive (or do not receive) as a result. Like Shannon and Crawford (1998), Swetnam (1992) asks for as many stake holders (volunteers, parents, mentors, school board members) to be as involved in the educational process as possible in order to help them see firsthand the many factors teachers must deal with in order to be successful in the classroom. The potential benefits of counteracting these negative portrayals are far reaching:

By promoting accurate portrayals...we can also contribute to a more realistic perception of the profession. The correction of these perceptions could result in attracting more qualified teachers, retaining current effective teachers, encouraging public understanding and support and generating more realistic expectations that enhance school and community cooperation to produce an effective education for all of our students (Swetnam, 1992, p. 32).

This study sought to collect actual teacher experiences to find out how accurate they would characterize the depictions of their experiences framed on local television news media.

Unlike many of the other studies which examined fictionalized depictions of public schools, Cohen's (2010) work examined mediated depictions of teachers as seen in local newspapers. Although based in reality, it is important to note that these are also constructions

of teacher experiences not the experiences themselves. Cohen sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining the way that negative language was used to shape news articles about teachers in Chicago. He suggested that large media corporations such as The Tribune Company, which he studied, have the ability to shape the public's perception of teachers and their work which carries with it the possibility to impact educational policy as lawmakers and influencers are also impacted by these depictions of teachers. Cohen calls for teachers to create their own public voices that work to shape the teacher professional identity and to contest mediated depictions of teachers that are used to shape educational policy. As he notes:

Recognizing that mainstream education news is a key site for the negotiation of teacher professional identity raises questions about the production of education news...a better understanding of the production of education news in local as well as national and international context is warranted (Cohen, 2010, p. 116).

This study also sought to examine local education television news stories in Baltimore and the ways that they chose to frame the experiences of public-school teachers in Baltimore with the understanding that these framings hold the potential to shape public perceptions of teacher experiences, which in turn could shape educational policy. I have attempted to champion Cohen's call by creating another space for Black teachers in Baltimore to create their own public voice and to contest the mediated depictions of their reality. This is especially important in an urban school system such as that of Baltimore which has struggled with high teacher turnover rates (MacIver & Vaughn, 2007) and has made it a priority to recruit more Black teachers to its workforce (Richman, 2018).

## **Rationale**

As television news media become monopolized and controlled by corporations, it becomes imperative that those groups who have been marginalized historically fight for avenues to tell their own stories. This research project sought to help with this fight by providing a space for Black teachers to counter the narratives of their lived experiences as are often depicted on television news. Through counter storytelling (Reynolds, 2010), critical race theory attempts to disrupt the power structure that wishes to silence the voices of people of color. By taking a case study methodological approach grounded in critical race theory, this project sought to unearth racial biases that impact Black teachers as they navigate the difficult world of public education. No discussion of what it is like to be a public-school teacher would be complete without the voices of Black teachers and their experiences. As public schools continue to become increasingly occupied by students of color, teachers of color, and in the case of Baltimore specifically, Black teachers must be at the forefront of our understanding of what these schools are like, what resources we need to invest in and what practices work best to teach our students. By examining a cross section of these teachers, this project aimed to be one of the first steps in a multi-layered reform of the public-school system in Baltimore. Additionally, in capturing the experiences and commonalities of Black teachers in a predominately Black public-school system, this study sought to potentially influence the treatment of, response to, and respect for Black public-school teachers. This effort has the potential to influence the way these teachers are talked about and depicted in television media, which in turn has the potential to impact public perceptions of public-school teachers in general.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

The conceptual approach for this research study was shaped by a combination of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Media Framing Theory. Dixon & Rousseau (2005) offer that one of the central points of critical race theory is “recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color” (p. 10). This is especially important in a field like education where public-school teachers are overwhelmingly white (82 percent) and school administrators are also overwhelmingly white (80 percent) (US Department of Education, 2016). With there being so few Black teachers across the country, Black teacher voices are easily able to be left out of common public narratives of schooling. While the majority of teachers in public school are white, the number of students of color is rapidly rising in public schools. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) predicts that white students will represent 46 percent of public-school students in 2024, a drop from 51 percent of the student population in 2012 with Black and Latinx students projected to make up 44 percent of the student population by then (US Department of Education, 2016). As the student population becomes more diverse, it becomes increasingly important that teaching staffs reflect this racial shift. As Villegas and Irvine (2010) point out, teachers of color are more likely to have higher expectations of students of color, confront issues of racism, serve as advocates for students of color and to develop more trusting relationships with students who come from similar backgrounds to their own. Yet the experiences of these teachers are rarely profiled in mediated depictions of public-school teachers. While it is certainly true that there is not a monolithic experience for Black teachers or other teachers of color who work in public schools, as Delgado (1990) suggests, there may not be one common voice, but people of color often share common experiences of racism that

10

help to construct a voice for oppressed peoples.

Robert Teranishi (2002) states that “CRT [Critical Race Theory] was instrumental in providing a voice for students who are otherwise not heard, thus allowing students to provide their own perspectives on educational experiences” (p.152). While this is incredibly important work and much has been studied and written about the experiences of students of color in education (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Floyd, 1996; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Vega, Moore & Miranda, 2015), there remains a critical need for further documentation and study of the experiences of teachers of color from a critical race theory standpoint. I echo Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) in their statement that “the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system...Without authentic voices of people of color it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (p. 58). This is especially true of Black teachers, who as Morris (2001) emphasizes “are often excluded from the discussion of educational issues facing African-American children and their communities” (p. 575). Historically, Black educators have been depicted as inferior teachers, working at schools that have been characterized as largely dysfunctional and incompetent, while ignoring massive racial inequalities that cause many of the problems that ail predominantly Black schools such as gross underfunding and lack of resources (Morris, 2001). This research project was an attempt to counter that prevailing mainstream narrative by providing voice to the experiences of Black teachers in a predominately Black school system. According to Solorzano (1997) critical race theory in education seeks to examine the forms racism takes in teacher education and how those forms are then used to continue to subordinate students of color.

Framing Theory, as it relates to news media, seeks to understand how news content is framed for public consumption through the selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration of particular issues over others (Poindexter, Smith & Heider, 2003). As Entman (1993), explains, framing is the process of selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them seem more important or relevant in one's communication of that reality. When local television news media chooses to highlight one topic over another or "frame" a news story as highly important, this has the potential to shape the public's perception of these stories as being significant and more importantly, seeing them as accurate representations of reality. This is especially important as it related to Black people who are often framed in a negative context in news stories (Poindexter, Smith & Heider, 2003; Messaris and Abraham, 2001).

This research project sought to better understand the particular frames that are being used to depict the experiences of Black teachers in Baltimore city public schools. As Poindexter et.al (2003) explain "the implications of local television news media framing of racial and ethnic minorities are significant because, as indicated, the audience is unaware of what is happening" (p. 527). By examining these frames and by allowing Black teachers to speak back to these framings, this project sought to counter the master narratives of Black teachers in urban public schools put forth by mainstream media.

### **Purpose and Aims of the Study**

This study puts forth the stories of twenty (20) Black public-school teachers (K-12) from the Baltimore City public school system and their perceptions of the mediated images of the school system and its teachers as seen in local television news segments. The purpose of this



study was to provide a counternarrative to the master narrative of Black teacher experiences in urban public-school settings such as Baltimore City.

Since 2017, local Baltimore news station, WBFF Fox 45, a subsidiary of Sinclair Broadcasting Company, a conservative-leaning (Fung, 2018) U.S. media conglomerate, has conducted an investigative news series entitled, “Project Baltimore” with the subtitle, “Save our schools”. As is directly stated in the promotional video for the news series, the goal of the segments is “to fix the problems facing our students and to hold school leaders accountable. Our job is to investigate on your behalf” (WBFF, 2017). Segment topics have included school buildings in poor conditions, schools lacking basic school supplies, teachers secretly changing student grades and schools with violent fighting cultures. They expressly state a claim to be fighting on behalf of the general public, an important claim as this shapes the public’s reaction to the news segments as being positive and working to inform them of otherwise unknown problems within the schools. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of these news segments fail to reveal successes within the schools or the school system and the only teacher voices included are either from retired teachers or teachers whose identities are completely withheld, and voices are altered to anonymize them. This “school system in crisis” framing is consistent with the neoliberal labeling of urban areas as being in crisis, which is often used as an impetus for government reform. This urban crisis trope has been used to push for conservative political and economic measures such as tougher crime reforms, tax cuts for large corporations and reduced funding for urban public schools connected to calls for more charter schools and school voucher programs (Weaver, 2017). In an attempt to add legitimacy to their framing, Black educational professionals, in the form of retired teachers, former district

employees and those unwilling to share their identities, were used in nearly every segment that discussed the problems facing these schools. This is not by coincidence. This “urban crisis” has almost always been synonymous with attempted overhauls of predominately Black communities beginning in the 1950s (Hayward, 2009; Weaver, 2017). And more often than not, these neoliberal attacks have been successful. As Weaver (2017) puts it, “Crisis talk has all too easily been used successfully by the ruling class to justify successive assaults on the urban fabric...” (p.2052). Public schools serve as institutional anchors in urban communities like Baltimore. Fox 45’s Project Baltimore continues this neoliberal tradition of framing urban (and often Black) communities as needing reform and/or saving from themselves.

All of these media depictions of urban education demonstrate the need for counter-stories from Black teachers, whose voices have largely been left out of these representations. This study sought to do that by having the following four aims:

1. To include the voices of Black teachers as counter-stories to generalized descriptions of public-school experiences
2. To understand areas where Black teachers feel public school depictions are accurately displayed in news media
3. To understand areas where Black teachers feel public school depictions are not accurately displayed in news media
4. To better understand the larger context of educational issues facing Black teachers that they feel are omitted from news media narratives about public school teacher experiences

This study sought to better understand the experiences of these teachers, adding a more holistic framing of a predominately Black urban public-school system that can be shared with the public. Policy makers (i.e. school board members, local government officials and politicians), many of whom come from much different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds and experiences than the teachers and students in these urban schools, can also learn about the needs of these schools, by hearing the stories of the teachers who offer a perspective that might not otherwise be heard or understood. These policies, ranging from formal legislative policies and regulations about schooling to more informal public policy debates about education, have the ability to shape the very nature of the schools these teachers currently work in (Gillborn, 2013).

### **Research Question(s)**

This study sought to counter the mainstream media narrative of Black teachers in urban public schools by asking the following questions:

1. How do Black teachers in Baltimore characterize the framing of Baltimore City Public School teacher experiences in a local television news media program?
2. How does a local television news media program frame the experiences of public-school teachers in Baltimore City?
3. What experiences do Black public-school teachers in Baltimore feel are omitted from mediated narratives of their experiences that would impact public perception of their jobs?

### **Study Significance**

This study is significant in that it sought to help fill a void in the existing literature on depictions of teachers in media in several ways. First, much of the prior research on the topic was geared towards pre-service teachers and the recruitment of new teachers to the field (Dalton, 1995; Grant, 2002; Tillman & Trier, 2007; Trier, 2005). This is, of course, very important as negative stereotypes of teachers have the potential to dissuade college students or career changers from pursuing careers as educators, thus leaving the field in dire need of high-quality teachers. However, new teachers are not the only group that may be dissuaded from a teaching career based on mediated depictions of the field. Current teachers face decisions about continuing in a career path that is increasingly scrutinized and negatively depicted in the media (Shine, 2017; Bosso, 2017). By talking to current teachers about the accuracy of mediated depictions of their experiences, I sought to find out the potential impact mediated depictions of teachers has on current teaching forces, an under-researched phenomenon. How do current teachers feel about the way they are framed by television news media? What is their response to these framings? As neoliberal media entities continue to portray urban public schools as inherently violent and teachers are underperforming (Garcia, 2015) the way actual classroom teachers respond to these portrayals becomes an important issue to address.

Secondly this particular study is significant considering that while there is much research on the experiences of Black teachers who teach in predominately Black school systems (Foster, 1990, 1997; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; King, 1993; Milner & Howard, 2004; Milner, 2006; Lewis, 2006; Monroe & Obidah, 2004), there still exists a major gap in research that allows for the voices of teachers of color, and in particular Black teachers, to be shared about mediated depictions of their experiences. While there are common experiences shared by many public-

16

school teachers, Black teachers working in predominately Black and low-income school communities such as Baltimore, undoubtedly experience unique circumstances that should be valued and, just as importantly, must be told. While Black teachers comprise only 6.5 percent of all public-school teachers nationwide (Strauss, 2017), white teachers continue to constitute over 80 percent of the national teaching force; as a result, they are largely seen as the image of teachers in mediated depictions. Specific to Baltimore, even though over 79 percent of BCPSS students are Black (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2018), the city school system has seen a steady decline in the number of Black teachers over the past decade with a recent high of 63 percent of teachers in Baltimore being Black in 2003, down to 38 percent in 2015 (Teachers Democracy Project, 2018). By giving voice to the experiences of Black teachers in response to mediated images of them, this study takes up Stuart Hall's call to "reimagine truth" (in Smith, 2017, p. 180). Teacher descriptions of their experiences that work to counteract mainstream media narratives of teacher experiences serve as not only counternarratives but work to create "counter-images...that offer substantially new meanings of marginalized groups" (Smith, p. 180-181), in this case, Black teachers. Hall calls for counter-storytelling to be used to reverse stereotypes, to replace negative representations with positive ones and to examine the limits of visual representations (Smith, p. 181). This study sought to do all three of those things by allowing Black teachers to speak for themselves against the negative visual representations given about them in the local television news media here in Baltimore.

As Catalano & Gatti (2017) point out, news media in general plays a "formidable role in shaping the public's opinion of social issues" (p. 73). The news media has the ability to use episodic framing to selectively portray teachers in negative and sometimes criminal light (p. 73).

Repeated exposure to these negative images contains the power to shape viewers thinking patterns about teachers in general (Littlemore, 2015). The authors call for a denaturalization of mainstream media's framing of educational issues and an advancement of alternative frames to depict teachers in order to "expose what is currently hidden, especially as it relates to the central question: who benefits from these negative representations?" (p. 73). This study sought, in part, to provide an alternative frame to depict teachers as the authors have called for by giving teachers control of the framing. Their question, which asks who benefits from this negative framing, is an important one that should be asked directly to the teachers who are impacted by that negative framing. Exposing the political influences that work to shape the mediated images of teachers can help to debunk the notion that the mainstream depictions are accurate and unbiased. All media portrayals are constructions that must be exposed as such especially when they have the potential to shape public perception as television news media portrayals of education have the potential to do.

Acham (2004) explains that the way things are, are not the way things have to be. Whereas mediated images of teachers have historically been used to belittle the teaching profession, because of its massive reach, television depictions of teachers has the potential to reverse this narrative. Acham adds that a shift in its use could allow us to "employ television as a tool of resistance against mainstream constructions of African-American life" (p. xii). Talking to Black teachers about their lived experiences in response to mediated fabrications of their experiences could be the first step in this act of resistance. Williams (2017) notes:

Educators need to strive to correct media outlets in their representations...by involving as many citizens as possible in the real world of education. The

involvement of educators in the shaping of media depictions of the teaching profession could ensure a more directly involved, better informed, and more supportive public (p. 67).

A more supportive public could reshape the way teachers are paid, treated and respected in American society which would go a long way in improving the educational outcomes of the students who need it most.

### **Organization of the Study**

This research study is broken into five chapters. Chapter one provides a brief introduction to the study, as well as presents the main problem, the guiding research questions and the significance of this study. Chapter two provides an overview of the major literature related to this study. Literature related to media portrayals of teachers and people of color is examined as well as an overview of the major theoretical frameworks related to the topic: Critical Race Theory and Framing Theory. Chapter three presents the methodology used for this research study. This includes the data collection process, criteria for the selection of participants and data analysis procedures. Additionally, this chapter outlines the researcher's positionality and reflexivity as it relates to this work. Chapter Four presents the study's major findings including key themes and anecdotes related to the research questions. Chapter Five includes a summary of the study and a significant discussion of the findings. Implications of the findings as well as the limitations and recommendations for further research are also included.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses. — Malcolm X, 1963

The following sections outline the major research and literature related to mediated images of Black people, public schools and public-school teachers across various platforms (fictional television, print and television news and movies). The major literature on critical race theory (CRT) in education is also put forth, as a foundational understanding of the theory is necessary to fully investigate the sometimes-incongruous relationship between mediated explanations of public-school teacher experiences and the lived the experiences of Black public-school teachers.

#### **Why media portrayals matter**

While this particular research project was focused on the ways that a local television news media program chose to frame public-school teachers in Baltimore, it is important to make clear that various media platforms have been used to frame public narratives of public-school teachers for decades. Newspaper and magazine articles, feature length movies, television dramas and sitcoms, documentaries as well as television news all put forth particular messages about the experiences of public-school teachers and any examination of these messages and the impact they have on real teachers and their lived experiences must include relevant research.



In an age of increasing scrutiny by the public over the messages put forth by media outlets, the ways in which historically marginalized groups (i.e. people of color, women, immigrants, children) (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007) are represented across various media platforms matters more now than ever before. All media seek to normalize power relations through the repeated exposure of signifiers, any perceivable indicator that communicates appropriate or expected behavior to a person, to viewers and/or consumers (Hall, 1973; Pope, 2016). As noted cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1980) posits, hegemonic powers encode media texts that must be decoded by viewers and consumers. With Americans currently watching approximately 23 hours a week of television across various devices (Wolverton, 2018), the images put forth go a long way in shaping public perceptions of the groups being portrayed. Therefore, it becomes a matter of utmost importance to recognize the forces that control the output of these mediated images and to decode the messages embedded in these representations.

As Hall (1997) describes, “Representation is conceived as entering in the very constitution of things; and thus, culture is conceptualized as a primary or ‘constitutive’ process...not merely a reflection of the world after the event” (pp. 5-6). Therefore, mediated images quickly escalate from being simply representations of groups of people to becoming the agreed upon public narrative of the groups themselves or, as Hall describes it, their constitution. These representations are often the only window mainstream viewers have into marginalized peoples (Bodenhausen et. al, 1995). It makes sense then that mediated images have the potential to be powerful tools in shaping the public narratives around these groups.

Historically, these socially constructed representations have been used to reinforce social

hierarchies with marginalized groups being depicted as weaker and of inferior intelligence (Spencer, 2011). As Smith (2017) explains, “a number of scholars...have argued that visuals hold the potential for unlocking otherwise withheld opinions and beliefs” (p. 182). These visuals work together to form what Hall (1997) refers to as a “regime of representation” (p. 232). This “regime” uses a system of images to portray marginalized groups as “others”; different from dominant-culture (white, middle-class) viewership and two dimensional in nature: either good or bad, smart or unintelligent, beautiful or atrocious (Smith, 2017). The result is that media representations often do more to build on existing stereotypes of marginalized groups than to contradict these perceptions.

While all mediated images are socially constructed, news media such as newspapers and evening television news broadcasts play an important role in shaping public perceptions of marginalized groups of people as most Americans see the news media as “the chief purveyors of political information” (Peffley et al., 2001, p.2). Cottle (2009) found that the news media play a significant role in shaping the public’s opinion of social issues including education. As Americans turn to news media for information gathering (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997), the mediated images seen on the news work to shape public perceptions of important topics from politics to education (Shaw, 2005). However, this does not mean that news media is any more trustworthy or neutral in its mediated depictions of topics and/or groups of people. Any investigation of the potential biases and/or shaping of content that takes place in media must also include a significant examination of news media and, in particular, television news media with its ability to reach large audiences who assume the messages put forth are trustworthy and reliable.

## **Framing in Television News Media**

Born out of the constructivist approach to media which holds that messages in media are constructed (Jolls & Wilson, 2014; Kellner & Share, 2005; Mears, 2010), framing theory (Bateson, 1972; Scheufele, 1999) in media posits that mass media work to construct social phenomena. These constructions, or framings, work to shape people's perceptions of a group, topic or issue. Framing does not have to be positive or negative. The rhetoric and images used in media work to shape particular interpretations without necessarily altering the facts of the story. Most commonly, framing in media is used as a tool to imply that a problem exists that must be solved. As Druckman (2001) notes, "the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker uses when relaying information to another... may reveal what the speaker sees as relevant to the topic at hand" (p. 227). Adegbola et al. (2018) explains, "The media framing theory places emphasis on mass media's selective contextualization of certain issues so as to shape public opinion, a step beyond telling the public what to think" (p.53). This is especially important to local television news media stories such as those related to urban public schools where larger contextual issues such as school funding formula, school selection criteria and social issues plaguing the larger metropolitan areas impact local schools. These issues are often not told as part of the framing of the stories related to problems facing the schools themselves. Entman (1993) adds that "journalists may follow the rules of objective reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation" (p.56). Most often this is executed through what has become known in the mainstream media as "spin", which is the presentation of issues with inherent bias in order to produce a positive or negative judgment from viewers (Fairhurst &

23

Sarr, 1996). This “spin” may include not only the words used in the broadcast but the visual imagery as well. As Messaris & Abraham (2001) note, “Implicit visual imagery is increasingly being used to frame messages that involve the representations of African Americans in news” (p.204). Poindexter, et. al (2003) point out that this visual imagery is often used to place Black people in a negative context.

Framing is generally done in one of two ways: episodic framing, which act as case studies and emphasize individual experiences or conditions and outcomes, or thematic framing, which tend to focus on trends over time and environments (Adegbola et al, 2018). Iyengar’s (1991) seminal research on the framing of political issues on television news programs found that television news reports were dominated by episodic framing with little to no long-term context being given for the individual stories being shared on news broadcasts. As Catalano and Gatti (2017) explain, television news uses “episodic framing” to highlight particular images, soundbites and storylines that work to frame narratives in a particular way. Cohen (2010) refers to this as the “politics of representation” (p. 108) in which there is a reframing of news events in order to shape perspectives by using selective grammar patterns and images to reshape public discourse on a topic. Kaplan (1990) adds to our understanding of this reframing that occurs via media by recognizing that while seemingly objective and neutral, news media outlets are increasingly owned by huge corporations and conglomerates with “a readiness to produce almost anything that could yield maximum profits while still technically classifiable as news” (p. 7). While there was initially great hope that the advent of cable news and more news sources would bring about greater objectivity and trustworthiness in news media (Kaplan, 1990), the result has been the opposite with partisanship and overt political agendas becoming more

recognizable to viewers (Eveland & Shah, 2003). As a result of corporate owned media (Lutz, 2012), the images and depictions of marginalized groups continue to lack in diversity and depth of their portrayals.

**Media Portrayals of Black Folk – History of Caricatures and Stereotypes.** From essentially the first depictions of Black people on televised media (movies, television shows and television news broadcasts) with DW Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" (1915), the media has been criticized for its blanket representations of Black people. Despite increases in the number of Black people shown on television, the diversity of the portrayals remains limited at best (Greenberg, Mastro & Brand, 2002; Mastro & Troop, 2004; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). Media portrayals of Black people on television have the ability to contribute to public perceptions of Black people regardless of age and race (Mastro & Troop, 2004; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008).

Black people have been depicted negatively in media using stereotypes such as those discussed in Donald Bogle's (2013) classic book, *"Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: An interpretive history of Blacks in American films"*. Bogle classifies Black film representations into the same five categories listed in the book's title. The "Tom", derived from the classic book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, represents the Black man whose main priority is to exemplify the inferiority of Black people. The "Coon", represents the Black man whose sole purpose is the amusement of White people, often offering self-demeaning jokes for entertainment. The "Mulatto", is usually an attractive woman of mixed race with light-skin whose primary purpose is to be the forbidden temptation of White men. This is contrasted by the "Mammy" figure, usually a dark skinned Black woman with a heavy built frame, who serves as a mother figure to White children in her role as a house servant but who lacks any real relationships of her own. The last figure

25

Bogle examines, the “Buck” or “Brute”, is derived from White fears of Black male strength during slavery. The Buck is defined as a violent, hypersexualized Black male, who instills fear into White communities. While Bogle examined Black people in films, these stereotypes can be seen in other media genres including reality television (Bell-Jordan, 2008; Orbe, 2008), television sitcoms and dramas and televised news broadcasts (Mutz & Nir, 2010; Van Dijk, 1995).

Dating back to 1968 with the release of the Kerner Commission Report, scholars have sought to better understand the way news media focuses on Black people and Black communities. Seeking to understand the causes of the 1965 Watts Riots, the Commission found that the media was at least partially to blame for the tensions that existed in that the depictions of the Black community shown on the evening news had been framed from what Stuart Hall would refer to as the “Dominant-Hegemonic position,” meaning that the story was largely framed from the white perspective with little to no attempts at telling the Black narrative of events or of explaining the socio-historical context that led to the uprising. Unfortunately, albeit not surprisingly, little has changed since the 1968 report findings. Studies of depictions of Black people in television news media since 1968 (Campbell, 1995; Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Gilliam & Iyenjar, 2000; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008) have largely found that Black people continue to be misrepresented and stereotyped in much larger proportions than their white counterparts. Black people have largely been associated with negative news and depicted as portrayers of crime while being far less likely to be shown as victims of crime. When they are shown as victims of crimes, they receive far less airtime for related stories than do white victims of similar crimes (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). Punyanunt-Carter’s (2008) study on local news and race

26

found that discrimination against Black people as a story topic was rare and that Black people were more likely to be shown in a news story if they had committed a crime. As she concludes, “because local television is now the primary news source and media effects theories suggest framing has the power to define the terms of a debate, the results of this content analysis of local television news and race should be a cause for concern” (p.534). I echo this cause for concern and add another layer with the intersection of race and public schooling depictions in local television news.

**Media Portrayals of Public Schools Systems and Policies.** Historically the news media has been negative in its depictions of teachers and public education in general and these representations of teachers and educational issues are of great importance. As Cohen (2010) notes:

Studies of the representation of education in print and video media, as well as the production and consumption of that media, uncover how education policy has been mediatized in ways that shape public opinion by directing readers to adopt particular policy priorities and assign responsibility for the political issues being identified (p. 106).

This was evident in the portrayal of the No Child Left Behind educational policy that Goldstein (2011) studied. He found that media framing of the policy produced and “overwhelmingly negative representation of teachers and teacher unions which affected public perception of education in a negative manner” (in Catalano & Gatti, 2017, p. 61). Thus, when these representations are negative, the general public’s view of teachers is likely to be negative as well. Kaplan (1990) argues that the entire K-12 school system is portrayed as less professional

27

and less attractive than other comparable career fields are on television. Catalano & Gatti (2017) echo this, finding that news media uses the episodic framing approach to depict teachers as incompetent and even criminals without depicting the background context that makes teaching such a difficult job. This framing, they argue, “shapes how the public perceives teachers, education policy and schools” (p. 61). Reyes and Rios (2003) explain that this warped portrayal of what teaching is, is especially important when teachers of color are involved as they are either left out of depictions or depicted negatively. The public is left with “sparse ingredients from which to make realistic assumptions, perceptions, or interpretations” of what it is to be a teacher (p. 4). They conclude by noting that “mediated manifestations of the teaching profession are more often problematic and dangerous than inspiring and honorable” (p. 4).

American teaching has been a profession dominated by women (Maurer, 2017) as historically women were often barred from other, more technical or lucrative, professional career paths. Hence the negative portrayals of teachers in media often work to continue the stereotypes of women as performing in less intense, less important jobs than their male counterparts and of teaching being a “female” profession. Noted critical race theorist Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term “Representational Intersectionality” in which she examined “the manner in which race and gender images, abundant in our culture, merge to construct unique narratives considered appropriate for women of color” (in Tate, 1997, p. 232). This representational intersectionality also applies to teachers of color who are often stereotyped in media in a dually negative manner as members of both a marginalized group (Black, Asian, Latinx) and a member of a generally negatively portrayed professional field (education).



Crenshaw's work on representational intersectionality sought to determine whether cultural artifacts such as media images could influence political thinking. This is an especially important endeavor as it relates to education in that mediated images of education have the potential to impact political outcomes such as school funding, school closures and the hiring and firing of particular teachers and administrators. In this way, mediated representations of teachers and education have real life consequences and when these representations are overwhelmingly negative, public perceptions of teachers and public education will most likely be negative as well.

While the majority of studies on mediated depictions of education focus on teachers' experiences, there is a growing body of research that explores the ways in which educational policies are depicted in media and the impact it has on public perceptions of these policies. For example, in "Media (Mis)Representations of Education in the 2000 Presidential Election" (2002), Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin examines major television, newspaper and radio media coverage of educational issues related to the 2000 presidential campaign between President George Bush and then Vice-President Al Gore. As Gerstl-Pepin offers, for most voters, media is increasingly their primary source of information and as it relates to elections, media plays an important role in helping democracy function. Instead of focusing on how media remains biased to the left or right, Gerstl-Pepin suggests that the biggest media bias comes from the leaving out of alternative viewpoints from the two main parties. In her work, she examines how educational policies were either misrepresented or ignored completely by media coverage of the presidential election.

Gerstl-Pepin examines Habermas' (1989) theory of the "public sphere" and applies it to the media. According to Habermas, the public sphere "is an arena of discourse—separate from state bureaucracies and the economy—through which citizens come together to discuss and debate issues and determine how a democracy should be governed and, thus, which issues are important and need attention" (in Gerstl-Pepin, p. 39). Gerstl-Pepin argues that media is the best example of public sphere today with the exception being that within media, issues are often not debated but instead are reported as fact, leaving many voices left out. This is especially problematic in education as the omitted voices most often includes teachers and minority groups. She describes media as a sort of "thin" public because a genuine dialogue does not take place. Instead media is used as a forum to analyze issues. Gerstl-Pepin calls out the media for preferring simplistic representations of deep education issues and calls for the media to make an "aggressive effort" to provide a more intricate understanding of educational issues that face underrepresented groups.

In "Imaging the Frame: Media Representations of Teachers, Their Unions, NCLB and Education Reform" (2011), Rebecca Goldstein examines mass media representations of national teacher union opposition to President George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" educational policy. As she notes, "What the public is often exposed to is based on the interests of those who have the power to control the message and its interpretation" (p. 545). This is especially important as it relates to educational policy and education reform as both of these "realities" are constructed by people in power often through media. Understanding how debates around these issues are framed is an important first step in engaging in meaningful discussion. As Goldstein suggests, what the public is exposed to is not coincidence but purposeful. The choices

30

of photos, advertisements and cover stories are not random but are instead purposefully chosen to engage viewers and to maximize profit.

Using an interdisciplinary methodological approach, Goldstein is clear to note that her work is not meant to be exhaustive but rather is the beginning of an examination into the ways the media frame school reform supporters and opposition. As she explains “The mass media may not tell people what to explicitly think about teachers’ unions. However, by negatively portraying teachers’ union, and by extension teacher, and framing them as anti-NCLB, anti-school reform and anti-child, the media might shape how the public thinks about them” (p. 566).

Media framing of public-school education issues is not unique to the United States. For example, in “Teacher Representation in News Reporting on Standardized Testing: A case study from Western Australia” (2013), Katheryn Shine and Tom O’Donoghue examine the impact that local news media coverage can have on both educational policy and on teachers. The major aim of their work was to provide a historical analysis of a local newspaper’s coverage of five major educational issues in western Australia between 1987 and 2007 with a particular focus in this paper on standardized testing coverage. The West Australian newspaper was chosen because of its longevity, having existed in Australia since the late 1800s and because of its reach of 2.3 million people daily. The newspaper is known across Australia as being supportive of the Australian Liberal-National Coalition, the major conservative political bloc in the country which undoubtedly shapes its framing of its news stories related to teachers and education.

Shine and O’Donoghue begin with a brief history of research on teacher representations in media, specifically noting that before the 1970s, much of the research focused on

31

representations of education but not teachers with a few exceptions. The authors claim that teachers are often portrayed in extremes: either as hero or villain, a notation that is in line with much other research on the topic.

Using an interpretivist paradigm which views our understandings of the world as being subjective and based on individual experiences, they analyze 106 articles on standardized testing in the local newspaper between 1997 and 2001. The authors ask four important questions of the media depictions:

What intentions did *The West Australian* portray as being those which teachers should have in relation to standardized testing and what reasons were given as to why they should have these intentions? What strategies did *The West Australian* portray as being those which teachers should adopt in relation to standardized testing and what reasons were given as to why they should adopt these strategies? What significance did *The West Australian* portray as being that which teachers should attach to their work on standardized testing and what reasons were given as to why this should be the case? What outcomes did *The West Australian* portray as those which teachers should expect from their work on testing and what reasons were given as to why they should expect these outcomes? (p. 7)

They found that the media coverage was negative towards teachers, depicting them as shirking responsibilities, resisting accountability and undermining the testing process. They also found that positive representations of teachers were rare. This is especially important because as they note, news media coverage “can affect teachers who are concerned about a perceived

32

negative focus in coverage of education” (p .2). This can have a lasting impact on morale, which in turn can impact how long a teacher chooses to stay in the profession, thereby impacting student learning.

**Media Portrayals of Teachers.** Much of the existing literature on mediated depictions of teachers focuses on the often-problematic nature of tropes. For example, in “Dangerous Morals: Hollywood puts a happy face on Urban Education” (1998), Sophie Bell, examines “thirty-something, ‘outsider’ adult characters” dumped into “the glamorized world of urban high schools” (p. 23). Bell, herself a former high school teacher, draws parallels between movies such the classic *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and cowboy-western movies, in which “the hero rides in from out of town and gets people to start following the law by breaking the law himself” (p. 24). Without explicitly referring to it as a trope, Bell outlines the stereotypical teacher movie in eight steps: an inexperienced teacher (almost always a white male) is hired and warned about uncontrollable students, the teacher is exposed to youth culture, the teacher fails at traditional teaching methods, the teacher decides to not back down, the teacher re-enters the classroom with a new out-of-the-box strategy, most students begin to accept the teacher except for one rebellious leader, the teacher meets with the rebel outside of school grounds and they make amends, the rebel and teacher join forces to solve a larger problem. In almost all of the movies, the new teacher is a complete community outsider in addition to often being a career-changer. Bell laments that this may send the message that teacher education is unnecessary and that almost anyone can become a good teacher relatively quickly.

Bell also offers an important analysis of films based on real life teaching experiences such as the portrayal of Jaimie Escalante, played by Edward James Olmos in *Stand and Deliver*

33

(1989). Bell argues that because Hollywood manipulates stories of success in education to the extreme end. As she describes it:

Escalante succeeded by working too hard. He taught the calculus class before school, two periods during the day and after school. They met during school vacations. He also taught English as a second language in the evenings. According to the film, he suffered a stroke and neglected his family in his passion for teaching. Is this what it takes? (p. 25).

Here she asks the important question: do teachers have to be superhuman to be successful as Hollywood movies make it seem? Even when depicted positively, teachers, according to Bell, are shown in an unrealistic light and are shown to be facing problems of such large proportion that it would be impossible for a single figure to solve them in real life.

As Bell laments, "It would be much more powerful for us all to see a vision of a whole school that worked, rather than a single-classroom" (p. 26). Indeed, in every movie Bell discusses, she notes that success is limited to the single teacher and no movie shows the transformation of an entire school, making it seem that it may be impossible to change school cultures or school communities.

Bell concludes by pointing out that her biggest problem with teacher films is not that they show unrealistic demonstrations of urban teaching or that they often show school leaders as standing in the way of student success, but that none of these movies seems to address the large inequities (racism, poverty, segregation and indifference) that face public education today. As Bell describes sarcastically, "The largely middle class suburban audience members don't need to be made uncomfortable by their own implication in the miseducation of the

movies heroes” (p. 27). Hollywood instead focuses on micro-school level problems that can be fixed neatly in 90 minutes.

Shannon and Crawford (1998) echo this finding in “Summers Off: Representations of Teachers' Work and Other Discontents”, lamenting that “Everyone is an expert on education. Whether they liked it, hated it or fell somewhere in between, everyone has years of experience at school and feels that experience entitles them to pass judgement on school policies, practices and people” (p. 255). They found that teachers were often only partially represented as babysitters, drill sergeants or jailers, or that in these films teaching was depicted as women’s work. While these depictions often were made in a humorous tone, the ramifications had the potential to be far-reaching and instrumental in some groups views of what it means to be a teacher in American society.

Robert Bulman (2002) builds on this in “Teachers in the ‘hood: Hollywood’s Middle-Class Fantasy”, in which he analyzes films about the high school experience to uncover the patterns and deeper lesson they teach us about American culture. Bulman begins by explaining that the appeal of high school films is that they need not be precise to resonate with the shared experiences of many Americans. He quotes David Denby (1999) who explains that genre films in general would not exist if they did not appeal to the emotions of their audiences.

Bulman argues that films about urban high schools, schools often depicted as being primarily populated by poorer students of color are often representations of white middle-class fantasies of the urban experience and that the teacher-hero, most often found in these films is a representation of these same middle class hopes. Individual students, again often students of color, are shown to be the problem in movies about these schools, instead of systemic social

35

inequalities and it takes a middle class, usually white, teacher-hero to come in and correct the behavior of problematic Black and brown or poor white children to get them to see their potential. Bulman uses Principal Joe Clark's (Morgan Freeman) famous line from the movie *Lean on Me* (1989) as an example: "If you fail I want you to blame yourself. The responsibility is yours" (p. 267). As he notes, "Hollywood is doing nothing but reflecting middle-class anxiety about the problems of inner-city schools and the naïve hope that such problems need not a sustained political commitment from all members of society, but merely the individual moral conversion of poor students" (p. 273).

In "Representations of Education in HBO's *The Wire*, Season 4", James Trier (2010) notes the trope of the white teacher savior that is often used in education movies. Trier quotes Hynes' (2006) work on the "stations of the cross" (p. 183) in teacher savior movies:

We all know the Stations of the Cross for the inspirational-teacher film by now:

[1] the naive young teacher's disastrous first class; [2] the staff meeting that devolves into a bitch session about unruly students, pointless paperwork and the idiotic directives of the administration; [3] the embittered veteran teacher condescending to the idealistic rookie in the teacher's lounge; [4] a climactic confrontation that either threatens violence or delivers it; [5] and a final, tear-jerking moment of redemption as [6] the teacher finally reaches the kids.

Trier demonstrates through the "Prez" storyline (a former cop turned teacher) that *The Wire*, despite all of its critical acclaim has largely held to this trope as can be seen in other education movies such as *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers*. Trier proposes using the storyline to



have new teachers discuss teacher clichés and to have them work in small groups to create a critical lens by which to analyze teacher movies.

Trier's work coincides with Shannon and Crawford's work which also found that the teacher savior trope is often used in mediated depictions of education to show that good teachers have a "calling" to come in, "establish order, take charge of the curriculum and then do whatever is necessary to make students learn" (p. 256). The authors point to classic teacher movies such as *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *To Sir with Love* (1967) as examples of media images of teachers who require an uncompromised commitment to their work and who work to overcome all impediments to save troubled young people. Although on the surface this may seem to be a positive depiction of teachers, it is ultimately quite limiting of teacher experiences. As the authors note:

Like Joan of Arc, they battle for their students and often suffer for their efforts.

As flattering as this savior image may appear at first glance, it ultimately robs teachers of a life outside and inside their work and separated them from the rest of us who are charged with educating and socializing children (p. 256).

Weems (2003) found that movies such as *Dead Poet's Society* (1989) and *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995) continue the teacher-as-hero model, with the teacher being exceptional, awakening and inspiring students to succeed on a personal, academic and social level (p. 261).

However even these seemingly flattering tropes of teachers can be problematic. As Reyes and Rios (2003) point out in "Imaging Teacher: In Fact and in the Mass Media", "the effects of mediated constructions are not inconsequential to how society perceives key actors in education, that is the educators themselves and the students with whom they engage" (p. 4).

If the majority of images of teachers are that they are incompetent, babysitters or that they are superheroes able to overcome all obstacles and challenges to make all students achieve in every way, then the public narrative of teachers becomes binary with real teachers judged by a set of unrealistic, closed-minded standards. As Reyes and Rios point out “the public is offered a warped repertoire of what a teacher is...though there are some exceptions, mediated manifestations of the teaching profession are often more problematic and dangerous than inspiring and honorable” (p. 4).

In “Indecent Proposals: Teachers in the Movies”, Dale Bauer (1998) begins by noting that Hollywood eventually misrepresents all professions and that all professions are sexualized in one way or another. Teachers, she claims, are depicted in a myriad of ways from authoritarian in movies like *Lean on Me* (1989) to anti-authoritarian in movies such as *Dead Poet’s Society* (1989), from idealistic to seductive, hip to clueless. Bauer focuses on the mass cultural imaging of teachers and professional desire and what that ultimately reveals about teaching in the cultural imagination.

Bauer takes special note of the depiction of college English professors such as Barbara Streisand in *The Mirror has Two Faces* (1996). As Bauer points out, as in most teacher movies, there is little focus on actual teaching, despite the fact that most teacher movies describe teachers as over-worked and overly passionate. Bauer then discusses the litany of teacher movies that use the “educator-hero” trope to discuss the crisis of American public education. She concludes that “When movies are not about actual sexual desire/harassment between professors and students, their desire is for discipline: instruction in how to control libido

through channeling it into proper social norms” (p. 303). Popular movies such as *Stand and Deliver* (1988) and *Lean on Me* (1989) take this approach.

Bauer concludes by emphasizing that the eroticization of the classroom serves to obscure the larger issues of concern related to education. As she notes, “Understanding how society views teachers through the prism of the cultural imagination can productively challenge the profession to create its own pedagogical images” (p. 312). Bauer calls for teachers to not rely on Hollywood to define them but to instead define themselves and their profession. Teachers images must be purposefully pursued and more encompassing of pedagogical practices in the classroom as opposed to personality traits or sexuality.

This call is continued in “Star Power and the Schools: Studying Popular Films’ Portrayal of Educators” (2007), by W. Reed Scull and Gary Peltier. The authors here examine the relevance of popular films as they portray K-12 teachers as a tool for teacher reflection and self-examination. They proclaim that the films hold explanatory power and can help teachers better understand how they are viewed by the public and also importantly the films offer potential insights into how students understand the educational system.

Scull and Peltier draw comparisons to studies of film portrayals of other professions such as lawyers, journalists and nurses, arguing that these representations can both lead to reinforcement of societal values or a reexamination of those values. The authors call on educators to view and critique the films as “educators can offer a perspective likely to differ from scholars in other academic fields” (p. 19). As they suggest, “... when people are frequently exposed to a consistent set of messages about a group, they tend to incorporate the information gleaned from those messages into their worldview” (p. 19).

**Media Portrayals of Black Teachers.** Despite Black students comprising more than 14 percent of public-school students in America, Black teachers only account for 6.5 percent of all public-school teachers (US Department of Education, 2016). And while teachers in media have been increasingly portrayed negatively, historically, depictions of Black teachers in media continue many of the stereotypes Bogle wrote about in *Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: An interpretive history of Blacks in American films* which date back to the earliest depictions of Black people in visual media. These tropes and many others that have been examined since, continue to dominate the portrayals of Black teachers in media today as being unintelligent or overbearing, incompetent or engaged in inappropriate behavior. When teachers in general are portrayed in such narrow ways it is problematic as it becomes the public's view of teachers but when Black teachers in particular are portrayed this way it is especially problematic as there are such few Black teachers available to lend voice to counternarratives of these portrayals.

Additionally, the ways in which Black teachers are portrayed is of significance as there is much data to suggest that Black teachers' presence in the classroom has a positive long-term impact on the outcomes of all students but especially Black students (Papageorge et al., 2018).

As Kenneth Meier (1984) explains, although individual teachers may have little impact on school and district wide policies, taken collectively, teachers have the ability to encourage and/or discourage student outcomes by enforcing or not enforcing school policies. This is especially important for teachers of color who are more likely to recognize and fight against what he calls "second generation discrimination" (p. 253). Second generation discrimination

consists of inequities in educational tracking and discipline such as Black students being

counseled away from taking top-level honors courses or being suspended for a minor infraction that a white student would likely get a slap on the wrist for. The representation of Black teachers in both media and in real classrooms results in more positive educational policies towards Black students, including increasing the likelihood of college attendance, lower dropout rates and higher likelihood of enrollment in advanced classes (Meier, p. 256). Mediated representations of teachers, and in particular Black teachers as competent, nurturing, professionals go a long way to impacting real life positive outcomes for students of color.

As Williams (2017) notes, “Although there have been many Black male media-teacher depictions...they have done little to uplift perceptions of Black men and the teaching profession” (p. 53). Unfortunately, this coincides with what Crenshaw (2018) found about mediated representations of Black women, noting that, “Whatever the relationship between imagery and action is, it seems clear that these images do function to create counternarratives to the experiences of women of color that discredit our claims and render the violence we experience unimportant” (p. 120). As Hall explains, “visuals have no inherent meaning but rather reflect the ways in which people and society integrate those images into everyday life” (in Smith, 2017, p. 180). The negative portrayals of teachers in media and in particular Black teachers sheds light on the way the public views and values these teachers in everyday life. Hence an examination of the representations of teachers is a critical first step in beginning to counter the mediated narratives created about public school teachers and in particular Black ones.

With *Room 222* (1969-1974) and *The Bill Cosby Show* (1969-1971), mediated depictions of Black teachers first began to appear on television (Williams, 2017). While *Room 222* featured

a Black history teacher who worked to introduce tolerance during the tail-end of the civil rights movement, *The Bill Cosby* show featured a young Bill Cosby as a physical education teacher who used comedy to connect to students but mostly focused on his relationships outside of the classroom including his pursuits of women. These two shows paved the way for future television shows featuring Black teachers including, *Hanging with Mr. Cooper* (1992-1997), which featured a former NBA player turned teacher and shows which focused more on Black collegiate educators such as *A Different World* (1987-1993) and *The Parkers* (1999-2004). In each of these shows however, either the home life or the romantic interests of teachers take the primary focus of the teachers' appearances on the show. Although there have been numerous television shows that have portrayed Black educators from the last 1960s until today, most either continue to display Black teachers in the stereotypical ways discussed by Bogle and others or fail to give an in-depth portrayal of the teachers actually teaching and dealing with real-life school related issues, focusing instead on the teachers' relationships outside of the classroom.

Building on Swetnam's (1992) work on media distortions of teacher images, Melvin Williams in "Ain't I a Teacher?": A Television Analysis of Black Male Media-Teachers on The Steve Harvey Show" (2017) explored the presence of teacher stereotypes as it related to Black male teachers and connections to stereotypes of Black males that exist outside of media. As the author points out, Black teachers in general are underrepresented in discussions of teacher depictions, with Black male teachers rarely being mentioned (p. 46). Using *The Steve Harvey Show* (1996-2002), which was the longest running television sitcom to feature a Black teacher in a leading role, Williams explored the series for stereotypical tropes of both Black males such

42

as gangsters, womanizers and drug dealers along with stereotypes of teachers to better understand how mass media was used to represent an underrepresented group: Black male teachers. In exploring the show, Williams acknowledged the potential of television to act “as a tool of resistance against mainstream constructions of African-American life” (p. 47).

Unfortunately, Williams’ exploration only reaffirmed much of the research that already existed about mediated images of Black teachers in that the depictions did little, if anything, to create positive images of these teachers. Christine Acham (2004) in “Revolution Televised: Prime Time and the Struggle for Black Power”, found that the majority of Black teachers on television were found on secondary television stations such as the now defunct Warner Brothers (WB) and United Paramount Network (UPN) networks which were heavily criticized for the stereotypical ways Black people were represented across the networks (Gosling, 1999; Okwu, 1997). Williams found that *The Steve Harvey Show* continued the portrayal of Black teachers as teachers of non-core subject areas (typically Math, English, Social Studies and Science) with Steve Harvey playing a musician turned music teacher and his side kick, Cedric the Entertainer, playing the physical education teacher. These depictions reaffirm the trope of the incompetent teacher and the belief that pretty much anyone can become a teacher, both previously discussed. In addition, Williams found that much of the show focused, not on the teaching skills of the two Black male teachers, but on their romantic interests, which often took place in the school building. Instead of moving away from historic tropes of Black men, Williams found that depictions of Black male teachers in media continued the stereotypes of Black men as hypersexual and womanizers, avoiding an opportunity to shift the narrative. While these depictions largely took place in fictional media portrayals, they are echoed in the framing of

Black people in television news media as discussed earlier. Portraying Black teachers as incompetent, self-centered and being less than professional in television media has the potential to negatively shape public perceptions of Black teachers and is doubly impactful as there are so few Black teachers available and/or given the opportunity to speak back against this framing.

### **Origins and Relevance of Critical Race Theory in Education**

The 2008 election of President Barack Obama ushered in what many scholars mistakenly referred to as a “Post Racial” era in American history (Hollinger, 2008; Lum, 2009; McKanders, 2009; Nelson, 2009; Tesler & Sears, 2010). A Black man reaching the highest political office in the Western world seemingly symbolized the finish of a centuries long quest for racial equality in the country. However, the election of President Trump in 2016, which ushered in overtly racist demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia and other cities, demonstrated the pivotal role that race continues to play in virtually all aspects of the collective American political psyche (Crenshaw et. al, 1995). As has been discussed by Gloria Ladson-Billings and others, the American educational system is not immune to the influence of race in educational outcomes.

Originally designed to critique racial inequalities within the legal system, critical race theory (CRT) has developed over time to be used as a tool to attack and transform the relationships between race, racism and power in education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Born out of Critical Legal Studies, Radical Feminism and the works of scholars such as Derek Bell and Kimberly Crenshaw, critical race theory seeks to question the foundation of the liberal order, with its alleged color-blind approach (Crenshaw et. al, 1995) to fighting inequality and to call for rapid and direct change in racial inequalities as opposed to the dogged incrementalism of



liberalism, or so-called progressive policies of the American left. Using the much applauded 1954 *Brown versus Board of Education* ruling as a case study, Derek Bell, considered by many to be the “intellectual father figure” of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 6) broke down the reaction to the case to reveal that the initial excitement and calls for action in the wake of the ruling were quickly overrun by a loss of interest from white allies and a renewed movement to deescalate the impact of the ruling by southern white opposition. The result was that 50 years after the *Brown* ruling, schools were more segregated than they were five years after the ruling and the Black-white education gap has grown not shrunk (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2009; Jencks & Phillips, 2011). Bell noted that the incremental approach to implementing the desegregation of schools allowed for opposition of the decision to use the political and legal system to secure a series of victories that prevented the *Brown* case from ever having the impact that was intended. Bell then takes the argument a step further by arguing that proponents of *Brown* missed the mark in calling for integration of schools as a means to creating racial equality. True integration never occurred as whites fled public schools occupied by Black students, taking their resources and money with them, leaving Black students destitute and leaving Black teachers without jobs (Bell, 1980; Fairclough, 2004). Instead he argues that the real solution to educational inequality caused by segregation would have been to legitimately fund schools equally and allow Black schools to compete in quality with white schools.

Bell’s arguments, although beginning in law, provided a clear pathway for CRT to be used in examining educational outcomes with regards to discipline in schools, bilingualism, tracking, charter schools, high stakes testing practices and affirmative action amongst many other school issues. Bell and other CRT scholars including Delgado and Stefancic, call on CRT to

45

include an “activist dimension” (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 8). This means that scholars have a responsibility to not just simply point out inequalities as they exist but must also work with communities and other activists to attack these inequalities. In education this means attacking racist schooling policies, seeking to change curriculum and working to transform teaching practices amongst many other practices.

**Critical Race Theory Ideologies.** Critical Race Theorists essentially fall into two camps: Idealists and Realists. Idealists believe that racism is largely a social construction, made up by society that is mostly a mental undertaking which is manifested in the attitudes and discourses of a society. They believe that the primary work of CRT should be to change the mentality of the society which will lead to a change in relations between groups of people and help to alleviate issues of discrimination. This work can be done in large part by turning a critical eye to the ways that people of color are represented in media and other public platforms (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 25). Realists on the other hand argue that racism is a system which privileges certain groups of people over others based on a racial hierarchy and we see the manifestation of this in who has access to better jobs, education, housing and resources within a society. They believe that the primary work of CRT must be to challenge the systems that work to keep people of color in subordinate positions within a society.

### **Key Elements of Critical Race Theory**

Several key elements combine to make up the foundation of critical race theory. First and maybe most significantly is the concept that CRT views racism as ordinary and as a part of all aspects of society (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Because racism is so pervasive,

this also makes it difficult to address directly as it is so embedded in our day-to-day practices

46

that it can be hard to recognize especially for those who refuse to acknowledge its existence. As we move towards a “color-blind” society (Crenshaw et al., 1995), having conversations about the impact of race and race-based practices becomes even more important but also more difficult to do.

The second major element of CRT, “interest convergence”, suggests that because racism advances white interests on all levels, large segments of society (mostly white people) have little incentive to fight against it. Bell (2004) argues that this was a large reason why white liberals abandoned the fight for educational equality after the Brown decision. Believing that they had done their part, white liberals lost interest in the need to continue fighting for Black educational rights, which resulted in the erosion of and eventually regression of progress towards true educational equality.

“Social construction thesis” (Delgado & Setfancic, 2017) holds that race has no scientific basis but was created by society for the convenience of dominant-hegemonic forces. Those in power choose to ignore scientific evidence in order to uphold superficial differences that benefit them. While race isn’t “real” in the biological sense, its effects certainly are in that members of the dominant society hold the power to shift stereotypes and images of minority in ways that allow them to keep control of power in society.

“Differential racialization” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Zamudio et al., 2011) explains that each race has its own origin story and own history regarding its treatment in society. The way the dominant group treats different racial groups changes at different times in history. This can be seen with the evolution of including Italians and Jewish immigrants as white Americans over the last fifty years as opposed to their secondary immigrant status in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

or in the way that east Asians such as the Japanese were treated during World War II as opposed to Asians' treatment as model minorities today.

"Intersectionality and anti-essentialism" (Crenshaw et al, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) hold that everyone is made up of multiple identities which may sometimes conflict or align. A scholar may be a woman, Black and gay and occupy three very important yet distinct realities. CRT calls for an acknowledging of those intersections and a recognizing that while there are many shared experiences for people of color and minority groups, we must work to not essentialize those experiences to a singular voice.

Lastly the "voice of color thesis" explains that because of their unique experiences, scholars of color may be able to explain experiences to white people that they might not otherwise know. This unique voice or perspective brings with it a "presumed competence to speak about race and racism" (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 11).

Daniel Solorzano (1998) adds to our understanding of critical race theory by expanding on Bell, Delgado and Stefancic's elements of CRT and adding a few others. The "intercentricity of race and racism" adds to the concept of racism being omnipresent in American society by explaining that there are racialized layers of subordination based on characteristics such as accent, gender, surname and social class.

Tara Yosso and Daniel Solorzano call on CRT to challenge dominant ideology. Just as Bell suggests that there must be an activist element to CRT, Yosso and Solorzano believe CRT must not seek to be objective or neutral but should instead expose "deficit-informed research that silences, ignores and distorts epistemologies of people of color" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). Tied to interest convergence, Yosso and Solorzano call for CRT to have a commitment to social justice.

CRT must work toward the permanent ending of racism, sexism and poverty for subordinate groups, not for fleeting temporary gains that eventually erode when attacked by white power interests. In alignment with the voice of color thesis, Yosso and Solorzano hold that CRT must work from the centrality of experiential knowledge. As they note, CRT draws on the lived experiences of people of color using family histories, biographies, parables and narratives amongst other tools to share this knowledge. Lastly, Yosso and Solorzano call for CRT to include a transdisciplinary perspective meaning that CRT must draw on scholarship from other fields such as sociology, law, women studies and others to analyze race and racism in historical and contemporary contexts.

### **Critical Race Theory in Education**

As much has been made about the stereotypes of Black people in America as seen through the media, an important component of this is the framing of Black people as not caring about and/or valuing education (Peffley, Hurwitz, & Sniderman, 1997; Steele, 1997). In part through visual images and framing of news stories, the master narrative surrounding Black people and education is one of lazy students, uninvested parents and uncaring teachers. However, little is made of the historical disadvantages related to education that Black people continue to suffer from such as disproportionately underfunded school systems, less qualified teachers and higher suspension and expulsion rates (Crenshaw & Allen, 2014; Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). As Bell notes in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (1992) racism is a permanent part of American life. Schools are no exception. With that in mind, Alfred Tatum, Gloria Ladson-Billings and several other educational scholars began to explore CRT as a tool to dismantle institutional racism in American education. As Ladson-Billings (1998) points out, CRT sees the

49

school curriculum as primarily designed to uphold notions of white supremacy through “master scripts” (p. 18). These scripts serve as dominant narratives so that the works of white authors and the accomplishments of white men are highlighted in school curriculums while minority accomplishments are left as afterthoughts.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define critical race theory in education as “a framework or set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (p. 25). Alongside curriculum, CRT sees minority students as being instructed almost exclusively from a deficit standpoint. This means that capital that could be used to engage Black and brown students is often seen as inappropriate for schools and is omitted, capital such as “aspirational capital”, the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite difficult circumstances, “linguistic capital”, the ability to navigate multiple languages and language dialects, “familial capital”, the cultural knowledge acquired through family relationships and history, “social capital”, the networks and resources accumulated over time through relationships, “navigational capital”, the ability to maneuver through social institutions such as schools which were not designed with minorities in mind and “resistant capital”, the knowledges acquired through fighting against oppressive forces (Yosso, 2005, p. 77-80).

In addition to misplaced instruction, CRT maintains that most testing forms used in schools today do not accurately capture what students know or are capable of doing. Black and brown students are subject to tests rife with implicit bias and are left depicted as academically incompetent by tests never designed with their success in mind. This is coupled with the fact

50

that schools with large Black and brown student populations are regularly and historically underfunded, a direct symptom of institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Using property tax funding formulas to fund schools almost always mean that schools in minority neighborhoods, where houses and properties have lower values in general, will receive less funding dollars, increasing the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Lastly, CRT holds that school desegregation often only benefits whites by giving them access to things like magnet programs and child care, with Black and brown students seeing increased suspension, expulsion and dropout rates at these schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Scholars such as Ladson-Billings call for CRT to be used to analyze each of these educational problems with the hope that exposure of the role of race in educational inequality will lead to actions that will provide equity to historically disadvantaged student groups.

Decuir and Dixon (2004) add to our understanding of CRT in education by expounding on the concept of “Whiteness as property” originally articulated by Cheryl Harris (1995) in its relationship to education. Decuir and Dixon explain that school programs such as honors and gifted and talented or Advanced Placement (AP) courses are seen as property of white students and while a few students of color may penetrate these programs, they are the exception not the rule (Decuir & Dixon, 2004). Even when multiculturalism is touted, expressions of cultural pride must be acceptable to white standards otherwise they will be rejected. In this sense even disposition is a property controlled by whites that minority students must adhere to lest they be exiled in the school setting. Decuir and Dixon argue that CRT is a necessary tool to critique school practices and policies that are both overtly and covertly racist in nature.

In their trailblazing work, “Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education” (1995) Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV add to our understanding of the role of race in education. They argue that while there are many lenses through which we can measure educational inequality, class and gender are not enough on their own to explain all of the differences and educational gaps that exist. This is evidenced by the fact that even for middle class Blacks, a gap remains with their middle classed white counterparts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Coded language is used to label schools and frame the expectations around them with “urban” being synonymous with Black, poor and lacking sophistication and “suburban” with white, middle class and meeting standards. As Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain, “the unspoken discourse is that White communities are ‘good’ communities that house ‘good’ schools” (p. 29). These labels impact public perception and potentially impact resources allocated to each school.

Ladson-Billings and Tate maintain that the multicultural approach to education is simply not working and is in fact another example of the white liberal ideology that calls for gradual change over time, noted by Bell and others, which essentially leads to no real change at all (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). They instead call for an increase in the voices of people of color to be heard in research about education. “Without authentic voices of people of color (as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members) it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, p. 58). Out of this call was born a new CRT methodology: counter-storytelling.

### **Bringing CRT in Education to Action: Counter-Story Case Studies**

The use of counter-storytelling as a form of critical race methodology is an important tool and one that is increasingly used to shed light on the experiences of people of color in the



American school system to counteract the dominant narratives of public-school education. In “Critical Race Theory and the Perspectives of Black Men Teachers in the Los Angeles Public Schools” (2002), Marvin Lynn, one of the foremost experts in critical race theory in education, examined the experiences of a historically underrepresented group, Black male teachers, to give voice to their experiences in a way that is often overlooked. Lynn interviewed 36 Black male teachers across three different urban high schools in Los Angeles in order to explore how the teachers saw themselves in relationship to teaching in highly impoverished areas. Taking up Derek Bell’s call for critical race theorists to serve as activists for change, Lynn gives voice to the “localized narratives of Black men in urban schools” in an attempt to call for “the elimination of barriers that impede the progress of Black men educators in urban schools” (p. 120). Using a CRT framework, Lynn also sought to shape how Black men are represented in studies about teachers by countering three trends in Black male teacher representation. The first trend is that Black teachers in general are largely invisible and marginalized in teacher research. Lynn notes that there is an assumption that our knowledge about teaching is static and not to be questioned but that knowledge is not apolitical and has been shaped by social forces which are subjective and is a knowledge that has largely not included Black voices.

The second trend he notes is that teacher studies that do include Black teachers often depict them as incompetent or villainous. Lynn notes a prior study by Kanpol (1992) in which Black teachers are depicted as “inept, disorganized and unenthusiastic” (Lynn, p. 121). Other studies depict Black teachers who work in poor urban areas as elitist and lacking compassion. Black male teachers in particular are depicted as abusive and disgruntled and as doing more harm than good for their students. The result is the continuation of the trope of Black

inferiority, with Black teachers being shown as less than capable in comparison to their white teacher counterparts, even in areas with large concentrations of students of color.

The third trend he notes is that Black teachers are often placed in tenuous positions, depicted as stewards of assimilationism and traitors to Black social justice causes. Lynn notes that this is a one-sided view of Black teachers and calls for a more nuanced examination of Black teacher responses to white domination. He notes that it was Black teachers who called for universal education at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Septima Clark and Horace Mann Bond who taught Black children mainstream skills while at the same time teaching them to fight for liberation and civil rights. Lynn's larger point is that the depictions of Black teachers as cowering to white domination is offensive and one-sided as Black teachers have a long and noted history as change agents for the Black community, despite the fact that more recent teacher research leaves this narrative out.

Using a qualitative critical race theory methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), Lynn interviewed 36 Black male teachers in Los Angeles to better understand how they viewed their racial identities impact on their pedagogy and their connections to their students. After conducting interviews, Lynn used Ladson-Billing's work (1994) on the typology of the culturally relevant teacher and Watt's work (1992) on racial identity to analyze the data. Several important findings emerged that worked to counteract the trends Lynn noted about prior research on Black teachers. For example, in contrast to the narrative of Black teachers being depicted as assimilationists and arbiters of conservatism, the teachers Lynn interviewed viewed themselves as change agents linked to the communities in which they work. As one teacher

stated:

My identity provides the impetus for me to come into an environment like this and try to impact change in our community. It's my way of being able to have what I see as some significant impact in change for our future as a community (p. 125).

As Lynn made clear, the desire to be change agents is often coupled with the reality of the many barriers that these teachers face to conducting that change, much of which rests outside of their control.

Lynn also found that Black male teachers felt an obligation to act as role models for students of color. As one teacher he interviewed noted, "It has actually given me a greater responsibility 'cause I grew up around here" (p. 126). This sense of purpose coincided with the teachers seeing themselves as protectors of Black boys like themselves; boys who are often depicted as being destined for an early demise. Further contradicting the representations of Black teachers as incompetent and disinvested, Lynn found that the Black male teachers he interviewed saw their identity as giving them a better understanding of their students' needs and behaviors. Several of the interviewees noted that they were less likely to overreact to student behavior because they understood their students' actions and reactions more intimately than their white counterparts did giving them a "pedagogical advantage" (p. 126). The personal identities of these Black male teachers often led to stronger personal connections with their students. Lynn concludes by noting that using a CRT methodology and framework for examining the experiences of Black teachers in schools of color allows us to rethink our pedagogical assumptions which are largely based off of white narratives. What if Blackness and maleness were conceived as additions rather than liabilities in schools? This could be a

55

transformative approach to addressing the many ills that face urban schools of color around the country.

In “Who Really Cares? The Disenfranchisement of African American Males in PreK-12 Schools: A Critical Race Theory Perspective” (2008), Tyrone Howard uses critical race theory methodology to examine the “underachievement and disenfranchisement of African American males in Prek-12 schools” (p. 956). Howard details the struggles of African-American male students in testing, special education, reading and other educational outcomes. He also indicates that there has been much recent scholarship dedicated to countering the hegemonic portrayals of Black male students as “socially and academically deviant” (p. 959). However, in using a critical race theory methodological framework, Howard makes it clear that his work is not simply a continuation of these alternative depictions but is also a call for interventions and new paradigms to improve the educational outcomes of these students. Self-identifying as a Black male who endured the pitfalls of the American educational system and a father of three Black male sons, Howard is transparent in his desire to examine race within education as a means to protect and nurture his sons’ experiences in schools, as his own experience was not nurtured. Building on the works of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Cornell West (2004), Howard (2008) calls for using CRT as a theoretical framework to examine the disenfranchisement of K-12 Black male students because race continues to be under-examined and undertheorized in education. More specifically, Howard calls for the use of counter-storytelling as a methodology to give voice to the students’ experiences. As he notes “paradigms must be created which will allow their voices to shed light on the day-to-day realities in schools and challenge mainstream accounts of their experiences” (p. 967). Much of

the research on the struggles Black males in K-12 settings is written about them without including their own lived experiences. Howard sought to vocalize the experiences of Black males and their accounts of schooling to shed light on the political nature of schools and how many Black males feel that schools are unjust towards them. Additionally, Howard calls on practitioners and researchers to use his work to better understand Black male students and the choices they make regarding their education.

Howard spent the greater part of a year documenting the experiences of ten African-American male middle and high school students from five different high schools in a large west coast American city. The young men attended a range of schools from predominately Black, urban and low-income to predominately white, suburban and middle-class schools. Despite the varied school experiences of the young men, Howard's interviews and observations revealed several themes that crossed school boundaries. For example, several of the young men expressed a need to try to counter stereotypes about them. These stereotypes included Black males not being good at school or being gangbangers or only being good at sports. As one student that was interviewed noted "I work hard to let them know that not all of us are messing up. A lot of us are doing homework every day, studying, working hard, so that we can improve ourselves" (Howard, 2008, p. 970). As Howard explains, these are stories of young men which are rarely shared in educational discourse. The young men also expressed their experiences of being discriminated against at school on a regular basis whether it be by teachers or administrators, especially with regards to discipline as young Black men are more likely to be suspended or expelled for a school infraction as compared to their white counterparts (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Monroe, 2005; Morris & Perry, 2016; Townsend, 2000).

57

Other areas of focus that emerged from the young men's stories included a lack of access to rigorous and quality education and a lack of care or empathy from teachers about post high school aspirations of the students. Howard warns that future researchers must be mindful that when receiving these counternarratives from insiders, we must recognize that these accounts may contradict our preconceived notions about schooling and counteract the mainstream depictions of these environments. He calls for researchers to provide non-threatening platforms that allow these students to express their stories, "which vary from the dominant script about them, their performance and their potential" (Howard, 2008, p. 974) and to not rely on white interpretations of Black experiences that only serve to conform to mainstream narratives. Black males must be given the space and opportunity to tell their stories for themselves. As one young man stated, "I'm kinda shocked that you are asking us about this kinda stuff, because we never get asked about racism and stuff. Because you just assume that nobody's gonna believe you when you tell them about it" (p. 975).

Howard deconstructs the common criticism of CRT as being subjective in its storytelling by explaining that storytelling exists in all of the dominant narratives that exist around education in America. Borrowing from Sleeter and Delgado-Bernal (2003) he notes that "At issue is the question of what counts as truth and who gets to decide" (p. 976). Mainstream narratives of meritocracy, democracy and education are no more or less true than the lived experiences of the young men described in these stories. Inequality in the balance of power means that some stories get told while others are silenced. CRT is a means by which to reclaim that balance of power by giving voice to the voiceless like these young men. Howard challenges

researchers to listen to the stories, challenges and experiences of those on the margins in order to transform disenfranchised populations.

In “Writing Critical Race Theory and Method: A Composite Counter-story on the Experiences of Black Teachers in New Orleans post-Katrina” (2013), Daniella Cook and Adrienne Dixson, conducted a year-long study of African-American educators in New Orleans who worked to rebuild schools after Hurricane Katrina. The study sought to answer two questions: What stories do Black educators tell about schooling in pre-and post-Katrina New Orleans and what are the implications of these educators’ perspectives for urban education reform?

Cook and Dixson begin by discussing the dichotomy of Black educators in the country as being both powerful in their role as educators while also being powerless as Black people in America. Hurricane Katrina’s destruction in 2005 and the forced closing of public schools led to a swarm of calls for school reform and the privatization of public schooling. Racial stereotypes of the largely Black school system as failing led to the implementation of charter schools throughout the city and also led to many Black educators losing jobs in the process.

Cook and Dixson use critical race theory methodology in the form of a composite counter-story to give voice to the lived experiences of Black teachers in New Orleans during the tumultuous time and to tell their version of the story of school reform in the crescent city. As they note, “CRT scholars use counter-stories as a way to defy the master narrative that attempts to erase the struggles and fortitude of people of color who have challenged and still challenge the USA to live up to its democratic ideals” (p. 1243). As former classroom teachers and former residents of New Orleans, both authors acknowledge the impact their positionality has on their ability to navigate the sensitive topics involved and to bring a unique insight to the

59

school and community dynamics. Using a purposeful sampling model, the researchers interviewed seven Black New Orleans educators during the first full school year post Katrina.

The researchers revealed that the mainstream narrative of public schools in New Orleans pre-Katrina was that they were incompetent and disastrous. These assumptions, like many other mainstream narratives about institutions of color, were clouded in white privilege that is often grounded in negative stereotypes of people of color (p. 1250). However, what emerged from their interviews and what is constructed in their counter-stories is a depiction of New Orleans public schools as a familial system with “fictive kin” relationships in which Black teachers saw students as extensions of themselves. Black teachers described communities of caring in which teachers felt social and psychological support from each other. This is a stark contrast to the push teachers felt to become competitive when white-led charter school conglomerates took over these schools post-Katrina. Black teachers noted that their experiences and knowledges were largely ignored in the school reform process or were considered problematic and part of the needed reforms. In essence their prior experiences were silenced by the white majoritarian story of ineptitude in New Orleans schools prior to Katrina, despite Black teachers giving evidence otherwise. By creating a composite story of these experiences, Cook and Dixson give voice back to the teachers without risk of them being singled out by a system many of them are still employed by. As they note:

A literary approach used within the composite counterstory forces us to listen and hopefully empathize with the depth of emotion within the narratives of the educators who participated in this study—to reorient the reader to the



experiences of people who are often invisible yet demonized in mainstream discussions about education in New Orleans” (p. 1253).

The critical race counter-story allows for the creation of another avenue for marginalized peoples to be heard and hopefully serve as a push to challenge the master narratives that exist around schools and schooling of students of color.

In “Telling Stories about School: Using Critical Race and Latino Critical Theories to Document Latina/Latino Education and Resistance” (2002), Lila Fernandez documents the power of a single counter-story in working to dismantle mainstream racial narratives about education. Just as with African-Americans, much of the research that on K-12 Latino/Latina education exists fails to give voice to student experiences. Fernandez combines critical race theory methodology through counter-storytelling with Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) to place another marginalized group, in this case Latinx students, at the center of research. As she notes, “We must recognize and address the lives of students of color who are often the object of our educational research and yet are often absent from or silenced within this discourse” (p. 46).

A native Chicagoan, Fernandez sought to understand the lived experiences of Latinx youth who had attended public schools in Chicago and their cultural practices. After interviewing several students, she settled on one student in particular, “Pablo” who provided first-hand testimony that served as a counter-story to the dominant school narrative. The researcher corroborated Pablo’s accounts with quantitative school data to tell a larger story of the Latinx experience in Chicago public schools.

Several key themes emerged from her interviews with Pablo that highlight the need for counter-stories in educational research. While not all of his teachers were incompetent or insensitive, Pablo described his caring teachers as few and far between and often felt invisible. He also explained that students of color were often pushed towards vocational skills rather than college skills. While Pablo was fortunate enough to go on to college, he expressed concern that his experience was the exception and not the rule and that far more often schools with heavy concentrations of Latinx students offered less rigorous classes. Even the classes he took such as an “advanced” English class did not prepare him properly for his first year of college. As a result of feeling undervalued and poorly taught, many Latinx students chose forms of resistance such as cutting class. Fernandez, borrowing from Solorzano and Villalpando (1998), refers to this as “critical resistant navigational skills” (p. 56). As she describes the students who practiced various forms of resistance, “they chose to resist an educational process they recognized as little more than a holding pen before releasing them to a lifetime of low-skilled, low-wage labor” (p. 56). Pablo’s understanding of why students cut class provides a counternarrative to the mainstream narrative of these students being lazy or uninterested in school when in fact it was quite the opposite. Students often left when they felt undervalued or that their time was being wasted or when more pressing concerns (i.e. needing to work a job) took precedent.

By giving voice to Pablo, Fernandez sharpens our understanding of the student perspective of the school as opposed to the story that might be told from a school administrator or teacher from a different cultural background who might not even recognize the subtle forms of racism that students of color experience on a daily basis. As she concludes,

62

“Using experiential knowledge, challenging dominant ideologies and acknowledging the centrality of race in American life help us uncover and understand school practices and students’ responses to those practices which we might not otherwise discover” (p. 60).

### **Enacting CRT to counter media framing of Black public-school teacher experiences**

As Rema Reynolds (2010) defines it, “Counter storytelling is a methodological tool with a history in communities of color that use oral interpretation to convey stories and struggles often not validated by the dominant culture” (p.148). Central to all of these case studies is the idea that critical race methodology in the form of counter-storytelling is an essential component to understanding the lived experiences of people of color related to education in America. Because white hegemonic power structures work to control mainstream narratives about education, there is an assumption that the school settings are depicted in honest and unbiased ways. Solorzano, Yosso and others remind us that all narratives are constructed and that mainstream narratives of education are no more objective than those written and composed under the CRT lens. Harper (2009) explains that these master narratives usually are nothing more than caricatures that depict marginalized peoples in negative ways (p. 701). As Duncan (2002) notes “marginalized populations possess values and attitudes that require explication and clarification because they are fundamentally different from the rest of society” (p. 132-133). These groups must have the space and opportunities to tell their own stories. No story of education can be considered complete unless it includes the voices of all participants. With overwhelming evidence still existing about the inequalities of resources, funding, early childhood initiatives and socioeconomics that still exist in this country related to race and education, the need for a methodology that works to expose and fight against these

63

inequalities is as necessary as ever. Indeed, as Cornell West has warned us, race does still matter and the call of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) still holds true that race remains undertheorized and under-researched as it relates to education in this country.

## Chapter 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I think black people have to be in control of their own image because film is a powerful medium. We can't just sit back and let other people define our existence.

- Spike Lee, 2019

#### **Using a Multi-Method Qualitative Case Study Approach**

This research project combined a qualitative descriptive case study methodological framework and critical race theory methodology in the form of counter-stories to collect data. Critical race methodology allows for the use of a variety of qualitative methods and data sources in order to tell the counter-stories of people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Because teacher perspectives of local television news media depictions of their experiences are lacking, this study took a qualitative approach to address the gap. Unlike quantitative research which seeks to transform numerical data into shareable statistics (Mertens, 2015), qualitative methods are used, "to understand phenomena or areas, such as ones lacking understanding or in which previous understandings appear inadequate" (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 29).

Qualitative descriptive research seeks to provide a comprehensive account of events as told to them or observed, using everyday language (Sandelowski, 2000). While other qualitative research methods may add interpretation of data, qualitative descriptive research uses straight descriptions of phenomena, which is important in allowing for the subjects to speak for themselves, as was desired in this study. As Sandelowski (2000) explains, qualitative descriptive research seeks to obtain answers to questions of special relevance to practitioners, in this case

teachers, by asking the question, “What are the people’s responses (e.g. thoughts, feelings, attitudes) toward an event”? (p. 337). This methodology often borrows from larger paradigms to create a multi-method approach, in this case, combining with critical race theory methodology.

A case study, according to Yin (2009), is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). In this sense, case studies are unique in that they allow the researcher to understand a phenomenon in depth but also within the context in which the phenomena occurred. As Yin continues to explain, because context and phenomena are often intertwined and are often difficult to distinguish from each other, data collection and data analysis are critically important to all case study research. Yin suggests:

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2009, p.18).

Three major forms of case studies exist: the single instrumental case study, which focuses on a single issue and uses a single case to explore that issue; the multiple instrumental case study, which focuses on a single issue but uses multiple cases to explore that issue; and the intrinsic case study which focuses on the case itself because of its unique nature (Creswell & 66

Poth, 2017). This project followed the multiple instrumental case study methodology as multiple teachers' experiences were drawn together in order to explore both the unique and shared interpretations of the mediated depictions of the teachers' lived experiences.

Case study methodology is unique in that it has the ability to be all encompassing by outlining the design of the study, providing data collection techniques and outlining approaches to analyzing the data. This particular case study took place within Baltimore City and was anchored by interviews of Black public-school teachers in the Baltimore City public school system. Despite each teacher having unique experiences to share, there were also commonalities that worked to provide a collective story to counter the mainstream narrative of the experiences of Black teachers in public schools put forth in local television news programming.

The research for this study was framed within the transformative research paradigm which seeks to take on social justice issues related to political, economic or social injustices and inequalities of power at any level (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This is especially relevant to this research topic as the depictions of the experiences of Black public-school teachers that have been put forth in local news media often frames Black public-school teachers as incompetent and being incapable of helping students achieve academic success. The goal of this research project, within this context, was to work towards uncovering and overturning the tropes of Black public-school teachers and to provide a platform for these teachers to counter the mainstream perspective framed by the local news media.

A semi-structured interview approach informed by critical ethnography was used for this research project. Critical ethnographic research seeks to better understand the cultural

world and key aspects in which people are situated (Roulston, 2010). This was an especially relevant technique to use for this particular research study as the basis for the study sought to construct a more complete understanding of the culture of BCPSS and to see if the culture, as was described by Black teachers, coincided with or contradicted the culture that was depicted within the local television news media. Spradley (1987) offers three types of ethnographic question types, all of which were incorporated into this research project. Descriptive questions seek to better understand space, time, events, people, activities and objects which are especially important in understanding teacher interpretation of the events depicted in the news media. Structural and contrast interview questions build on information established in descriptive questions to give further depth to responses. All interviews were semi-structured with several guided questions aimed at soliciting responses about the mediated depictions of Baltimore schools from the teachers' perspectives but allowing space and time for the teachers to take on new topics or make additional commentary as they saw fit. According to Roulston (2010) semi-structured interviews are used to guide the questioning, although the interviewer may choose to move away from the pre-planned questions and follow an interesting or informative lead. This practice was followed during the interviews conducted for this study.

### **CRT Methodology – What is Counter-Storytelling?**

“How can one talk back to messages, scripts and stereotypes that are embedded in the minds of one's fellow citizens and indeed, the national psyche?” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 34). This question is at the heart of the purpose of critical race theory. As CRT scholars seek to expose the interconnectedness of race to every aspect of society, including education, critical race theorists also seek to share the everyday experiences, perspectives and stories of people



of color “to come to a deeper understanding of how Americans see race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 45). As Ladson-Billings (1998) explains, CRT emphasizes the role of voice in bringing power to discourses around racial justice. This can include using parables, poetry, fiction and in many cases, counter-stories. These platforms allow people of color to name their own reality as opposed to maintaining the dominant narratives constructed about people of color and their experiences. Ladson-Billings notes that much of reality is socially constructed and these stories provide minorities a tool for self-preservation. Lastly, these stories, as noted by Bell and others, allow for whites to hear stories and experiences they may not ever hear otherwise which helps to overcome ethnocentrism and the “need to view the world in one way” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13).

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that:

- a. Foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process
- b. Challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color
- c. Offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination
- d. Focuses on the racialized, gendered and classed experiences of people of color
- e. Uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, humanities and the law to better understand the experiences of people of color (p. 24).

Critical race theory methodology seeks to counter the mainstream or majoritarian story historically told from the upper middle class, heterosexual, white male perspective. As Solorzano and Yosso (2002) detail, these majoritarian stories often work to silence the voices of people of color whose experiences do not match the dominant narratives as do the standard methodologies which claim to be neutral and objective. They maintain that any methodology that seeks to remove or deemphasize racism and other forms of subordination distorts the experiences of those directly impacted by racism, those people who Derek Bell famously described as the “faces at the bottom of the well”.

Born out of the storytelling used by trial lawyers in court, CRT scholars use counter-stories to upend damaging narratives and beliefs about marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These stories serve many forms including naming discrimination so that it can be openly combated. Ladson-Billings (1998) points out that

Historically, story-telling has been a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression. The story of one’s condition leads to the realization of how one came to be oppressed and subjugated, thus allowing one to stop inflicting mental violence on oneself (p. 24).

Counter-storytelling is a method within critical race theory which seeks to share the stories of people on the margins of society whose stories often do not get told (Matsuda et. al, 1993). As DeCuir and Dixson (2004) add, “counter-storytelling is a means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” (p. 27). These stories serve as a direct challenge to majoritarian stories about the experiences of people of color that are seen to be objective and unbiased. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) add that “counter-stories can

70

shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race and further the struggle for racial reform” (p. 32).

Counter-stories (or counternarratives) come in several different forms. Personal stories often are autobiographical and seek to tell an individual’s encounters with racism and other forms of oppression. Stories/narratives may also be told about another person in the third person as a response to racism and experiences of oppression. These stories are often told in biographical form. Composite stories/narratives compile multiple stories experiences to create composite characters to discuss the shared experiences of people of color related to racism and other forms of oppression. While the composite characters are not real, their experiences are and represent the real experiences of many. This research project sought to use the personal stories of twenty Black teachers in the biographical form as a part of a case study approach.

Linda Tillman (2002) suggests that storytelling offers a culturally sensitive research approach for people of color. In order to create counter-stories a researcher must first engage in theoretical sensitivity. This requires the researcher to give meaning to data collected and to be able to separate pertinent from non-pertinent information. Secondly, the researcher must practice “cultural intuition” (Bernal, 1998). This means that the researcher must take the personal experience and tie it to the larger collective experience and community memory in order to analyze the data. This is essential in demonstrating that the experiences of people of color are not isolated incidents but instead speak to a larger shared history of oppression and racial violations.

Counter-stories serve four functions according to Solórzano and Yosso (2002). First, they build community for marginalized peoples by putting a human face on educational theory and

practice. Second, they challenge perceived wisdom related to education by providing a context to challenge those belief systems. Third, they open new possibilities for marginalized peoples by demonstrating they are not alone in their struggle for justice. Lastly, counter-stories teach others by using stories to construct new worlds that are richer than reality.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) assert that “substantive discussions of racism are missing from critical discourse in education” (p. 37). Counter-stories and critical race methodology allow for this discourse to be had by challenging traditional qualitative methods by requiring the “addressing and ameliorating conditions of oppression, poverty or deprivation” (Lincoln, 1993, p.33). When these stories are told from the people who have had the first-hand experiences, opportunities are created for oppressed peoples to gain a voice and control over their own narratives and a call is made for scholars to take actions to improve the educational outcomes for people of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Giroux, 2004; Howard, 2001). As Delgado and Stefancic (2017) contend, “Powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of correction in our beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity” (p. 51).

### **Research Context and Demographics**

Baltimore City Public schools is the fourth largest school district in Maryland with a student population of just under 80,000 (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2018) and 165 schools from K-12. Despite the city of Baltimore being just over 63 percent Black, the school system is just under 80 percent Black (78.6%). 52.7 percent of students within the school district qualify for free or reduced lunch, a significant indicator of poverty (U.S. Department of Education, 72

2012). While the student population is nearly 80 percent Black, the teaching staff, of about 4900 teachers is just under 40 percent Black (Richman, 2018). This number is an increase over the past few years as the district website acknowledges that “teachers who identify as African American is higher today than at any time in the last seven years” (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2018).

This study was specifically focused on the experiences of Black public-school teachers within the district. Despite making up less than half of the teaching population within Baltimore, a large proportion of local television news stories about Baltimore City public schools focus on Black educators in predominately Black schools. Because Baltimore City public schools contain a wide array of school types from “neighborhood” schools (schools which enroll students from the assigned zip code without qualification) to trade schools (cosmetology, auto repair and others) to highly selective magnet programs, I sought to collect the stories of Black teachers from a variety of types of public schools. Selecting a cross section of teachers was also important because it allowed for a discussion of a wider variety of the topics, as teachers from different school types sometimes offered different reactions to specific news segments shown in the “Project Baltimore” news series. In 2018, the series was nominated for 11 local Emmy awards by the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, winning seven awards. Categories nominations ranged from “Investigative Report – Single Story”, “Investigative Report – Series”, “Feature News Report – Serious Feature”, “Feature News Report – Serious Series”, “Crime – Program Feature/Segment”, “Politics/Government – No Time Limit” to “Politics/Government – Program Feature/Segment”,

“Education/Schools – No Time Limit” and “Education/Schools – Program Feature/Segment” (National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 2018).

As was discussed previously, WBFF Fox 45, the media company being examined in this investigation, is a subsidiary of the Sinclair Broadcasting company, a national media conglomerate with right-leaning (American conservatism) tendencies, which potentially impacts their framing of news stories such as those related to Baltimore City public schools.

### **Selection and Description of Participants**

As an active teacher in Baltimore City, I am a member of the social media teacher group, Baltimore C.E.D.E., or “Caucus of Educators for Democracy and Equity”. It is a closed Facebook group, meaning one can only join if they are invited by the page administrators, all of whom are on the executive board of the Baltimore Teachers Union. The group has over 2,500 members which includes both current teachers in the district as well teachers who have recently moved away from the district and a few administrators. The group consists of teachers from a variety of racial backgrounds and work experiences which made it an appropriate avenue from which to secure study participants who could share their reactions to the mediated depictions of their work experiences. Topics in the group also range across a wide variety including questions about certification, suggestions about how to best improve voting in union elections and job openings. Prior to this study, there had been several large-scale discussions in the group about the mediated images of Baltimore City schools seen on “Project Baltimore” over the previous two years. Some of these discussions included hundreds of teachers.

Once IRB approval was gathered, I created a new post within the group, soliciting Black teachers to participate in the study who were willing to share their views of the mediated

images of Baltimore City schools and its teachers over the past two years. In order to protect participant identities, interested parties were asked to send a direct message responding to the flyer/posting as opposed to responding publicly, so that other members of the group would not be able to see who responded. Within two weeks of the posting, twenty-two Black teachers within the group had expressed interest in participating. In total, twenty teachers participated in the study. In order to protect the identities of those involved in the study, pseudonyms have been used for all interviewees and schools at which the interviewees work. No physical risks were involved in this study and any sensitive information that might jeopardize the participants' employment status has redacted.

Study participants were selected using a purposeful, maximum variability sampling strategy (Palinkas et. al, 2015) to represent multiple backgrounds (i.e. age, gender, subject area, years teaching experience, personal experiences) and teaching experiences within the pool of Black Baltimore City public school teachers. I sought teachers who had been in the district for at least two years which is when Sinclair Broadcasting began its investigative news segment on Baltimore schools. My aim was to gather between 16-24 teachers from various schools and school types across the district to participate in 45-60-minute interviews related to the local television news media segments. Demographic data was collected from each teacher who agreed to participate in the study including: years teaching in general and in the district, subjects taught, highest degree earned, state and/or national teaching credentials and other roles in the school (i.e. coach, teacher mentor, club advisor etc.). In the end, twenty (20) Black educators (12 women and 8 men, ranging from 24 to 57 years old) from the Baltimore City public school system participated in this study. The educators ranged from three to twenty-two

75

years of experience in the district. Four of the participants teach in elementary schools (K-5). Five participants teach in middle schools (6-8<sup>th</sup> grade). Eight participants teach at the high school level (9-12). Three participants are special educators who support students from K-12. Although it was not originally solicited, twelve of the twenty participants are graduates of Baltimore City public schools themselves.

Despite the fact that this research focused on the experiences of Black teachers in Baltimore, it is important to recognize that the experiences of all Black teachers are not the same. Teacher backgrounds and experiences vary, produced a wide range of counter-stories here.

### **Interview and Video Selection Protocols**

A preliminary version of this study was conducted in the spring of 2018. In the pilot project, three teachers of color, with a wide variation in number of years teaching in the district, were interviewed from one high school in the district to gain their perspectives on mediated images of Baltimore City schools as well as two of the news stories covered in the Project Baltimore series. The findings from that project indicated a general frustration by the teachers in the way that the school system was being portrayed and a frustration that many of the important factors, that have caused the problems that plague the school system (i.e. underfunding, racial bias), were left out of the news stories. The findings from the initial study led to the development of adding a component of audience reception to the interviews as the teachers often made references to the Fox 45 “Project Baltimore” series in generalized terms. Audience reception is designed to provide insight into visual texts that “could not be predicted from knowledge of the text alone” (Livingston & Das, 2013, p. 110). Participant viewings of the

76



news segments as a part of the interviews allowed for a more specific discussion of the subtopics brought about the initial interview questions. Keeping with the purpose of counter-stories as a methodology in critical race theory, this study sought to use the audience reception analysis via the interviews of Black teachers in order to privilege the voices of those who perceive themselves as disadvantaged as it relates to their representations in media” (Moffitt & Harris, 2014, p.64).

The interview protocol consisted of 14 open-ended questions grouped by the aims of the research project (Appendix B). This protocol was modified and refined from three preliminary interviews that were conducted related to the research topic in order to ensure that they were not leading questions and that the questions were comprehensive enough to answer the aims of the research project.

After gathering participant background information and the participants general thoughts about the ways in which public school teachers are framed in media, participants were shown three video clips from the “Project Baltimore” series related to Baltimore City schools for the interviewees. Segment topics included violence in schools, poor and dangerous school facilities and teachers engaged in misconduct regarding student grades. Using an exploratory thematic qualitative media analysis approach (Smith, 2019), three videos were selected to be shown to and discussed with study participants. Each video had to either directly reference teachers or topics that impacted teachers directly (such as district budgeting issues and local education government policies). The 39 video segments were initially sorted into eight themes and then sorted into three categories: teaching conditions (building safety, classroom environments), teacher compensation and public perception of teachers (stories that sought parent,

community members and government officials' reactions to teacher practices). Videos in each category were then sorted by release date, beginning with the oldest video and moving to the most recent. The third video in each category was selected at random to be shown to study participants during the interviews.

Videos were then analyzed for episodic and thematic framing elements, following Catalano & Gatti's (2017) model. As these three videos are incapable of representing the entire body of local television news media regarding Baltimore City Public school teacher experiences, this study sought to capture how the teachers were framed regarding the topics of these three videos (violence in schools, teaching conditions and teaching integrity regarding grades) as opposed to a quantitative examination of the framings of Baltimore City public school teachers.

For each video selected, both the visual and verbal choices made were analyzed with the understanding that alternative approaches or "frames" were available to tell the stories told here. As van Leeuwen (2008) explains, all texts (including visual texts seen here) are only representations of events not the events themselves. These representations evaluate, give purposes for and justify the texts and in many cases "these aspects of representation become far more important than the representation of the social practice itself" (van Leeuwen 2008, 6). These representations of teaching in Baltimore City public schools are not the experiences themselves.

Both verbal and visual images from each segment were analyzed to better understand the framings put forth by WBFF Fox 45 about Baltimore City public schools and teachers' experiences. Each video segment and elements were coded for signifiers and messaging that might not be obvious to the lay viewer.

All interviews were audio-recorded, and the interviewer kept a field notes journal to record ancillary notes such as interviewee physical reactions, body language and other data related to teacher interpretations of the mediated images.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

As explained by Solorzano & Yosso (2002), critical race methodology allows for creativity in methods and analysis in order to share the experiences of people of color. In order to do that here, a thematic analysis of the interviews was undertaken. Interviews data was categorized by emergent themes that was then interpreted by the researcher (Roulston, 2010). Data from the emergent themes was then coded by topics of conversation (Roulston, p. 151) that emerged across interviews. The goal was to create coded categories that reflected the various teacher interpretations of the local television news media vignettes, themes that emerged within the media depictions and teacher descriptions of important context missing from the framings that they felt might impact public perception of their experiences. An open coding strategy was employed to capture patterns as they emerged from the interview data (Creswell, 2013). Codes were then developed within each individual case and then across cases to further develop themes, similarities and differences in order to broaden the researcher's understanding of this particular case (Creswell, 2013).

As Wolcott (1994) suggests, the goal is "to answer the question: What is going on here? By presenting data from the researcher's observations in fieldwork or information derived from interviews" (p. 12). Participant data was analyzed using a critical race theory framework to make meaning of the teachers' experiences. Data was reread multiple times in order to check for potential oversights and to develop a full understanding of each participant's story. Data

interpretation in qualitative research has two main aims. First and foremost, the aim is to better understand this particular phenomenon. How do Black teachers see themselves being depicted in local television news media? Secondly, the aim is to relate the phenomenon to the reader in a way that is understandable (Kim, 2016) with the understanding that our experiences shape our understanding of any event. As Milner (2007), notes,

“How education research is conducted may be just as important as what is actually discovered in a study. Moreover, who conducts the research, particularly what they know and the nature of their critical racial and cultural consciousness-their views, perspectives and biases-may also be essential to how those in education research come to know and know what is known” (p.397).

All analysis and interpretation of data in this project was shaped by my own experiences as a Black public-school teacher in Baltimore who is researching teachers similar to myself.

**Trustworthiness, Credibility and Reliability.** In order to assess the validity of the interviews, multiple methods of data, such as the interviews of multiple teachers at multiple schools in the district were used to triangulate data. As Roulston (2010) states “by using multiple forms of data and interviewing different groups of people within a social setting, researchers can check the accuracy of interviewees’ statements and evaluate the truth of claims made in interviews” (p. 86). In addition, because of the researcher’s role as a participant-observer, a detailed positionality/reflexivity statement is given to explain the researcher’s subject positions to the audience.

The computer software NVIVO 12 was used to compile interview data in order to conduct an inductive thematic data analysis, creating codes and meanings across the interviews. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher using NVIVO. The researcher then conducted a preliminary analysis of each interview, highlighting for emergent data to create codes that related to the research aims and questions of the project (Roulston, 2010).

Credibility was established by conducting member checking, borrowing from Paris and Winn's (2013) model of humanizing the connection between researchers and participants through what they call, dialogic spiraling. A dialogic spiral is "the [social] construction of a conversation between two or more people whereby the process of listening and speaking co-creates an area of trust between speakers—the space between" (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017, p. 380). Study participants were given the opportunity to review their accounts of the interviews for accuracy and were given the opportunity to make amendments, clarifications and corrections as they saw fit. This was done in an attempt to avoid what hooks (1990) describes as a form of oppression in which someone is asked to share his or her story and the story is told back to them in a way that is inauthentic. Because of the nature of the interviews, I often spent well over one-hour with study participants as they shared personal stories and experiences as I shared mine with them, which allowed me to expand my understanding of their experiences. These "spiraled" exchanges allowed participants to express ownership and equality in their role in the study. For example, when asking about the videos shown during the study, I was regularly stopped by participants who wanted to share parts of their experiences that I did not capture through my questioning.

Smith: So, what I'd like to do at this point is show you three videos. The first video I want to show you is discussing the issue of violence in schools. They're talking to a BCPSS employee for perspective of violence.

Ms. Rooney: Just another important thing to kind of add. Just a comment. I have so many students that want to call me mom. And at the high school level. You want to call me "ma"?

S: What do you think that's about?

Ms Rooney: Absence. I show an affection to my students that they don't get and it's a safety thing. They feel safe with me. They tell me everything. You have no idea. I mean, like real conversations. And they trust me and they call me mom and I thought it was something that wouldn't happen at the high school level. I thought it was something more like elementary kids. She's like my mom. She cares about me. But no, 17 and 18-year-olds. "Hey Miss Rooney!". "Hey mom!". "I wish she was my mother". "Can you adopt me?". I've had that. That breaks my heart. Why don't you want to go to your house? You know, getting haircuts and uniforms and wash clothes, just general care stuff. It's not happening.

All participants were given a full transcript of the interview and given the option to withdraw from the study at any time, omit or change anything that they were uncomfortable with.

Credibility was further established by comparing the findings of this project with similar projects found in the related literature. Areas of overlap and further development of previous research are discussed in Chapter 5. The transparency of this project is ensured by the public dissemination of the findings as well as by the sharing of methodologies used throughout the research project.

### **Ethical Issues and Considerations**

As teachers are often concerned about tenuous job security and potential ramifications for sharing views that could potentially be seen as disparaging to the school system itself, all

efforts were made to ensure that the identities of the study participants remained anonymous

82

in order to promote the highest levels of honesty and accuracy in their responses to the interview prompts. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity and privacy and all references to specific schools and administrators within the Baltimore City public school district were also provided pseudonyms. All participants were asked to provide written and recorded consent to share their educational experiences in the study. All interview data has been secured in a locked desked drawer on a password protected USB file in the researcher's home office. No one outside of the researcher and the Institutional Research Board (IRB) has access to the audio recordings of the transcribed data. No monetary compensation was offered for participation in this study.

### **Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality**

I grew up watching “A Different World”<sup>2</sup> on NBC, a Cosby show spinoff that was originally meant to showcase Denise Huxtable (Lisa Bonet) and her journey through college. Everyone else thought he was just a nerd, but I always thought Dwayne Wayne was the coolest guy. When Bonet left the show, the premise shifted to focus on an ensemble cast of Black students at the fictional, Hillman College, a historically Black college (HBCU) located in Virginia, that was partly based on the real-life Hampton University and partly based on the Spelman and Morehouse Colleges in Atlanta. Dwayne Wayne (Kadeem Hardison) quickly emerged as the male lead, with many of the episodes centered on his quest to win the love of the beautiful southern belle, Ms. Whitley Gilbert (Jasmine Guy). Dwayne was everything I wanted to be: smart, ambitious, funny, grounded and eventually marrying the girl. Without even realizing it,

---

<sup>2</sup> While the images of Black educational experiences from “A Different World” shaped my own experiences and expectations of education, I chose not to include an analysis of the show in this study as its primary focus was K-20 experiences and this study focused exclusively on the media framings of K-12 teachers.

my vision of Black education, and what it could (and maybe should) look like was shaped by me watching that show. No one in my family had ever been to college, so “A Different World” was my first exposure to higher education for Black people. I wanted to be a teacher, in part at least, because I saw Dwayne become one on the show. He was firm but had a sense of humor and he cared about his students beyond the classroom. That resonated with me then and it continues to resonate with me now in my 15<sup>th</sup> year in public education as both as a classroom teacher and an administrator. I did not know the terminology back then but essentially “A Different World” framed Black education and Black teachers as important. They were more than just competent; they were leaders and life-changers. They were countering years and years of mediated constructions of Black education. Those counternarratives and counter-framings resonated with me and has shaped my research in several ways.

First, knowing that the story of Black educators could and should be different than the master narrative that is shared is what drew me to this work. Negative depictions of teachers in public schools like mine, especially teachers of color, directly reflect upon me and the way the public thinks about my role in the school. When I hear lay people describe teachers as “glorified baby-sitters” or “losers” as the son of the President of the United States did (Strauss, 2019), it bothers me deeply because I have dedicated my life to helping children from a city as embattled as Baltimore. Having grown up in Baltimore and attended Baltimore City public schools myself, I vividly remember the numerous teachers throughout my K-12 journey who dedicated their lives to give me the best education they could. These teachers stayed after school countless hours, gave me rides home after school plays and Algebra club in middle school, encouraged me to try new activities such as soccer and lacrosse, and did numerous kind

84



and thoughtful gestures in an attempt to garner school opportunities for me. In short, they inspired me to become a teacher because they invested so deeply in me. Yet, these are hardly ever the stories that are shown about teachers on television news or in movies about public schools. This is especially damaging when the negative depictions focus on teachers of color. During my entire K-12 experience I had a total of six Black teachers: two in middle school and four in high school. This was despite the fact that I attended predominately Black schools (my high school graduating class of 300+ students had only 17 white students, 1 Hispanic student and 2 Asian-American students). Much of my impression of Black teachers came from television shows such as “The Cosby Show” or “A Different World” both of which focused on solidly middle-class Black Americans and neither of which resembled my own experiences growing up in impoverished public schools in Baltimore. By taking on a Critical Race Theory methodology, I sought to give voice to other Black teachers, who are few and far between in the teaching corps in general but who have an immense impact on school systems like ours in Baltimore which overwhelmingly serves Black children.

Secondly, these representations are important to me because they directly contradict my own experiences over the past decade as a teacher. I currently work at a large magnet high school in Baltimore that attracts students from all areas of the city. These students represent every race, ethnicity, gender and social class found in Baltimore. While our school faces challenges of poverty and underfunding that many of the schools in the district face, we have produced a track record of success with a 100 percent college acceptance rate for the class of 2019 with over 13 million dollars earned in college scholarships (Harcum et al., 2019). Even more impressive is that this was accomplished in spite of the fact that 51 percent of our

85

graduates are first-generation college attendees (Harcum et al., 2019). My school is not alone; Baltimore has one of the top STEM public high schools in the region, a nationally recognized arts high school that has produced several famous designers, actors and dancers, and several highly successful trade schools that feature cosmetology, auto repair and engineering (Richman, 2018). Yet, the local television news often showcases the school system as highly dysfunctional and seemingly without success. I wanted to research the experiences of other Black teachers like me in this district to show that the Black teacher experience in Baltimore is not monolithic as the news media would have us to believe. Our experiences vary widely and my engagement in this work is an attempt to share the complexity of Black teacher experiences.

My position as one of the Black teachers being framed by the local television news media made me a participant-observer which helped to give me a higher level of credibility with study participants that they might not have afforded me otherwise. This intimacy helped to give me access to stories of teachers that otherwise might not have otherwise been told. I believe that my role as a participant-observer gave me further impetus to take up Yosso and Solorzano's (2005) call to not be objective nor neutral in countering acts of racism but to instead take a social justice approach to counter these neoliberal white power interests. As was discussed previously, by engaging in this research approach I attempted to heed Yosso and Solorzano's proclamation that CRT must work from the centrality of experiential knowledge and therefore should draw on the lived experiences of people of color using family histories, biographies, parables and narratives amongst other tools to share this knowledge. My objective was to allow their knowledge and voices to be shared, which in and on itself is an act of resistance against a

86

media machine that purposefully chooses to create a problematic picture of Black teacher experiences in an attempt to have the school system that employees those Black teachers, crumble.

## Chapter 4

### FRAMINGS VERSUS COUNTERNARRATIVES: STUDY FINDINGS

But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story...I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

- Chimamanda Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009)

This chapter offers an overview of the results of the data collected from 20 Black public-school teachers working in BCPSS. The data includes individual interviews conducted in person with 18 of the participants, a focus group interview conducted with two study participants and the researcher's reflections as a participant-observer. The chapter is organized first by the framings put forth by the local television news program, followed by the teachers' response and counternarratives to those framings. A summary of the overall findings is also included.

This analysis sought to contextualize how WBFF's "Project Baltimore" transforms actual BCPSS teacher experiences into representations of those experiences through its news segments, thus projecting one version of these experiences. Based on an interview of a BCPSS nurse, the framing put forth in the first segment is that the school system is rife with violence that teachers must confront daily. The second segment frames BCPSS teachers as working in abominable conditions which prevents quality education from happening. The third segment frames BCPSS teachers as being complicit in poor academic outcomes because of a fear of speaking out about administrative pressure to change grades.

## **Framing 1 – BCPSS is inherently violent**

Released on Monday, August 6th, 2018, “Project Baltimore” lead investigator Chris Papst purports to investigate violence in BCPSS. The 4:59-minute segment begins with a close in shot of studio anchors Kai Jackson and Jennifer Gilbert, who opens the dialogue by stating “Being in school is like being in a war. Those chilling words coming from a City Schools nurse who says our schools are far more violent than the public knows”. Kai Jackson then sends the segment over to Chris Papst, who is standing in front of a bar graph titled “School Suspensions”. The graph shows a 58 percent decline in suspensions in Baltimore City between 2007 and 2017 alongside another graph that shows a 58 percent decline in suspensions across Maryland schools. Papst explains that the public might assume that schools are getting safer because of the declining suspension rates, but he talked to a BCPSS nurse who explained, “It's the exact opposite”. The segment begins with a video of two Black female students (presumably between middle and high school aged) fighting in their school uniforms as a crowd of Black students stands around, video recording and cheering them on. As the fight video begins, the nurse’s voice pans over, saying:

Going into these schools, it's heartbreaking and that's the only way to describe it. It feels like you're going into a war. The first thing we say is like, 'Here we are. We're in Afghanistan.' And that's how we feel. We feel like we're at war.

Papst explains that the woman’s face is blurred in order to protect her privacy as a Baltimore city schools nurse. As Papst continues talking, the shot switches to four stills of previous “Project Baltimore” segments all of which discussed the issue of violence in BCPSS. Papst explains that the nurse has witnessed the violence first hand, including fractured skulls,

concussions and stitches. Generic photos of injuries flash across the screen as the nurse explains that she does not think the alarms are being sounded on the issue.

The segment then switches to Papst interviewing a white male teacher, Ed Kitlowski, from Baltimore County who taught for 33 years and was running for the Baltimore county school board. While explaining that rising violence in schools is a statewide problem, the video of the Black BCPSS students fighting is played again. In the next shot, Papst slowly paces in front of school headquarters, while explaining the change in Maryland school law from 15 years prior that states if a school has too many suspensions, it could be labelled as “persistently dangerous” which would make it eligible to be reconfigured by the state school system and both teachers and principals’ jobs could be at risk for termination. Kitlowski explains that this incentivized school principals to underreport suspensions thus leading to the decline in suspensions across the state. Papst explains that “Project Baltimore” did research to find the list of schools who were on probationary status for being persistently dangerous and found only one school on the list, Friendship Academy in Baltimore City. The BCPSS nurse explains that she is not surprised. She says:

It's just not publicized. We've seen the violence, we've seen the escalation on a whole different level. And I know the numbers may say differently, that it's going downwards, but that's not what is going on in these schools. That's not what is going on in these buildings. It is actually just the opposite.

The segment closes with another shot of the Black BCPSS students fighting and the camera goes back live to Papst in the studio, who explains that Friendship Academy was closed at the end of the previous school year. When Kai Jackson states that the issue seems to be a

statewide problem, Papst responds by explaining that local school systems say that they are following state guidelines and the state school system says that they are following the federal guidelines of President George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" policy. Papst concludes by asking for viewers to call into the 1-800 number to report any issues they want to have investigated by Project Baltimore.

On three occasions during the 4:59 minute clip, the video footage of Black students fighting was shown. While the segment discusses violence as an issue across Maryland schools, the only footage of actual violence being perpetuated was of Black BCPSS students in their school uniforms. The framing of BCPSS as being inherently violent was supported by the remarks of the school nurse who described BCPSS as being like "walking into Afghanistan", a war-torn country, mired in conflict since 2001. Significantly, the nurse does not distinguish which schools she has worked at and if some schools were worse than others. By saying "walking into these schools" she implies that all BCPSS schools experience high levels of violence.

### **Teachers Respond – Black teacher counternarratives of dealing with violence in BCPSS**

While Fox 45's "Project Baltimore" chooses to frame BCPSS as inherently violent and war-like, Black teacher participants from across the school system offer a more nuanced assessment of dealing with violence in Baltimore City public schools. Several key themes emerged that worked to counter the master narrative of BCPSS being a violent workplace as was offered by "Project Baltimore".

**Counternarrative 1 – Black teachers do not fear teaching in BCPSS.** Nearly all of teachers (17 of 20) interviewed offered the same response of “No”, when asked if they feared for their own safety while teaching in BCPSS. As Ms. Logan, a kindergarten teacher at Morris Brown Elementary/Middle school who has taught in Baltimore for eleven years explained, “No, I’ve never felt afraid to walk into a school...because it’s a school. There are children here. I don’t care if the children are this tall or that tall, they’re children.” This sentiment, that children are children and that teachers need not be fearful of them was repeated often. Ms. Jones, a twenty-year veteran foreign language teacher, currently at Cheney High, echoed this same feeling in sharing her experience of having taught at several different schools in the district:

I’m speaking only from my experience. I interned at Tubman high school years ago, under Mr. Hugh. I then started at Morris Brown middle when I officially became a teacher and then here at Cheney High. I’ve never felt unsafe in my schools. Now, people may think I’m naive. But I’ve been here for over 20 some years. I’ve gone to many different schools. I’ve taught in the summers at Tech and other schools and I’ve collaborated with teachers in many of the schools here in Baltimore City...So do I feel like I’m walking into Afghanistan? Thankfully, no, not at all.

Ms. Peterson, Ms. Jones’s colleague at Cheney High, echoed that sentiment:

I’ve never felt unsafe in this building. Even when I’m getting pummeled because I’m in between a fight. I’ve never felt unsafe in this building. And to hear that suspensions are going down. One isn’t surprising, we’ve all seen that happen in action, but it does, it makes me happy. Like, we should not be disrupting the



schedules of at-risk kids causing more instability in their lives by sending them out of one place that's kind of safe for them or where they get a hot meal. I've never felt unsafe. I don't want to take that nurses story away from her and I don't want to wash away her experiences but and as a person who's been in a lot of Baltimore city schools, I've never felt unsafe.

While no teacher interviewed feared for their safety, several teachers did express fear from other issues they face as teachers in BCPSS, namely with the outside community and vindictive administrators. As Ms. Baines, a sixteen-year, special educator at Wilberforce Elementary/Middle, explained about her experiences teaching in an unsafe neighborhood:

Have I ever felt unsafe? I feel like there was a time where I felt that the surrounding environment outside of the school was unsafe. I feel like the principal and the administrators try to do everything in their power to keep the teachers and students safe, in terms of intruders and things like that. I feel like there should there...everyone has an opinion. I'm not an administrator. So, I can't speak to the reasons why administrators make the decisions that they do. But I feel like in some instances, better communication could have been had in terms of emergency protocols, the routines for safety drills.

Ms. Rooney, a fifth-year teacher at Voorhees Technical Academy explained that it was not the students that made her feel unsafe, but rather, her fear came from dealing with other teachers:

Felt unsafe in the school that I taught in as result of student actions? No. I felt unsafe due to, in my first school, where I had a teacher that was bullying us. She

created a very unsafe environment, to the point where you thought that your certification would be at stake and she was just constantly in a 'got you' moment for brand new teachers, you know, being really spiteful and then having the principal bothering new teachers, very first year and just a lot of craziness. That made me feel unsafe but not really from teacher expectations.

Several of the teachers interviewed here expressed a higher level of comfort in teaching in BCPSS because they graduated from BCPSS themselves, as shared by Ms. Pence, a fifth-year reading teacher at Fisk Elementary/Middle school:

I've never felt unsafe, but that could just be personal. Like even working here. I literally, my grandmother used to live on K\*\*\* and B\*\*\* street. I was down here all the time. So, this neighborhood doesn't even feel unsafe to me. You know, like I've grown up in Baltimore city, I learned how to carry myself accordingly. And I also focus on relationship building on a different level. I'm going to tell you I'm not going to be your friend, but I love you all the same and I'm here for one reason and that's for you to be the best version of yourself. So, at no point have I ever felt, I don't feel unsafe. Maybe like sometimes different parents make me feel unsafe, but it's because they make me fear the safety of student. Like they want to get upset with a child that's not theirs. So, it's kind of like you're upset that this child touched your child, which makes sense. But you're an adult. So that's different.

### **Counternarrative 2 – Portraying BCPSS as violent is offensive and insulting.**

Another common response found throughout the interviews was the exclusive use of

Black student imagery to portray violence within BCPSS. Many teachers found this framing offensive and insulting to both them as teachers in the school system as well as to their predominantly Black student population.

Ms. Logan was especially offended by the program's choice to use a clip of Black students from Baltimore fighting rather than focusing on school violence in general. As she explained:

... they might've blurred the children, but all of those children in those fights were Black! So, you mean to tell me white children don't get into fights at school? So, all of the teen flicks that I've watched as a kid, where white kids were bullying each other and dumping each other in trash cans, that never happens? If it's a problem all across the state of Maryland, where are the St. Mary's county kids?

The Afghanistan war analogy used by the BCPSS nurse in the segment was refuted several times by teachers who were incensed that a school employee would choose to use such an inflammatory description of her schooling experience. As Ms. Mason, a high school English teacher at Cheney, put it:

...to suggest that any of us and I'll even think about some of these other schools, that we are walking into war zones? My immediate question is then timeout then we need to be having and something else needs to be happening. If you're walking in your place of business and you said, you're ready to put on your riot gear, then stop, shut it down because we need to have a conversation because

these are teenagers. I should not have the metal detector. I should not have to do those things like that.

Mr. Wilson, a special educator at Clinton, a charter high school, also made it clear that if schools were like a war-torn country, as the nurse in the segment described it, many teachers would not teach:

One, I don't know what her understanding is of Afghanistan and then two, I just think it's interesting when you take one person's experiences and we generalize it to multiple schools or even this particular school she's at. I don't know if her experience reflects others' experiences there. When students get into altercations, they're not orchestrated. They're a little chaotic. They're busy and over pretty quick, but I've never walked into a school saying, 'Gosh. Hope nothing happens to me'. I worked at a school when I work at a non-public, which wasn't Baltimore City schools, but I worked at a school, we were, I was a trained to help teachers learn how to provide physical restraints. I didn't feel any more or less danger. I felt like there were safeguards that were in place. We understood the population of those students. Being in a high school, you understand not just the population, but you also understand that you're at an age group where again, they're figuring a whole lot of things out. But I never, I wouldn't come to the school if I felt like I was going into a war zone.

This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Stafford, a middle school science teacher and educational associate at Bennett Middle School, who asked if the war analogy was

maybe coded language for the nurse's feelings about working with Black children:

So, I totally disagree with the statement as far as saying that it's a war zone. It's not. For me, it's human nature. I feel like sometimes that's all they know. And I feel like when you walk into a school, you can't be scared as the adult. You've got to build relationships. What are you scared of? They're not trying to fight you. They're coming to you for help. They're looking at you as an adult. So, I feel like if you're scared you shouldn't be in this district because I feel like, what are you saying about Black children?

Here we see Black teachers directly challenging the framing of their teaching environments as being war-like and providing an understanding of the verbal and visual choices made by "Project Baltimore" in telling this story that may not have been noticed by the common viewer. This stance is important as "Project Baltimore" sets forth a master narrative of BCPSS as violent that is marketed to viewers across the Baltimore area. As Ms. Pence pointed out, the framing of BCPSS as war-like is presenting the topic as a major issue when in fact, it may not be:

It presents it as if it's the majority. The majority of my fourth graders aren't fighting. There's a handful. But because of their personalities, they're going to stand out and I think it makes you forget about the actual majority who are sitting in their seats and are doing their work and are trying...I don't think that's the right way to go about presenting it because it makes it look like every school is a war zone. And when I come to work every day, it's not a war zone. There might be like 30 minutes where like we're coming back from recess and

everybody's upset. But then everybody's in their seats and they're sitting and we're reading. So, I think it's about perception.

This is an important counter to the broad-brush portrayal of BCPSS that “Project Baltimore” puts forth about violence in the schools. Ms. Simmons, an English teacher at Voorhees Technical Academy, a local charter school, echoed the idea that it is unfair to label every BCPSS in the same way as the news so often does:

I mean, I think the analogy to Afghanistan may be kind of harsh. Some schools are far worse than others, Friendship (now closed) being one of them. At “Love Academy” and at Voorhees we've had our fair share of fights, but I wouldn't say they were violent fights. Just, your run of the mill, fight somebody for saying something smart or whatever. I mean, I can't speak for every school. But I've heard other educators and administration who have been in other schools, around other schools...I think it's unfair for her to say in a way where it applies to the whole district because every school does not look like that. But in her experience, at her school. It's definitely a case by case school by school and every school doesn't fall under that category.

While “Project Baltimore” framed the BCPSS nurse as providing a counter to the data they discuss in the clip about the decline of suspensions in Baltimore and across the state, at no point in the segment do they provide any statistical analysis of fights and/or other forms of violence within BCPSS. Instead, “Project Baltimore” made the choice to frame the nurse as expert testimony on the status of violence in BCPSS. This was a fact not lost on the teachers interviewed here. As Ms. Logan pointed out:

Her view, to me, is a little problematic because you're only getting the injured children. And then also to say that there's this marked increase in violence across all City schools, where is the evidence? Where's the data? Are we just going to listen to a nurse who likens the schools where children go to, to Afghanistan? That's hyperbolic and it's also offensive.

**Counternarrative 3 - Violence is a problem in schools but context is important.** It is important to note that not all aspects of the narrative put forth by “Project Baltimore” related to violence in BCPSS was refuted by the teachers. Many of the participants agreed that violence in schools is an issue that deserves attention. However, many of the teachers were quick to point out the importance of understanding the greater context in regard to the state of City schools and how there are a variety of factors that make violence an issue in BCPSS. Several teachers made mention that while “Project Baltimore” framed violence as a major problem in BCPSS, school fights are a rather common phenomenon, especially during the developmental adolescent years. As Ms. Mason put it:

Let us not pretend that students do not fight. Kids are kids. We are in the sick hormonal stage of life and between Facebook and the “Twitters” and the “Snapchats” and we fight about last week and whatever. The kids yell. They fight. Let’s stop. That happens. I mean, that happens, but to say the idea that I’m in a war zone? No, I’m actually not...There are things that I am not worried about in this school. And I am happy to say that I am not worried about a kid popping me upside the head. I’m not worried. I’m actually not too worried about fights. And that’s not to say that our kids are so sweet and lovely. I mean come

on. They curse each other out in the hallways...I had some characters but a war zone? No. Not here.

This sentiment was echoed by other teachers including Ms. Logan, who graduated from BCPSS herself:

Kids fight. And there are some kids that are bigger than me, okay? And yes, when I walk through the hallways and I hear kids that are cursing, you know? Yeah. I've confronted children about their language or their behavior and sure, I've got an attitude. But then at the end of the day, I'm an adult. I'm grown. You are a child. I don't know what's going on with you and your life and your home, what's happening to you when you're walking to school or what you've got waiting for you when you walk yourself home. I don't know what's going on with you, but this is a child. I don't care how big they are, how nasty their mouth is, it's a kid and kids do stuff. They're silly. They don't think things through or they're rough sometimes. I've never feared for my safety.

In the spaces where Black teachers did agree that violence in BCPSS is a major problem, teachers believed there was a greater need for stronger repercussions for incidents of violence that occurs and a need for school leaders to support teachers when violence happens. As Ms. Rooney, who has taught on the elementary school and high school level, passionately stated it:

...we've had students spit on teachers, spit on other students. Our school police officer had bleach thrown in her face. These kids are back in school the next day in the restorative practice room. Are you kidding me? That's why you have these teachers that



are leaving because where's the safety for us? I'm not supposed to hit a child. We don't really have any protection. You send them to the school police. All they do is filter them back into the restorative practices. So it's a cycle that...We're sitting ducks and the persistent violence that's happening around the city, that spills into our schools. You got people calling people, waiting outside at dismissal to fight. And the social media is something that you can't even begin to tap into with social bullying, cyber bullying. You know what I'm saying? What's happening on social media, we can't even access it. We won't even know what's happening until it's at our doorstep. So, I think that the code of conduct has crippled us because they (school administrators) aren't really able to do anything, but it just takes them to this whole PBIS, positive behavior interventions in schools and that stuff is a joke.

Mr. Pickford, a music teacher at Bethune-Cookman charter school which recently closed, also expressed concern about the lack of consequences he saw for violence, which ultimately led to more violence in the school:

I observed in the beginning of the school year, a young man in my class, get into an altercation with another young man. Basically, slapped him so hard that he knocked the young man down and I wrote it up to the principal and said this is what happened. And the very next day, the same young man that smacked that other young man walked into my classroom, and I'm thinking to myself, "so we're not going to address this"? And once kids know that they can do whatever they want, that's when they'll do it. I heard a student actually say, in my school this past school year, "Well, I mean, I can do what I want, because ain't nothing gonna happen to me anyway". And I'm like, wow!

This feeling of grappling with issues of violence that extend beyond the teachers' control was repeatedly echoed. Participants discussed issues such as social media and home environments as causing issues of violence to impact the school setting, leaving them powerless. Just as Mr. Rashford, a middle school math teacher at Norfolk Middle School shared, there are a wide variety of issues that must be discussed related to school violence because reducing it to one or two issues would be shortsighted:

The biggest thing I find in schools is social media. It's killing them. Like I left a school where you can't have your phone, to a school where they can freely have it. Now I implemented a policy within my classroom that parents had to sign that when they come to my room, they put the phone in my safe. They get their phones if they need to use it for like a calculator, other than that. Afghanistan, I think it depends on the school how big it is. "Morris High" is huge. It's like 2000 students there. Yeah, it's going to seem like a war zone. You have a fight on this floor and a fight on the next floor, but you're dealing with 2000 kids! I just don't think they have enough teachers, or I don't think they have enough teachers that look like them or enough teachers that can relate to where they come from. I find too that we're getting to not get enough dedicated people to our kids. They want to be buddies. It's okay to have friendly relationships. Not to the point where the kids don't respect. So, I mean, the violence is hard to really say because the violence I've seen at my school has come from outside. It was my students versus students from another school. I found myself on the bus stop. I'm like, 'Yo, it's not going down!' But nonetheless, I won't say it's a war zone. I'm not going to say it's like Afghanistan, but I'm going to say that some of these fights I think that happen stem

from social media and the neighborhood they live in. They bring it into the building and I just think the adults are going to have their ear to the ground to find out. I've got an informant at Norfolk. He tells me everything and I keep him protected. But you still got to do my work! So, I just think that as adults we really got to hone in the social media thing. That's where it's starting. But I don't think we have enough classes or the structures to put that kind of stuff in place. And I think the parents need to be there too.

It is important to note that while the teachers discussed these issues as being a major component of violence in BCPSS discussion, at no point did "Project Baltimore" or those interviewed, refer to understanding the larger context of violence that plagues the city and seeps into the school system. Interviewees provided a more nuanced framing of the topic which serves to counter the master narrative put forth by "Project Baltimore". As Ms. Pence explained, sometimes the violence teachers see in schools comes from a lack of preparedness and embarrassment on behalf of struggling students:

So, the first challenge is that a lot of my babies are reading below level. So if I'm reading below level, a lot of the times I'm going to practice avoidance and because they don't really know how to express what they don't understand or they feel like if I don't understand it or I share that I don't understand it, I can be made fun of or chastised or whatever it may be, they're going to do it in different way. So, I'm either going to be defiant. I'm going to be disruptive. I'm going to be loud. And that's how they are. And a lot of them are very aggressive, because I think that they have dealt with some emotional traumas, that we as a school district just are not even equipped to deal with. So they don't know how to express their emotions the right way. So, when they get

upset, the first thing they want to do is fight. Or when they get upset, the first thing they will do is kind of like spazz out or become very loud. So, while I do agree, I think that the numbers are deceiving, and I do believe that there is something that needs to be done to address (this). I don't think it's the majority and I think that that's what this presents. Outside of academic struggles, teachers discussed that violence is sometimes caused by other traumas students face outside of school, including not having enough to eat at home:

When I hear stuff like that, when I had people say, "Oh, these kids are bad". That's because you don't know them. You're scared to get to know them. You're scared to know anything more than about them than Oh, they fight. They're people, their children. You know what I'm saying? Some of these kids have to fight sometimes because that's all they know. You have kids who face a lot of trauma at home. Some kids are getting touched at home. Kids not eating, don't have running water, don't have lights. All they know is survival. I had a student my first year here. I knew he wasn't eating, and I used to be big about you can't eat in my class. Then when I got in graduate school, they were like, you wonder how many kids don't eat at home? That touched my heart. I would go to Sam's (club) to buy granola bars, all this kind of stuff. I had kids ask, "Can I have two? Can I have three?" Sure. So you have to understand for some kids, if somebody touched your lunch or something, that's my only meal for the day. Like you just disrespected me and there's no other way for me to get it across because I'm *that* hungry. You know what I'm saying? And I'm embarrassed to say I'm hungry. So there's a certain way...they don't know how to express themselves and I feel like that's what we are here to teach them. We restore them and not say that they are savages or they like

a war zone. That's not fair to them. You're labeling them already. So, what are you trying to say?

As has been mentioned, while the teachers acknowledge that violence is an issue worthy of discussion in BCPSS, "Project Baltimore's" narrow framing of the topic as being unique to Baltimore City and its projecting of images of Black school employees and Black students in the story perpetuated Black schools and Black students as being violent, without offering a solution to a problem. The Black teachers provided several potential remedies to the issues of violence facing BCPSS, most notably reframing how violence is defined and stressing the importance of relationships in defusing violence before it happens. As Ms. Tyson, an English teacher at Dillard High school, explained:

I've never had a fight in my classroom in 14 years. Um, and I think it's a part of the rapport that you establish with the students. I remember one time, early on in my career, a young man allegedly stole another young man's cell phone. Okay. And you know, they stood up and I said, "not in here, you don't". And they went through the rest of the class and you know, did the lesson, handed in the work and then as soon as they made it to the threshold of the door and got in the hallway, then they got in each other's face. But you know, I was alert to it. I grabbed one, the teacher next door grabbed one. Sure. And so just becomes, what do you expect the students to do? Are they scholars or are they inmates? And my experience is that people usually don't treat their students like inmates.

Mr. Wilson agreed, echoing that having strong relationships with kids allows teachers to know what's coming and prevent violence before it begins:

I guess the best tool I've ever had in my toolbox has always been my ability to build relationships. It's like when we teach and you back map, let's go back to the beginning and let's go back to what happened before that moment and what happened before that and what happened before that. And I would venture to say that there were some clues, some hints, some kind of thing that said hey, something is about to happen. Now, who it got to and all those other things. That's a whole lot to figure out, but I would venture to say that typically these things don't just organically just jump off. Usually there's something that you can kind of connect the dots to.

And while strong relationships can help prevent violence before it begins, Ms. Spicer, a teacher at Lincoln Elementary/Middle, offered a poignant statement about how we frame violence in schools in the first place:

I was going to war, but not with the kids... I do feel like there's an invisible violence that exists and I'm not talking about kids. They get into fights. When you have a school that does not have soap in the bathroom, that's an act of violence because it's disrespectful. If you have a school that doesn't have paper towels, it's their way of saying you don't matter enough that we supply that. We supply you with the basic necessities. We can't forget that Baltimore City public schools still has lead in the water, which is why we have all the Deer Park water sent to the schools. So that's violent. If your child can go to school and come home with brain damage, that's violence. So, the violence that's not talked about is that. I think the violence of not having clean and safe environments for our kids all the time. I think the violence of the way that sometimes teachers talk to students who they feel like don't have advocates. Those are the violent acts that I

see...But as far as students fighting, there is never a fight that a student had that a teacher didn't know it was coming.

Ms. Spicer, herself a graduate of BCPSS puts forth a reframing of the narrative of violence in BCPSS that was echoed in a variety of ways by the other Black teachers interviewed here.

“Project Baltimore’s” framing of BCPSS as a violent workplace is countered here by teachers who acknowledge that violence exists but are aware that focusing on violent student fights is but one small aspect of a larger system of violence set against the teachers and students of Baltimore City. Ms. Spicer’s counternarrative is an important one in that it identifies the root causes of many if the symptoms that Project Baltimore recognizes while not being willing to diagnose the broader disease.

### **Framing 2 – BCPSS teaching conditions are untenable**

Released on April 5, 2017, lead investigative reporter Chris Papst purports to be investigating the poor conditions of facilities in BCPSS, in which teachers are forced to work. The segment begins with studio anchor Kai Jackson asking the rhetorical question, “What’s going on inside of Baltimore City public schools? Why aren’t children getting the education they need and deserve? Who better to answer those questions than a teacher?”. Kai sends the segment over to Chris Papst who explains that over the previous few weeks many people had called into the “Project Baltimore” hotline, including a teacher who had recently retired after 17 years of working in BCPSS. The teacher explains that she knows she is getting herself in trouble by being on the news report but that somebody needs to speak up, clearly implying that other teachers felt the same way that she did but were less willing to say anything for fear of retribution from the school system. The teacher, Christine Bryant, explains that she thinks there

107

was a gross mismanagement of money and as a result, there were roof leaks in school buildings and mice crawling in the florescent lights in classrooms. An interspersed clip shows Bryant walking around a classroom, lecturing students donning science safety goggles. While students' faces are blurred, it is clear to determine the race of the children (Black) because of the skin color of their hands and necks, which are not blurred. Papst can be heard over the video, explaining that Bryant devoted herself to teaching some of Baltimore's most disadvantaged students. Photos show Bryant, a Black teacher, with her students, all of whom are also Black. When asked why she decided to talk to "Project Baltimore", Bryant states that she wanted the people to know that there was somebody out there for their children, implying that she was somehow the exception and that the majority of teachers in Baltimore are not supportive of the children. Papst explains that while working at Garrett Heights Elementary/Middle as a STEM teacher, Bryant often lacked basic supplies and was forced to buy supplies with her own money because her school could not afford them. Classes were so overcrowded that students were forced to sit on desks, classroom windows were broken, and bathrooms did not have paper towels. Janitors were not readily available, so Bryant was forced to keep a mop and broom in her own room. Faucets did not provide hot water for science experiments; mice feces were everywhere and during the winter the thermostat would break and her classroom would not have heat. Papst juxtaposes this with a graphic showing that BCPSS has a 1.3-billion-dollar budget each year and spends \$16,000 per year per pupil which is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the country, implying that there should be enough money to avoid dire straits. The segment jumps to Papst conducting a sit-down interview with then BCPSS chief operating officer (COO) Keith Scroggins, who when asked if the conditions were acceptable, explained that he did not think anyone



would say they are acceptable. As Scroggins described the urban challenges in Baltimore, the segment shows footage of classrooms with spilled liquids on the floor, trash strewn about, and books tossed from shelves. Papst summarizes the rest of Scroggins comments, emphasizing that the administrator explained the situation has “slightly” improved in his time as COO. The segment then pans to another graphic showing that over the previous three years, \$9 million was cut from the district’s maintenance budget, while teacher salaries increased by \$13 million, implying a correlation between the two. The teacher, Ms. Bryant, stated that she believed the students were suffering because too much focus is being placed on the adults, in this case, the teachers. The clip closes with her explaining that she saw and tried to change many of the concerns, but one voice was not enough. As the clip ends, the segment returns to the studio where Papst explains that the teacher hopes that by her coming forward, she can inspire other teachers to do the same. Kai Jackson then says to Chris Papst, “You listen to this and it sounds like she almost didn’t have any time to teach for the other things that she had to deal with that teachers probably shouldn’t have to deal with”. It is important to note that nowhere in the five-minute segment does Bryant or anyone else in the clip ever suggest that they were not able to teach because of the conditions of their classrooms. However, this framing has the potential to have a lasting impact on viewers of the clip as it comes very near the end of the segment and is followed by Papst’s urging viewers to call in if they have similar stories to the one just aired.

### **Teachers Respond – Black Teachers counternarratives of poor teaching conditions in BCPSS**

While Fox 45’s “Project Baltimore” series chooses to frame teachers in Baltimore as having less time to teach because they are dealing with so many facilities matters and a lack of

109

resources issues on a daily basis, Black teachers from across Baltimore City who were interviewed for this study provided a wide range of experiences in addressing their daily teaching conditions. These counternarratives are important as they provide a multi-layered view of what it is like to be a teacher in BCPSS and they push back against the narrative created by “Project Baltimore” that frames BCPSS teachers as being afraid to speak out against school system problems.

**Counternarrative 1 – Spending on supplies is an expectation of being a public school teacher.** Reporter Chris Papst highlights the fact that Ms. Bryant spoke of how she often spent well over the \$250 allotted by the federal government through a tax credit for teachers to spend on classroom supplies. In the clip, Papst emphasizes that Bryant may spend that amount in one month, framing the issue as an egregious burden placed upon the teachers. However, the teachers interviewed for this study repeatedly expressed no qualms with spending their own money to support their students’ learning. In fact, many of them saw it as an expectation of the job. As Mr. Stafford, a middle school science teacher and educational associate at Bennett Middle School in the midtown section of Baltimore explained:

So, it's not about me. At the end of the day, I don't care how much the school is lacking with money as far as a science experiment. Some kids will never get this again. You know what I'm saying? I had kids when I got into seventh grade say, “I didn't have science since like fourth grade”. We did a yeast lab and my kids thought it was like the best thing. Balloons and test tubes and sugar and yeast. You didn't know it could make a gas? It's little stuff and that didn't cost me anything. It cost me a couple of dollars, but I feel like the smile on their faces is

ten times. Why would I complain about that? Why would I complain about spending money for something that's for a greater good? It's not like I'm just giving them this money to blow. I'm actually showing them something. I can show you the video of them doing the experiment. So, I feel like certain things we shouldn't complain about as teachers. I feel like you get into this if your heart is in it. That's my opinion. If you're getting into this for the money, if you're getting into this because you feel like, oh my teacher sucked. No. You need to have the heart for this. You have to really truly care. You have to understand like I'm not going to make a lot of money. I probably put more money out than I make sometimes, but it's about the kids and when the kids see that you care, honestly, I think all that stuff goes out the window, the conditions of your building and stuff like that.

This sentiment, that teachers do what is best for the students was echoed by Ms. Peterson, a veteran English teacher at Cheney High:

I knew coming in, out of the few expectations that I had about teaching, I knew I was going to have to spend some money and I'm okay with that. Like, it's my investment in my classroom to make me feel better as well as the kids. So, do I have to cut Sean off of using 10 tissues at a time? Yes, absolutely. Do I have to buy hand sanitizer to make sure I don't get sick in the winter? Absolutely. I'm okay with that. We buy books for kids that can't afford to buy their books and you charge it to the game. It is what it is and I think that's what we signed up for.

And we also get paid a little bit more that we can make those purchases and not feel too much of the weight of it.

While 15 of the 20 teacher participants agreed that paying for teaching supplies and materials is part of “the game” as Ms. Peterson puts it, it did not mean they disagreed with Ms. Bryant, who appeared in the “Project Baltimore” clip. Four teacher participants did express concern about having to spend so much to teach effectively even though they knew it may be necessary as a teacher in Baltimore City. Mr. Baxter, who like Ms. Bryant, is a secondary school STEM teacher at Grambling Academy, a 6-12 charter school in West Baltimore shared:

I've definitely seen those conditions, even from as simple as being a science teacher myself. I definitely can relate to what she's going through. It's funny, because I actually wrote curriculum for the district and one of our biggest issues was, especially when it came to PD and you know if you're a charter school, you have to pay for all of your materials. Whereas if you are in public school, you know, everything is given to us. And one of our biggest issues with writing the new standards for next generation science was, we had to constantly keep in mind, some teachers are going to have access to these materials and some weren't. So, we actually had to do double the work because we had to plan for if you had the materials or didn't have the materials. And it's crazy because as a science teacher, that's one of the first things you have to think about, “what can we do to cut a corner or save money so that the kids can still get the experience even if we don't have the materials?”, and it's unfortunate, because it is a disadvantage to the kid because they don't get the real experience, they get the

simulated experience based off of our budget. And as a teacher, you have to make decisions. And I've even found myself getting in trouble at home, because I've spent more money on my kids than I have my own child. You care so much that you pour into other people's children and sometimes you feel bad because you didn't pour as much into your own. But these are the struggles of everyday.

These types of sacrifices were echoed repeatedly, with most teachers acknowledging that the sacrifice of dollars was attached to the emotional labor and connection teachers have with students. As Ms. Roberts, a 12-year veteran former elementary school teacher who now serves as a school counselor at two different schools in the district puts it:

This job is labor. It's a profession but it's emotional labor and we do spend a lot of our own money and a lot of our own time that we're not compensated for. And I'm at the point, I don't even ask for compensation and I spend \$2-300 of my own money and I'm not even going to ask for that back.

**Counternarrative 2 – Resources and conditions do not prevent high quality teaching from occurring.** Many of the participants took direct issue with anchorman Kai Jackson's statement to reporter Chris Papst at the end of the segment when he said ""You listen to this and it sounds like she almost didn't have any time to teach for the other things that she had to deal with that teachers probably shouldn't have to deal with". The teachers believed this was an exaggeration of what teachers really experience. Ms. Tyson, a 14-year veteran English teacher at Dillard High school in east Baltimore, was quick to point out that the statement did not align with the remarks of the teacher in the segment:

But what struck me was the commentary after the news story. You know, the part where it's all, "she almost didn't have time to teach". She never said that. And so, it's this idea that we are somehow, working in a developing country where the mice are attacking us in class or I think that commentary is what becomes so dangerous because that's the last thing that a person hears after the news stories. So, during the expose if you will, I'm nodding my head, you know, I empathize, but then when we get to the point where, "Oh, you almost can't teach", nobody said that! And I think that's when things become dangerous. And I think that's part of the reason why we have a shift in public perception of Baltimore City public school systems. Yes, you know, things definitely could be better. We would like, newer schools, we would like air conditioning that works five days a week instead of four. Um, but you know, like in this particular building, this is one of the facilities for summer school. So, I know Dillard probably has a nicer infrastructure than some of the other schools. But I think that the biggest tragedy is that some of our magnet high schools where students are actively getting accepted to the top-tier four-year colleges and universities, they don't have adequate computers. They don't have air conditioning. It's very uncomfortable during the winter, in the summer months. But does it prevent teaching? Absolutely not and I think that any teacher worth his or her salt is going to remember we are here molding these young minds and preparing them for our tomorrow. So, you know, one monkey doesn't stop the show.

Ms. Jones, a foreign language teacher at Cheney High, has actually taught in the district longer than Ms. Bryant, entering her 22<sup>nd</sup> year in BCPSS. Like Ms. Tyson, Ms. Jones too believed that while things could be improved, a lack of resources does not stop learning from occurring:

I do understand what she's talking about. Obviously, we do know that almost every building I've ever been in has had challenges with either heating, or...with mice or insects, things like that. The administration of every school tries their best to address those things right away. They ask us to file report on things if something's broken or wrong and usually the turnaround wasn't too bad.

Sometimes we were displaced due to heating issues. These buildings are older, and they have different older systems. So sometimes that is tough in the world, and the environment we have or the climate changing the way it has so extremely. But I've never felt that I couldn't teach. Yes, there are issues with how they keep the maintenance of the bathrooms. That's a big issue. But that's just something that affects me personally when I want to go, you know. But in my classroom, I'm very fortunate. The technology could be better, obviously. But I would say not from what she said that I can't say that I've never been able to teach.

Her colleague, Ms. Mason, also at Cheney High, was even more dismissive of the news segment's framing of the issue, bluntly stating, "No, I'm not spending my time fighting mice and roaches that we are not able to teach". It is important to make clear that almost all of the teachers interviewed in this study (18 of 20 participants) recognized that BCPSS needed additional supplies and better facilities. However, as has been pointed out, the difference

between the narrative set forth by “Project Baltimore” and the one being told by many Black teachers from across Baltimore is that the staff does not believe these needs impede student learning. That despite these shortcomings, Black teachers, and teachers in general in Baltimore, find ways to ensure that students are learning. As Ms. Roberts explains:

Yes, I will agree that there’s a lack of the supplies. Now day-to-day supplies, I can’t say that I’ve been without day-to-day supplies. Now some of the other essential supplies that would be useful to the curriculum, like some textbooks, yeah that stuff is lacking. I taught social studies and science a few years ago and we didn’t have enough textbooks but there are work arounds: making copies, finding other sources of reading, that was a challenge but for my day to day, no. Bathrooms, are like a public restroom but again, it doesn’t bother me enough. Now with maintenance staff, yes, we could definitely use more maintenance staff. Here we have one full-time maintenance person and she works for Baltimore City and we have the contractors that come in the evening. So, we can’t rely on one person all day. It’s just so unfair for one person but every school could use another maintenance person. But I’ve never really seen it as a hinderance to learning.

Ms. Tyson echoed this sentiment and add that it is up to the teacher to set the tone of the classroom. When the teacher is focused and is able to ignore the distractions or shortcomings, the students will almost always follow suit. As Ms. Tyson put it:

Um, you know, it can get uncomfortable. But I think that the teacher is the captain of his or her classroom. So, when the teacher comes in ready to go and



ready to withstand the conditions, then the teacher and the kids follow suit.

That's always been my teaching experience.

**Counternarrative 3 – One teacher cannot speak for all teachers: not all BCPSS schools are in poor conditions or lack resources.** “Project Baltimore” attempts to frame the experiences of a few BCPSS teachers to have serve as representative of *all* BCPSS teaching experiences. Papst positions Ms. Bryant’s years of service in BCPSS to add to her credibility and therefore should be taken as valuable. While Ms. Bryant’s experience is important, it is not the only story to be told of the experiences of BCPSS teachers. The conditions of the schools she worked in does not necessarily reflect the conditions of all BCPSS schools as was reflected in the stories shared by the participants. Mr. Stafford, science teacher and educational associate at Bennett Middle explains, showed that many BCPSS schools were renovated in the past five years through the district’s “21<sup>st</sup> century Schools Buildings Plan”:

I'm fortunate enough to work in a building that is fixed. The [Baltimore] Ravens did Ravenwood High and we have a really good relationship with the maintenance people. We have a custodian and she's very diligent with stuff. She'll paint. She'll do anything. I haven't worked in the school as far as like, oh we don't have this. We always have paper towels. My first year here every teacher was getting a box of paper every quarter. And when I was teaching reading intervention. I didn't even need paper. I was giving my paper to my colleagues because I'm like, well you teach ELA, you teach math, you might need it more than me. I just need to make a couple of copies here and there and I've never worked in a school where we didn't have supplies. We always have toilet

paper. We always have water. We literally do water runs like every week. I just felt like your principal has to budget the money the right way. I'm a firm believer in that. If your principal budgets the money the right way it can all work out. I think the district is doing a great job in my opinion from what I hear and see. You have a lot of 21st century buildings coming. A lot of buildings are being renovated, updated. A lot of schools are shifting something for that. You know, I had a friend who used to work at Colton Elementary which is now Stafford Elementary. They fixed Colton. It looks like a brand-new building to me. I'm like, Oh okay. So, I feel like they are trying to do more but like it takes money.

Ms. Rooney, a special education teacher at Voorhees Technical Academy, also noted how impressive some of the new teaching facilities in Baltimore City were:

He did mention they have made some improvements. Absolutely. There are some state-of-the-art centers around here. Bill Gates High School is gorgeous. Leverton Elementary/Middle is gorgeous. Um, some of the ones I can't come right off the top of my head, but they have done some great renovations to these schools. You have to keep that ball rolling.

And while several other teachers also spoke about this as a flawed narrative, three teacher participants pointed out that there is additional work to be done on that front.

Ms. Pence, a 5<sup>th</sup> year reading teacher at Fisk Elementary/Middle school talked about the impact of moving from an older school building to a brand new one, so early in her career:

I've lucked up because I started off at Fisk with very little resources and now we have so many resources. But the low point is definitely the lack of resources though. Like when you go to other buildings and when you are going to professional developments and you're seeing like schools that don't even have projectors, don't have simple things like that. Our children are falling so far behind and that's because of funding and lack of, and so while we're trying to be really progressive with our curriculum, it's kind of difficult because we're not. All schools don't look like this and all schools don't have this stuff. And even here, the students, they don't really understand how lucky they are because it's kind of like when you're born into it.

This disparity between the haves and the have-nots with regards to facilities in BCPSS is one that many teachers wanted to explore further. While they were critical of the framing that all BCPSS teachers teach in horrible conditions, they were also quick to point out that the building conditions are wildly inconsistent and that there seems to be a lack of equity with regards to which schools get resources first. Mr. Oxford, an English teacher and co-founder of Benedict School, an aspiring magnet school that offers college credit to high schoolers, showed that while he has only been a teacher in Baltimore for four years, he has noticed the politics behind the building location of new schools:

What is that...beautiful brand-new school? One of the 21st century schools. Is it the \*\*\*\* school in \*\*\*\*\*? And then the other one that's right up from me. I live in Mount Vernon but it's right up from North Avenue, right on the cusp of Bolton

Hill. Beautiful new school. Multiple, I mean, tens of millions of dollars.

Understand that these things are needed and are new. I'll tell you why that school is there. Because it's right on the cusp Bolton Hill, and they cleared a lot of land, and that place is going to be going up in the next 10 to 15 years. They're planning for development... And that's kind of Baltimore City Public Schools right there. We will plan for these things, and put resources into the things, the areas and the people we think are most valuable. And when it comes down to it then, those who need the most, are kind of... well it just depends if you have a very vocal and strategic principal who's able to organize very effectively, you'll get the money. But if not, people become apathetic over a situation that they cannot control.

This observation by Mr. Oxford, while not able to be confirmed quantitatively, was a sentiment shared by twelve other teacher participants.

**Counternarrative 4 - Context matters: Poor school conditions reflect an underfunded/impoverished city.** Black BCPSS teacher participants discussed being troubled by contextual information that was purposefully left out of “Project Baltimore’s” news segments. 14 of the 20 teachers responded by discussing the history of economic despair that has affected Baltimore City and has in turn, impacted the quality of the schools in the city. This history of underfunding of BCPSS (Gross & Jochim, 2016) as well as a city with an increasingly shrinking middle class (Mallach, 2018) has meant that schools have gone decades without proper maintenance and oversight. None of this was mentioned in the framing of BCPSS by “Project Baltimore”, yet nearly every teacher interviewed in this study (18 of 20) made mention of those issues in some

120

form. For example, Ms. Logan, an elementary school teacher at Morris Brown Elementary/Middle in central Baltimore, who is also a product of BCPSS, spoke about the school buildings:

I think people do forget that we are learning and teaching in the oldest school buildings in Maryland. Like you drive through the different counties and you see new buildings. You see lots of them. You see state of the art classrooms with air conditioning and stuff, and Baltimore city, I think we have so much more work to do in our buildings because most of our buildings are so old. And I think it's also kind of lost on people that, this might just be my opinion, but wherever there are poor kids, poor families, you're going to get poor facilities. I think from the state and federal level, the way that our schools look is by design. The way that our children and the families that these school services is by design. It's like because we're black and there are lots of low-income people. I think that this is what we're going to get.

Mr. Wilson, a special educator in Baltimore for nearly 20 years, echoed this idea that BCPSS school facilities are impacted by the lack of monies to support them:

One of the things that I always think about when you hear stories like that is you can't separate the school system from where the school system is. And there are things that happen in our city that are much different than neighboring areas, neighboring counties. So for example, if I look at the police department budget for Baltimore City compared to maybe a neighboring county, they might spend more. They may spend less. It's based on what's going on. So it's reflective. I

don't know a whole lot of conversations about building new school buildings in Baltimore City. So when you have buildings, I think this building was built in the 30s or the 40s, you are going to get to a point where you're doing a lot of patchwork. I think there's an understanding. Again, when you have resources, you can do certain things. When you don't, you have to do other things...I mean it's, it's par for the course of knowing that in Baltimore City schools, quite often you were being asked to do more with less.

Teacher participants agreed that “Project Baltimore’s” seemingly purposeful omission of the historical context that negatively impacts BCPSS today is an egregious error that many Black teachers in Baltimore take issue with. Ms. Mason offered the following analogy to explain the condition of some BCPSS teaching environments, “I used to live in a row home and you knew that if your neighbor had mice, even if you were awesome, guess what you had? And so, this building is 200 years old. There's an expectation”. “Project Baltimore” chooses to frame the conditions of BCPSS as shocking and appalling while the Black BCPSS teachers acknowledged that they understood their role as a teacher in an urban environment and worked to find a way to make the most of their situations.

### **Framing 3 – Teachers fear speaking out against deplorable academic standards**

Released on November 2, 2017, the “Project Baltimore” segment titled, “Veteran Teacher on City Schools: “It’s a complete disaster”, features reporter Chris Papst conducting a sit-down interview with a former BCPSS teacher who claimed the state of BCPSS schools as “an emergency”. The clip begins with Papst giving a voice over as a tear-away calendar graphic

simulates days peeling away. Papst explains that over the previous few months “Project

Baltimore” heard from several current and former teachers who claim that grade changing was happening at their schools, but none of these teachers was willing to come forward to speak on camera for fear of retaliation. Here Papst frames BCPSS teachers as being mired in the fear of potentially losing their jobs if they were to tell the truth. This framing is further aided by images of blurred faces being interviewed, presumably of Baltimore City teachers, to lend credence to Papst’s statement that there are many teachers who want to come forward but are afraid to. Scott Miller Phoenix, a middle-aged Black man and former BCPSS teacher states, “I’m angry and I think somebody’s got to say something about it”. Papst explains that Mr. Phoenix taught for 25 years as a social studies teacher in Baltimore. Several of Miller’s former school identification cards are shown in an attempt to add credibility to Phoenix’s position. It is important to note that several of the identification cards show that Miller served as a substitute teacher, which is significant because it means that he would not have the same level of job security as a full-time teacher and he would have little-to-no say in academic decisions made in the schools he worked. None of this is discussed in the story.

Papst explains that Miller was laid off from the school system (another issue that is not discussed at all in the framing of Miller’s complaints) and that he describes the quality of education in Baltimore City as “a complete disaster”. Papst shares that Miller worked at four different schools, and each school had issues with heating, rodents, violence and even marijuana smoke in the hallways. A clip of a mouse in a school doorway is shown as evidence, although no school is identified. A slow build camera shot down a hallway leads to Papst sharing his biggest revelation: Miller says that every school he worked at participated in illegally changing students’ grades. Papst asks Miller pointedly if he was ever pressured by an

123

administrator to change grades, to which Miller replies, “Oh, definitely” and that he knows that it happens at other schools as well, suggesting that BCPSS teachers are willing participants in grade changing across the district. No evidence is offered as to how Miller knows that grade changing occurs at schools other than the ones he has worked in. Papst explains that Miller worked at, the now closed, \*\*\*\*\* high school and that it was a common practice for student grades to be rounded up to the nearest five. A report card graphic is shown with a 56(F) on the front cover. When the report card is opened, a 60 (D) is shown on the inside, to represent the grade changing that Miller alleges took place. Miller states directly that this occurs “all over the city” and that administrators regularly change grades because they are scared to see how poorly the students are doing academically. No specific evidence is offered as to how Miller knows that this occurs “all over the city”. Papst voices over another graphic which shows that of the 371 students who took state testing in Northwestern’s final year, zero students were proficient in math and only three were proficient in English, seemingly corroborating Miller’s framing of BCPSS academics as a “complete disaster”. No other school’s data was offered, nor was districtwide state testing data provided during the segment. Miller explains that the schools struggled academically and that he was compelled to withdraw his own children from BCPSS altogether. The segment closes with Miller explaining to Papst that he was disappointed that he could not keep his children in the school system he had worked in for so long but “what choice did I have?”.

### **Teachers Respond – Black teachers counternarratives of academic standards framing**

While Fox 45’s “Project Baltimore” series chooses to frame teachers in Baltimore as, at the very least, being co-conspirators in rampant grade changing that occurs across the school

124



district, Black public-school teachers from across Baltimore who participated in this study offered a wide variety of responses to explain the educational outcomes of students in the school system. As was previously mentioned, these counternarratives are important as they provide a multi-layered view of what it is like to be a teacher in Baltimore City and they shift the narrative created by Project Baltimore that frames Baltimore city teachers as being afraid to speak out against problems they may face in their schools, while providing a new narrative that unsurprisingly shows that not all teacher experiences are the same.

**Counternarrative 1 - Don't blame teachers: the BCPSS grading policy <sup>3</sup>does not serve student interests.** To no surprise, many of the teachers expressed outrage over the simplification of what they see as a very complex issue: the grading policy in BCPSS. Of all of the segments shown, the issue of grade changing summoned the widest range of responses. One place where participants agreed was that it would be impossible for one teacher to speak for all BCPSS teacher experiences with grades, as "Project Baltimore" tried to do with Mr. Phoenix. As Ms. Jones, angrily put it:

I'm completely offended and that whole piece was an outrage to me. I'm the grandchild of a lawyer and the first thing I heard about him being laid off after all that time, that didn't go unnoticed on me. So that can build some resentment. But I think that what bothers me most about that is the fact that, again, you cannot have one person speak out as the spokesperson for all of us. Two, even if

---

<sup>3</sup> While the official grading policy found on the BCPSS district website refers to each school having its own grading policy, in 2011 the district rolled out a new policy which made a 50 percent the minimum grade any student can be given for a marking period and a 60 percent is considered a passing score for a marking period. Prior to 2011, a 70 percent had been the minimum score for a passing grade. (Papst, 2018).

you have some others call in, you have not vetted this in any way. I don't know anything about his ability in the classroom and whether he was effective as a teacher or not. But you're taking this as some kind of mandate that this is what it is.

Ms. Logan, an elementary school teacher, echoed Ms. Jones' outrage:

It just strikes me. One teacher, who's taught at four schools, can say that the district is a disaster? It's a disaster that's happening everywhere because he's been everywhere? It's just like, it just kind of rings a little...I don't like it. And also I don't necessarily think that it's true. I don't believe that.

Ms. Baines, a special educator at Wilberforce Elementary/Middle, who also works at the districtwide level, took these sentiments one step further, arguing that the segment's use of Mr. Phoenix representative of all BCPSS teacher experiences was not only problematic but was also evidence of a larger strategy to purposefully make BCPSS and its teachers, look bad:

Oh, hands down, it seems like the media is just looking for the flaws. And it just helps to perpetuate a cycle of negativity with the teachers, with the parents with the students and then you have some like Fox 45 Project Baltimore. I mean, it is literally just to look for some sense of corruption. And again, no one takes into account, the reality of the teachers' day, and the barriers that they face while they're still trying to work with predominantly underserved communities, and the teachers themselves are underserved. But they fall into this niche.

Ms. Baines comment is an important one, noting that many, if not most, of the “Project Baltimore” segments focused negative light on BCPSS and its teachers. She also recognizes that segments like this one fails to consider the larger context of issues teachers must deal with on a daily basis in a city like Baltimore. One of these issues, as was brought up by several of the teachers, was that the grading policy is flawed in many ways and does not serve the best interests of the city school students. This, in fact made it difficult for teachers to know how to proceed with grading. Mr. Baxter, a former middle school science teacher, who now teaches high school science at Grambling Academy charter school, explained some of the difficulties teachers face with grading students as a result of the current grading policy:

It would be a list of kids and sometimes they were high potential. Some of them we couldn't fail because of policy. So, it's like, as teachers sometimes, what do you do? When I think about grade changing, the conversation I ask myself is, we need to look at the grading policy itself. I remember vividly when I was in school, 65 was a passing grade. Our senior year they took it up to a 70, and that caused the failing grades to skyrocket. And to add insult to injury, they don't take it back to a 65, they drop it to a 60! And I think that's been to the detriment of our grading. Everything unfortunately is about numbers.

Mr. Wilson, a special educator at Clinton Charter in east Baltimore, expressed similar concerns about the grading policy:

One of the things I've always kind of questioned, and I understand some of the idea behind it, is the idea of 60 being passing. It was never something that I was

still not really comfortable with. And I think about that really in this particular case where we have kids now who when they apply to colleges, their G.P.A's are low. It really kind of limits their opportunities in places they can look. So even though we stay on them and we have these meetings, if I know I can get a 60 and I can pass and go to the next grade and I can earn that credit and then when junior and senior year come and I got a one-point something, what does that do for my college prospects?...philosophically that's always been something that I've struggled with. So, I've tried to get kids to kind of see beyond what the bare minimum was.

Ms. Rooney, a teacher at Voorhees Technical academy, was explicit about how the grading policy hampers students' opportunities to achieve on a higher level, "...that literally was the worst thing Baltimore City did when they lowered the passing grade to 60. It's teaching them that you really can get by with only giving 60 percent effort". And while the teachers agreed that the grading policy helped to lower the academic standard for students, it did not mean that teachers waved their hands in defeat. As Mr. Baxter explained, even with the challenges teachers face using a flawed grading policy, many teachers go out of their way to ensure that good, high quality teaching still does occur:

I would not call it a disaster I will say, from the teachers I've encountered, we definitely do what we need to do to teach our kids. Is the grading always perfect? No. Is the system that is setup around them perfect? No. But I think a good teacher, we have our best intentions, even if that means, I know you're not

going to fail but I have to threaten you all year to keep you from failing because that's what I need to do to motivate you to get you to do what you need to do. Then that's what I have to do, and I promise you I faced that so often in middle school.

**Counternarrative 2 – Grading pressure does exist in some places, but teachers hold the line of integrity.** Several of the teachers interviewed for this study (3 of 20 participants) acknowledged that they have heard of, or even in a few cases, witnessed conversations around grading that corroborate what Mr. Phoenix states in the “Project Baltimore” segment. However, an important distinction they make is that while Mr. Phoenix framed teachers as being willing accomplices in grade changing, or at the very least, unwilling to speak out against administrators who sought to change grades, they described themselves or their colleagues as refusing to be complicit in grade changing.

Mr. Pickford was a middle school music teacher at Bethune-Cookman Academy, an all-male charter school that was recently closed by the local school board for a lack of academic progress. Mr. Pickford is himself, a graduate of BCPSS and reflected quite passionately about how he stood up to an administrator who wanted him to change a student's grade, in part because the school was under pressure to improve their academic standing:

And I can say this within my 12 years, I've always given grades that I thought were fair and I've been threatened by principals to change grades. And I'm like, No, I'm not doing that because if he did absolutely nothing from the time he walked into my classroom, how the hell can I give him a passing grade? I can't because that's not how the real world works. You only get rewarded for doing

work. I'm not going to default you and give you a 60 because it looks good on the school's record. I'm going to give you what you deserve. Because as a teacher, I have a certain amount of integrity, that is not going to allow me to just default grades. This past year I was told, how come you have so many failures? I'm like, because they did nothing! Well, can you justify it? Yeah, I can show you all the work that they didn't do.

I had a principal that I worked for a few years ago at Bethune-Cookman, basically told the office administrator that she needed to change grades and she said, "No, I'm not changing any grades". And she said if you don't change these grades I'm telling you to change, then I'm going to transfer you to another building and I'll get somebody that will. And she said, "Well, you've just got to transfer me out". And what ended up happening was, she [the office administrator] still held firm, didn't change the grades. And the principal that we did have, ended up leaving. But it's just one of those things where administrators will pull you into their office and let you know that, well, we have a reputation that we need to maintain, we have a certain standard that we need to continue. And if you don't do this, then it's going to be bad for your career. So that does happen very often.

While some school administrators may pressure some teachers to change student grades, teachers like Mr. Pickford, push back and do not willingly comply, contrary to the story told by Mr. Phoenix.

For other teachers, the pressure to change grades can provoke immense anxiety and discomfort. Ms. Simmons, a fourth-year high school English teacher at Voorhees Technical Academy, explained that blaming teachers for grade changing is not fair, especially when a young teacher feels they have no other options because of the pressure they received from administrators:

Yes. So, this recently happened to me this school year. So, as I've said I've taught seniors. They are on semesters. So, one group of students semester one and then another group for semester two. Semester one, they took their finals, like mid-January. When the final grades came in, there's the exam grade coupled with their quarter one and quarter two grade. Some of them missed the mark by like 56 or 57. Parents will say, "Well, why'd you give my child a 58? It's two points away from...". This is two percent, not two points. So, it takes a few assignments at a high level to bump that 58 to 60. So, when you're talking about a 56, that's a lot. So, I had about four students that were, one was at a 56, one was at a 57, and then one was at a 58. They all graduated the other day. Let's just say that. I was pressured. I was forced to give them a 60...I was very nervous. I was. I said if I ever get audited, my gradebook gets audited, how do I justify that? The papers that the students...they call them formative tasks, that they have to write are district mandated. So if they don't see a paper for that student, what am I supposed to say? And I questioned the administrator who takes care of grades and schedules and all that. I questioned that, is going to come back on me? Or will you take the fall for that should something ever go down. I was very

uneasy. But I did it because I felt like I had to. We want to make sure they move on. I will say one student had an IEP. So I guess he's protected. I don't know. But yes, I was very just uneasy and apprehensive about putting in the grade change. So when I had to fill out the grade change form, the reason that I was told to put was student turned in additional assignments. That's it. So yes, it's a very real thing.

While there ended up being no major consequences for changing the student's grade, Ms. Simmons was visibly nervous even in recounting this story. Her story is an important counter to Mr. Phoenix's narrative as framed by "Project Baltimore". Ms. Simmons expressed genuine trepidation throughout the process and afterwards which represents a more richly nuanced version of the story and negates the idea of teachers as co-conspirators to changing grades.

**Counternarrative 3 – Context matters: student academic performance is not just about teachers.** Several of the interviewees recognized the myriad of factors that influence student academic outcomes that are far beyond the control of teachers in the classroom. While the grading policy is one issue, the teachers listed dozens of other concerns that impact how students perform in the classroom. In short, they thought the segment oversimplified the issue and only considered a small portion of a much larger set of systemic problems in the school district. Repeatedly the participants emphasized that the historical context of the school system should be included in any discussion of problems facing BCPSS. For example, Ms. Baines discussed the major instructional gaps facing students:



I can't speak for administrators because I'm not one. I know that teachers have struggled with grades. If you have a class, who's had a substitute teacher for the majority of instruction, is it fair to fail them even though they have not received an appropriate education? No one talks about that, but that happens a lot, especially in elementary school. The elephant in the room is they did not receive adequate instruction. But why do we fail them? Or conversely why would we pass them? So there are just a lot of variables that need to be considered in terms of the reasons why children pass or fail school.

I think that part of the problem is, and this is again a statewide if not national crisis in terms of understanding that our role, is not to constantly assess students. Our role is to educate students and sometimes these requirements that a student has to know x, y and z by this date, on this month, this year, I think that that's a little bit absurd. And when you're not factoring in all of the precursors to failing or passing grades, you're looking at things from a very narrow lens. There are some students who miss school every single week, but the assignments they do turn in, they always aced them. A lot of educators who face students like that may feel torn. Do I fail them simply because they have not been in attendance long enough? Or do I pass them? And that basically defies all of the attendant requirements in terms of 180 days of seat time. How do you handle these gray areas? When a student doesn't qualify for special education, because they're categorized as a slow learner, and the different criteria may be rigid for identifying a specific disability, but they need a little bit more help. But

you feel like they have struggled and attempted, and they've come to class every day and they have blood, sweat and tears that they're putting forth and in terms of effort. Is it fair to fail them?

Ms. Baines raised important questions about the difficult decisions teachers must make every day regarding student grades. Questions that are not brought up at all in “Project Baltimore’s” framing of the issue. Other teachers, like Ms. Roberts, who is an elementary school counselor who splits her time between two schools and is a former elementary school teacher in the district, brought up similar issues:

I am actually the grade reporter at Vance and Ms. Waltham is very precise in making sure that the grades are accurate. So I have not seen any grade changing issues. A lot of the kids come to us below average. They come to us below average in Pre-K. My best way to describe it is, I feel like we’re recreating the society within the schools. Many, not all of our students, might come from a broken home, no father, no mother, a lot of kids being raised in homes with cousins, a lot of moving, etc. One parent, who can’t really focus on the child, too many kids or whatever and then in school it’s almost the same thing, where they’re putting so many children together and not being able to meet the need. So, a lot of them are missing development milestones, miss those moments of life and now it's a deficit. Those milestones matter and trying to make up those milestones in a school setting is not always possible...It impacts the entire classroom. Again, it's a lot of emotional exchange. So, I have been in situations where the emotional environment wasn't healthy for anyone and it’s usually

based off of one or two or three students. Academically many of them are not where they're supposed to be. And again, it's what they're brought up in at home.

These issues in students' home environments, which may include poverty and educational deficits were not accounted for in "Project Baltimore's" narrative of grade changing, yet the participants mentioned them as concerns that greatly impacted educational outcomes. Ms. Tyson, who teaches at Dillard High in the central part of the city, added that for older students, these issues that can be easily overcome:

You know, a lot of my students who fail, um, in their senior year don't fail because of, of cognitive problems. They fail because they're not here because they're out working jobs and they can't get up for first period in the morning. So, if you look at first period failure rates and compare them to the middle of the day, failure rates, they're much higher. And so it's not just that kids aren't coming to school, but we have employers who are violating child labor laws and they have kids working until 11, 12, 1 in the morning. And so they're just not here. But I feel like a lot of this starts at home and it's not to reassign the blame to the parents, but it's just the idea that we have to get back to that village mentality. If your child is working because the light bill is in their name or if they're working...I had several students who, we start here at 8:08 in the morning and they usually don't get here until 8:30 or 8:40 because they're dropping off younger siblings at their school because they drive. And so, it's like as a teacher, do I turn a blind eye and say, okay, I'm not going to start market

people late until 30 minutes after the bell rings or do I hold them to the fire? And so sometimes you, you grapple with it. You don't know what to do, but then, like the young lady that I spoke of earlier, if you come out with a 59.4% and I know the extenuating circumstances, I'm going to do what I can to help you. But, things like Project Baltimore, they've made that hard because now, you've got to answer the chain of command and you're almost at Dr. S [School Superintendent], for a grade change and that becomes difficult. But I wish that the media would delve deeper into why and how things are happening instead of just doing this expose that they are happening.

And unsurprisingly, Ms. Tyson was not the only teacher who expressed dissatisfaction with the nature of “Project Baltimore’s” framing of this issue. As Ms. Spicer, a teacher at Lincoln Elementary/Middle school put it, the news program is selective in who and what they choose to focus on which plays a role in how the public perceives BCPSS teachers:

Well, you know, I think it's the media's take on standardized testing. Because I feel like when you watch the news and it says, oh, this is the state of Maryland, this is how they've performed on let's say, PARCC. And this is Baltimore City and how they performed on PARCC. And this is Howard County, and this is Anne Arundel County. And I think even just phrasing it without context, because these assessments don't monitor growth. So if, if I teach fifth grade and I had students, who are on a second grade level and I get them to a fourth grade level, no, they're not on grade level, but I've bumped them up two years. But the test doesn't show that. So then if you just look at the end product, it's like, oh, these

teachers in Baltimore, they're not working. Their kids aren't performing. And so since standardized testing has become a way to check data and it's become the way that schools get money and earn reputations and things like that, I think the news when it just showed what those scores are or it just gives these little snippets of information and it's not just limited to PARCC, it can be the graduation rates or other ways that statistics are shown in the media, I think plays a role.

Mr. Pickford shared similar sentiments regarding the impact of the news media's one-sided converge of topics like this:

Well, unfortunately, the news media really did not do a service to us. And I'm talking about that expose WBFF Fox 45, where they were basically accusing teachers of changing grades and no integrity, and it doesn't make it any better that the school board is not trying to release the information. And now the governor's involved. So they look at Baltimore as a corrupt place with corrupt teachers, and corrupt administrators, just a bunch of corruption because teachers have to change grades.

Maybe Mr. Davis, a seven-year educator BCPSS, who just finished his teaching career at the now shuttered Bethune Cookman Academy, put it the most poignantly when he explained the role the media played in shaping the public's understanding of an issue as complex as grading:

You know, my last year at Bethune-Cookman, I was on the news more times than I've ever been and I've written four books and produced a documentary. And I

got no coverage around any of those things. But when they wanted to blow my school up, I was always on the news. You know, that's intentional because Fox Baltimore needs ratings for Project Baltimore. Here's a failing school that's going down and its board is going to crash. Let's jump ahead of that, right? And that shapes the perception of the public. Oh these teachers don't care. They're making all this money and it's failing. They don't care. They can't care. Right. But its more nuanced than that.

These extenuating circumstances matter immensely to teachers who deal with so many students on a daily basis who face hardships and obstacles to their educational success. Mr. Phoenix's characterization of BCPSS being "complete disaster" is dangerous in that it leaves the viewer with the impression that teachers do not care. However, what can be seen here is quite the opposite: there are many Black teachers from around the city, who do care immensely but who are often hamstrung by systemic problems. These teachers offer a counternarrative that, if presented side by side with the "Project Baltimore" narrative, could help give the public a much better understanding of the difficulties of being a teacher in an underserved community and may help to reshape the often-negative public rhetoric that is espoused against BCPSS teachers.

This chapter sought to represent the narratives put forth by 20 different Black teachers from across Baltimore City Public schools about their experiences related to violence, school resources and facilities, and grading integrity. Through sharing the teachers' voices, a counternarrative was created to contradict and conflict the master narrative of teacher experiences in BCPSS put forth by Fox 45's "Project Baltimore series". While there were

138

moments of corroboration between the stories, more often than not the stories told by teachers provided a more nuanced and complex explanation of the experiences of these Black BCPSS teachers, keeping with Critical Race Theory methodology, these counternarratives told stories that were often overlooked by mainstream narratives that historically leave out the voices of people of color.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We've got to keep telling our stories because our experiences are so broad and rich and multifaceted there isn't just one way to be black...The more stories we share the more reflective we can be of the whole diverse African-American community. – Oprah Winfrey, 2015.

As Baltimore seeks to increase its Black teacher workforce (Richman, 2018), prospective teachers will undoubtedly seek to understand what it is like to be a teacher of color in BCPSS. As has been shared, much of the public's perception of what it is like to be a teacher is shaped by mediated narratives of these experiences (Scull & Peltier, 2007). When these characterizations are controlled by large media conglomerates (such as Sinclair Broadcasting) they have the potential to be one-sided and intentional in the ways that they frame teacher experiences. Neoliberal political forces often use media to attack public school education in an attempt to drive public perception negatively against public schools (Dumas, 2013; Garcia, 2015) and to shape public sentiments which in turn help to shape public policy related to public schooling. This study quite intentionally sought to address this one-sided, purposeful framing of BCPSS teacher experiences as being wholly negative by taking up the critical race theory call to create counternarratives about the experiences of people of color. The study findings show that race cannot be ignored when trying to understand the issues that Black teachers face in BCPSS. The findings also suggest that the context of these issues related to school violence, school resources and grading must be further examined in media if an objective story of what it is like to be a public teacher in BCPSS is to be told.



Building on the work of Lynn (2002), Decuir & Dixon (2004), Lewis (2006), Bosso (2017) and others, this study recognized the additional need to include the perspectives of Black teachers in all matters related to public school education, including how teachers are portrayed in media. This study also is a response to what Berliner & Biddle (1996) refer to as a “manufactured crisis” in public school education. Media forces such as local television news segments like “Project Baltimore” are just the latest in a growing trend of mediated stories focused on showcasing problems within American public schools. Media programs that choose to frame public schools negatively have been shown in major television shows (Gerstl-Pepin, 2015) newspapers articles (Catalano & Gatti, 2017) and documentaries (Dumas, 2013). “Project Baltimore” and the local television news segment is just the latest iteration of this framing attempt.

This study came about in part because my own experiences as a public-school teacher in Baltimore did not align with the mediated story of BCPSS being told by “Project Baltimore”. Therefore, I set out on a journey to capture the experiences of other Black teachers to see if my own experience was unique or if it was representative of a different version of BCPSS teacher experiences that were not being shared publicly. The findings from this study suggest that I am not alone in my experiences. While teachers were not dismissive of the real problems facing teachers in this city, over and over again they chose to highlight the successful stories and explained how their good experiences far outweighed the bad. In short, they complicated “Project Baltimore”’s framing of BCPSS teacher experiences as being uniform. These teachers made it clear that there is much more to BCPSS than what is shown in five-minute clips on the nightly news. My hope is to not only spark discussion about what it is like to be a teacher in

141

BCPSS but to potentially encourage prospective Black teachers to reconsider what they may have initially believed about what it is like to teach in BCPSS.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study sought to better understand the ways in which Black teachers working in the BCPSS agreed and disagreed with the ways in which their experiences were portrayed in local television news media. The following section situates the teachers' responses within the conceptual frameworks of framing theory and critical race theory and examines the intersections between this study and the previously conducted studies mentioned in the literature review of the topic.

#### **Media Framing Theory and Episodic Framing**

As Adegbola et. al (2018) explain, unlike thematic framing, which seeks to provide a more complete overview of a topic over time in context, episodic framing in news media is usually presented in case study form with an emphasis on individual experiences, issues and conditions. Episodic framing is much more widely used in news media (Iyengar, 2005) in large part due to the fact that they are easier to prepare and require less on-screen time to tell a story (Adegbola, 2018). The inherent risk with telling a shorter, more condensed version of a story is that many important details are left out. Adegbola et. al (2018) remind us that "the prevalence of episodic frames in news is less beneficial for comprehension and may oversimplify issues, resulting in a misunderstanding of important aspects of such events" and that "The sharp increase in the use of episodic frames...may also present a distorted, decontextualized view to American audiences" (p.58).

This risk was discussed in the stories shared by the teachers interviewed specific to the three major framings put forth by “Project Baltimore”: 1.) City schools are inherently violent, 2.) City school conditions are reprehensible and, 3.) City school teachers lack integrity related to student academic outcomes. In each case, the teachers shared the need for viewers of the program to understand other contextual factors not put forth by the news program. For example, when discussing violence within BCPSS, several teachers discussed the problem of violence facing Baltimore City in general and how many students have become traumatized by the violence they must contend with in their daily lives outside of school. Teachers shared that students do not fight randomly or without reason but that fights are often a reflection of the trauma that students see in their neighborhood or home environments. This violence may occur as students go and come from school, but students are also exposed to violent fights on platforms such as YouTube, fights are often shared via social media accounts and violent interactions between police and community members are viewed by students on a regular basis. Teachers repeatedly pointed out that students are exposed to violence in Baltimore on a daily basis, which makes the occurrence of violence in school unavoidable.

There exists a need for the public to understand the trauma BCPSS students deal with, in order to have viewers fully unpack the violence that sometimes occurs in BCPSS. As one teacher shared, when students see school as a “safe place”, one with teachers and administrators who care for them, it can make the school setting an acceptable venue to settle disputes as students are aware that teachers will step in to deescalate a situation before someone is seriously hurt. Teachers stressed the need for more conflict management training and resources to help

students navigate difficult interpersonal situations they may face, rather than resorting to violence.

This lack of context to fully tell a story is consistent with the episodic framing theory, which suggests that the decision to leave out important information is purposeful in trying to shape public perception on a particular topic (Catalano & Gatti, 2017). The teachers in this study corroborated this assessment, suggesting over and over again that important information was being left out of the media's framing of their experiences. As Ms. Baines shared. "All of those issues that those educators and staff members presented, they are true. Is it the entire truth? Or is it the complete truth? No. Not given the right context." This was echoed by Mr. Baxter who added, "there are other factors at play and I don't think some time they get as much publicity as they should so that you can understand the full story".

### **Critical Race Theory and the Voice of Color Thesis**

The Voice of Color Thesis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) posits that because people of color in this country have unique experiences related to race and racism, they are able to share experiences and perspectives that would otherwise be unknown to white/mainstream audiences. CRT scholars call on people of color to use various platforms (newspaper opinion pieces interviews, tv shows) to push back against mainstream narratives and majoritarian stories. As Williams (2004) reminds us, "'If there are narratives that reinforce and reproduce dominant cultural perceptions, then narratives also have the possibility of revealing gaps in those same perceptions' (p.168). The teachers interviewed for this study reveal the legitimacy of the voice of color thesis and need for counter-stories related to public school education from

Black teachers. In contrast to the mainstream framing of teacher experiences in BCPSS as being

exclusively negative, the Black teachers in this study consistently pointed out positive experiences with their students and in their school communities, while also recognizing several systemic problems that they face. These positive experiences were often based on interactions with students, including individualized morning greetings and handshakes, attending graduations, grade promotions and proms and having students come back to visit teachers after attending college or finding a job post-graduation. Yet, at no point in the three videos chosen at random for this study, were any of these positive interactions depicted or even mentioned in the segments. While teachers agree that there are negative interactions with students as well, they called for a more balanced storytelling of their experiences.

When we combine the narrative forward by “Project Baltimore” with the counternarratives offered here by 20 Black teachers in Baltimore, a more balanced perspective is offered for public consumption.

Importantly, the perspectives put forth by the teachers in this study are largely consistent with what Lynn and other scholars have found when conducting studies about Black teacher experiences. As was also the case in Lynn’s study (2002), the Black teachers interviewed here saw themselves not as incompetent or as being incapable of doing their jobs successfully, but instead saw themselves as important parts of enacting positive change in the lives of their students not just now but for the rest of the students’ lives. Teachers discussed the pride they feel by creating sometimes life-long relationships with students, many of whom stay in touch or even ask for advice from their teachers well into their adult lives. It is these deep and meaningful relationships

that teachers point to as one of the factors that keep them working in a school system

that is sometimes scant of resources and proper funding. For some teachers, students serve as pseudo-children to them. And like Lynn's study, several teachers here explained that despite the negative framing in the media, they feel a responsibility as Black teachers, to help students who look like them and who sometimes come from the same shared experiences.

Although it was not a criterion for participant selection, it so happens that 12 of the 20 teacher-participants in this study graduated from BCPSS. This personal connection to the students and the school system was evident in the way they talked about what it is like to work BCPSS, describing the children as "beautiful" and expressing their love for the students. Teachers acknowledged that Baltimore, like many mid-sized urban cities, has its fill of what could be described as both good and undesirable sections. However, each of the teachers who also happened to be BCPSS graduates discussed feelings of obligation to help current students have the same positive experiences in BCPSS that they did as students. This feeling of obligation to give back to their own communities was not limited to the classroom. One teacher discussed working as a lobbyist for BCPSS in order to push for increased funding from the state legislature. These deep-seated connections represent teachers who seem to enjoy their experience as teachers in BCPSS, not teachers who are fearful and disillusioned, as "Project Baltimore" framed it. These excerpts further demonstrate Black teacher voices are needed to counteract the narratives put forth by programs such as Project Baltimore about teachers. As Lynn explain, reports and studies about Black teachers that do not include the voices of actual Black teachers tend to depict them as villainous,

146

unenthusiastic and uncompassionate. By giving Black teachers the opportunity to tell their own stories, we take up the CRT call to push back against master narratives about people of color in education and potentially share perspectives that are otherwise left out of these portrayals.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study sought to answer the research question: How do Black teachers in Baltimore characterize the framing of Baltimore City public school teacher experiences in local television news media? In general, the teachers that were a part of this study have characterized the framings as incomplete and lacking in context. While the teachers were often careful to not be dismissive of the educators interviewed in the Project Baltimore segments, they often took issue with the overly negative depiction of their experiences. Many of the teachers pushed back against these framings by highlighting the positive relationships they develop with their students on a daily and life-long basis and by discussing the systemic problems that make being an educator in Baltimore City public schools a difficult job in some instances.

This study also sought to answer the questions: How does local television news media frame the experiences of public-school teachers in Baltimore City and what experiences/context do Black public-school teachers in Baltimore feel is omitted from mediated narratives of their experiences that would impact public perception of their jobs? Local news media, in this case Fox 45's Project Baltimore series, framed the experiences of public-school teachers in Baltimore in three ways that were explored in this study: as teaching in inherently violent schools, as lacking necessary material resources and teaching in untenable conditions and as lacking integrity regarding student academics. With regards to the experiences/context

147

that Black teachers felt was omitted from the narratives put forth by the local news media, there were several areas of concern. First in response to the framing of BCPSS as inherently violent, teachers discussed a need for the public to understand the layers of trauma that many students carry with them into the school house. Several teachers discussed the violence sometimes seen in schools as a reflection of the violence seen across Baltimore City. Teachers also brought up the fact that fights are actually infrequent despite the way they are framed in on television news and that fights are often prevented and/or mitigated because of the positive relationships teachers have with their students. Teachers also discussed the need for the public to understand that while they may lack resources in some cases, they find creative ways to ensure that student learning is not disrupted. Teachers pushed back against the framing that they lacked so many resources and worked in such unsanitary conditions that they could not teach. Several teachers discussed the fact that they willingly spend their own money to ensure that students have what they need to be academically successful and that Baltimore is home to some of the oldest school buildings in the state of Maryland which means that they are more likely to need maintenance and to sometimes falter in extreme weather, an issue that was not discussed in the framing put forth by Project Baltimore. Lastly, teachers discussed the need for the public to understand that grade changing occurs few and far between and in those rare cases when it does occur, teachers often feel threatened by school administrators who seek to have grades changed for a variety of reasons. Teachers also discussed issues with the grading policy itself, which many suggested does not give students a fair representation of their academic process. Teachers pushed back against the framing of them lacking integrity and changing grades for their own benefit, instead suggesting that classroom grades and



standardized test scores are often impacted by factors outside of their control such as student attendance and familial responsibilities that take students away from the classroom. By offering the added context to each of these framings, Black teachers worked to counter the narratives about their experiences in Baltimore school and provide a more nuanced interpretation of their professional lives.

### **Implications for Black public-school teachers**

This study offered several implications for Black public-school teachers working in urban areas such as Baltimore City. First, this study confirmed Shannon and Crawford's (1998) call for teachers to use a variety of methods to combat the negative imagery of teachers displayed in media so that the public can have a better sense of what happens in the classroom. Nearly all (18 of 20) of the Black teachers in this study took issue with the negative portrayals of their experiences and for many, sharing their experiences as part of this study was their first opportunity to share their own perspectives. If Black public-school teachers are given more opportunities to share their experiences with the public or can create new platforms (i.e. social media pages, alternative news outlets) to share their experiences, it has great potential to reshape public perceptions of Black public-school teachers.

Secondly, this study confirmed the need to include more public-school teachers in participatory action research. While many studies have been conducted about teachers, there still exists a need for teachers to be included as equal partners in the creation of new knowledge about public school education. As Baker-Bell et.al (2017) state, in participatory action research, "researchers and participants seek to teach and learn about cultural justice

with and from each other across the research” (p.361). By engaging in back and forth dialogue with Black teachers here through dialogic spiraling, the study promoted Baker-Bell, Paris and Jackson’s call for “reciprocal inquiry” in which researchers center the value of Black experiences and Black language both of which are often devalued (Baker-Bell et. al, 2017). The more that Black teachers can be at the center of creating and participating in their own research related endeavors connected to their teaching experiences, the more we create authentic inquiry that values Black voices.

Participant responses confirmed the need for media literacy training for teachers. Several of the teachers interviewed here discussed the trickery and deceptive methods Project Baltimore used to frame teachers in a negative light, such as hiding the identity of interviewees and using retired or teachers who recently left the district to represent the experiences of all teachers. This is in addition to purposefully leaving out important information and context that might help to give viewers a different perspective of the news story. Each teacher was aware of and had seen various segments of “Project Baltimore” prior to this study. Several mentioned that they had become upset by the segment and had refused to watch any further productions. They expressed a desire for local television news to shed a positive light on the work of students and teachers in the district, including stories about students who overcome dysfunctional school settings to attend college, many of whom are first generation students.

If more teachers were trained to recognize media biases and partiality, they would then have more opportunities to combat the negative framings, stereotypes and tropes about their experiences put forth in mainstream media. As Trier (2006) reminds us, the mass media must

be constantly evaluated and critiqued. The teachers in this study revealed the need for Black teachers to be more involved in this critiquing of mass media.

Lastly, this study revealed the need for Black teachers to have more spaces for fellowship and sharing of their experiences with other Black teachers. The teachers interviewed for this project repeated over and over again how they only ever hear about the negative happenings in BCPSS, but each teacher shared many positive occurrences that happen on an almost daily basis in their professional lives. By creating spaces for Black teachers to gather and share experiences, these teachers might be empowered and uplifted by the positive stories they hear from other teachers, as I was throughout this project. Many teachers are in search for positive stories to combat the constant onslaught of negativity they see, hear, and read about their experiences in media. Spaces such as “Teach for America” (TFA) provide monthly and sometimes bi-weekly meeting spaces for teacher cohorts to share challenges they face as well as positive experiences, but these are reserved for TFA teachers, the vast majority of whom are white and middle class. By creating spaces for Black teachers to fellowship and share positive experiences, we can create a community of care for Black teachers that seems to be sorely lacking and can protect the mental health of Black educators.

### **Implications for shaping public perceptions of Black public-school teachers**

Dumas (2013) in his discussion of racial representations role in media as a part of neo-liberal education reform, points out that media makers (i.e. film writers and directors, television producers, etc.). make choices in production related to shot selection, editing, and narration that work to “reinforce already existing racial representations, and confirm our imaginations of

black people and their tentative relationship to education” (p.546). Dumas’s posits the theory

151

of anti-blackness as being connected to neo-liberal multiculturalism as it relates to education and education reform in that the liberal and neo-liberal agendas have worked to move society into thinking we exist in a racially transcendent society “in which we no longer have to consider race or pursue racial equality in any direct way, because neoliberal policies and subjectivities are seen as the guarantors of multiculturalism. Neoliberal multiculturalism is able to account for continued racial disparities by insisting that racialized subjects who still suffer are either unable to access race-transcending neoliberal opportunities, or more damning, are unwilling to surrender their racial allegiances in favor of neoliberal ones” (Dumas, 2013, p.531). While Dumas examined this in the context of the much critiqued 2010 documentary “Waiting for Superman”, the same issue existed here in the framing of Black teachers in Project Baltimore. By using former Black teachers in their segments to showcase the problems of a predominately Black school system, Project Baltimore sought to nullify the critiques of their programming as being racist or anti-black. How could these segments be seen as racist if Black people are doing the bidding? However, this tactic of framing a predominately Black school system as being violent and uninterested in properly educating Black children, is consistent with Dumas’ anti-blackness critique of “Waiting for Superman”, which uses the same tired tropes about Black people related to education. The teachers in this study were critical of the programming choices as well, pointing out that “Project Baltimore” sought to legitimize its critiques of BCPSS by using Black bodies to disparage the school system. Teachers expressed feeling disheartened by seeing other Black educators frame BCPSS as dysfunctional and unworthy of respect. However, this tactic is not unique. As Conner & Rosen (2013), posit:

Neoliberal ideologies view these mostly low-income, mostly Black and Brown urban youth as undeserving beneficiaries of a wasteful system. Across the U.S., neoliberal reformers have advocated defunding public services in favor of strengthening the private sector, ultimately placing the responsibility for those services in (presumably more efficient) private hands. This shifting of resources is justified using accountability measures aimed primarily at assessing the performance and behavior of teachers and students.

Many teachers in this study presented the need to have Black teachers push back against neo-liberal educational agendas that use media spaces to shape public opinion against Black teachers. “Project Baltimore” uses Black faces as a cover to push their anti-public-school and anti-black agendas, both of which directly pushes up against Black educators who see through the thinly veiled media tactics.

### **Implications for public school education-related policy**

Gillborn (2013) explains that education policy comes in both large-scale formal legislation but also comes in smaller informal form through public debates and reform efforts. This study provides an important example of the dangers of using media stories as fodder for educational policy agendas. As has been demonstrated, many of the framings put forth by Fox’s “Project Baltimore” have been contested by Black classroom teachers yet the current governor of Maryland, Larry Hogan, has repeatedly referenced “Project Baltimore” segments as evidence to push forward his conservative leaning policies towards Baltimore City public schools. These policies often are related to funding that the state gives to Baltimore City schools, funding that helps to pay for supplies, teacher salaries and educational opportunities for students. When an

153

unbalanced depiction is given and is then taken as fact by important political figures such as the governor, it has the potential to have a lasting impact on classroom teachers and students. This study reveals why teachers must be engaged in these conversations in authentic ways and must be provided public platforms to reshape narratives of their experiences, which in turn may help to reshape public school policies at the local and state levels.

Policy forums related to public education should seek out Black teacher representation specifically as these perspectives are often underrepresented in dialogue about public school education. This may include creating state legislature subcommittees that include Black teachers of various grade levels and school experiences as well as lobbying and bargaining units such as the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) and its parent organization the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) creating task force committees to represent the perspectives, experiences and needs of Black teachers in Baltimore and other similar school districts nationally.

Since 2015, the state of Maryland has operated The Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education, colloquially known as the “Kirwan” Commission. Under the guidance of Dr. William Kirwan, Chancellor Emeritus of the University System of Maryland, the 25-member panel has been tasked with reviewing the current state of education funding across the state and providing recommendations for the governor and state legislature. These recommendations, if implemented, hold the possibility of enormous change to the ways schools are funded, teachers are hired, professional development requirements for local school systems and a myriad of other policies that would change the trajectory of school systems across Maryland, including BCPSS, for decades to come. However, an examination of the 25-

154

member panel of educational and legislative experts, reveals that only three members are Black people, none of whom are public school teachers (all three are state delegates or council persons) and the one BCPSS teacher on the commission is a white male. Educational policies that do not include Black voices, even if well intentioned, run the risk of leaving out important perspectives as the “Project Baltimore” series has done.

### **Study Limitations**

There were several limitations to this particular study. First, while taking a case study approach was an appropriate methodological approach to take to investigate this project, case studies are limited by the relatively small quantity of data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2017). While twenty teachers from various school types and years of teaching experience were interviewed for this study, they cannot be said to represent all Black teachers in BCPSS. As with other case studies, the findings of this study are unique to this particular set of teachers in Baltimore and are not necessarily generalizable to other similar studies of Black teachers and their experiences.

Another potential limitation of this study was that the primary tool to collect data was through in-depth interviews. This methodology was used as most of the data was collected through the summer months (June and July) when teachers were free from school as this was the most convenient time for most study participants. However, the timing of data collection made it difficult to gather teachers together in one space for a focus group, which had been part of the original methodological plan. It is conceivable that data results may have been different if participants had participated in focus group interviews as they would have had more

opportunity to interact with each other and provide commentary and feedback for each other's perspectives.

Another potential limitation of the study is the level of honesty and forthrightness provided by the study participants. While there is no reason to believe that the interviewees were dishonest in their descriptions of their experiences, several participants did discuss their desire to remain unidentifiable in fear of potential retribution for being critical of the school system. All efforts have been made to provide pseudonyms for all participants and schools mentioned in the interviews as to protect the identities of those involved. In addition, all responses included in this project were vetted and approved as being accurate accounts of their experiences by the study participants as a part of the dialogic spiraling process (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). While I am a teacher and believe that my role as a teacher aided in my accessibility to participants, it is possible that some teachers may have guarded or altered their responses due to my additional role as a school administrator. In addition, it is possible that my identity as a cis-gender male may have precluded some participants from speaking as freely with me as they might have with a researcher with a different identity.

Additionally, the study was limited to teachers who had taught in the school system for at least three years as that is when the Project Baltimore series began. It is possible that teachers newer to the school system would have had different perspectives than the teachers interviewed here. Without having the lived experience of working in BCPSS for multiple years and through various leadership and policy changes, it is possible that newer teacher responses may have been more critical of BCPSS and more in-line with the framings put forth by the local television news segment.



Lastly, this study was limited by the recruitment of study participants. Because participants were obtained through social media postings, there may have potentially been another pool of potential study-participants who were omitted from the project. While this study included participants from 18 different Baltimore City public schools, there are currently 165 K-12 schools in Baltimore, which makes it conceivable that selecting teachers in a different manner might have resulted in different study results. With just over ten percent of BCPSS schools represented in this study, it is impossible to say that this project is fully representative of all BCPSS teaching experiences and school environments.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The recommendations for future research connected to this project are largely shaped by Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) voice of color thesis which seeks to put forth the experiences of people of color, which are often unheard by white people. The first recommendation would be to replicate this study in similar cities: Memphis, Detroit, New Orleans, Milwaukee to see if Black teachers in public school systems with similar racial and socioeconomic demographics share the same experiences with the media that Black teachers in Baltimore have shared here. For example, the Sinclair broadcasting news affiliate in Milwaukee, Fox 6, has a similar investigative news segment. Although not expressly titled, "Project Milwaukee", a cursory search of news stories on the station's website reveals stories over the past three years about the Milwaukee Public School system that are similar to those done by Fox 45 in Baltimore. Topics include questions about school safety, accusations of mismanagement of school funds, and repulsive schooling conditions, in this case, lead in drinking water. While this study is not

generalizable, it would be useful for researchers to examine similar stories of Black teachers around the country.

Another suggestion to add depth to this study would be to conduct a multi-year, longitudinal study of the ways in which public school teachers are framed in local news media and include each major news outlet in the area (WJZ, WMAR and WBAL). This would allow for a large-scale examination of news segment trends over time and potentially offer more insight into the mediated agendas of each source. A longitudinal study would also allow for the incorporation of a larger cross-section of Black teachers to be interviewed and for a larger percentage of BCPSS schools to be represented, providing a more comprehensive overview of Black teacher perspectives.

Additionally, while this study focused on Black teachers in Baltimore primarily because the investigator is Black and because Black teachers make up the largest minority group of teachers in this city, a future project might investigate Latinx teachers in the city and the media framings they face. Baltimore's Latinx population rose by nearly 10 percent between 2000 and 2010 and many believe the population has grown even larger as we near the next census report in 2020 (Zhang, 2019). Latinx students make up the second largest group of students in BCPSS at just over 11 percent. As critical race theory can be applied to different minority groups, a study of Baltimore's fastest growing minority education population and the way they are constructed in local news media would be critical to potentially avoiding some of the same policy related missteps that has negatively impacted Baltimore's Black population.

As part of this study, I had the opportunity to interview several Black male educators in Baltimore, many of whom expressed concern and frustration over being one of few Black male

teachers in the school system. Yet several studies (Bryan & Ford, 2014; Lewis & Toldson, 2013) have demonstrated that all students, regardless of race or gender, benefit from experiences with Black male teachers. A qualitative research project which seeks to capture the educational experiences of a group of both Black male teachers and Black male high school students in the Baltimore area would aid in addressing this gap. Moving outside of the academy, after interviewing both groups separately, I would like to conclude with a forum between the two groups, in which teachers can share with the students, their reasons for becoming teachers and where students can share their experiences (or lack thereof) with Black male educators. The follow-up to this research project would be to create an annual forum at in which aspirational Black male students from across Baltimore City are invited to local universities to learn more about the college process but also for a dialogue with Black male faculty about education and possible teaching career options and experiences. The final phase would be to have local universities partner with BCPSS to conduct interviews of Black male teacher candidates in their final semesters in hopes of increasing the pool of Black male teachers in the school system.

Lastly, critical race theory calls on scholars to use their voices to be activists as well. Future research connected to this project must include work to create spaces for Black teachers to tell their own stories. As mentioned previously, Black teachers need more spaces (newspapers, television shows, podcasts, etc.) to tell their stories and their experiences. This type of work will heed Delgado and Stefancic's call for an activist element within CRT that moves scholars out of the ivory tower and into the real world.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Baltimore will always be my home. I was born and raised here, started a family here, became a teacher here and now my own son is a Baltimore City public school student. This study began as a personal quest to tell my truth, to share my experiences about why I am so proud to be a product of BCPSS and a teacher in the school system now. Adiche (2009) tells us of the danger of a single story and my fear was (and remains) that “Project Baltimore”, with its wide-reaching audience, is telling a single story that has an agenda of turning public sentiment against BCPSS and its teachers so that the entire school system can eventually be restructured. This is my attempt to use my voice and the voice of other Black teachers in Baltimore, to tell another side of the story. While we all agree that Baltimore and its teachers need many more resources and much more support than it currently has in order to do the type of work that needs to be done to improve student outcomes in this city, framing BCPSS teachers in denigrating ways put forth by “Project Baltimore” does nothing but perpetuate the negative mental imagery about Black educators that has long existed in public media forums. Every day I am proud to work alongside many talented, dedicated and persevering educators who look like me, who dedicate their lives to helping the children of Baltimore City create a better future. Those are the stories that should be told about Baltimore City and its teachers. This is the first of many attempts I will make to do just that.

Appendix A:  
Study Solicitation Flyer



Participants needed for Doctoral Research Study

**Topic:** Teacher responses to representations of Black Public-School Teachers in Local Television News Media

**Who:** Self-Identifying Black Baltimore City Public School Teachers who have taught in the school district since at least 2017 (All school levels are welcome: elementary, middle and high school)

**What:** One-time interview, 45-60 minutes, June 1<sup>st</sup>-August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019

**Location:** Determined by the Interviewee

**Contact:** Sedrick Smith [slsmith01@umbc.edu](mailto:slsmith01@umbc.edu)

Appendix B:  
Interview Questions

Personal/Demographic Background:

1. What is your role/position at your school and how long have you taught there?
2. Please explain why you became a teacher in BCPSS.
3. How would you describe your experience teaching in BCPSS thus far? What have been some of the successes? What have been some of the challenges?
4. Have you taught in another school district? If so, how did that experience compare to your experience in BCPSS?
5. What were your perceptions of teachers before you became one?
6. In general, what do you think is the public perception of BCPSS teachers?
7. Where do you think this perception comes from?

Television news media framing of Baltimore teachers

8. In general, what do you think of the way teachers are represented on local television news?
9. In general, do you feel as though Baltimore schools are accurately depicted in news media? Explain.
10. What has been your reaction to some of the recent television news coverage of BCPSS?
11. Review this “Project Baltimore” clip and then answer the following:
  - a. Does this particular news segment accurately reflect your lived experience? Why or why not?

- b. What other factors would help the public better understand the issue depicted in this news segment?

#### Closing

- 12. What impact, if any, do you think Project Baltimore's decision to use three Black educators to tell these stories has on the public's perception of what it is like to be a teacher in Baltimore City public schools?
- 13. Do you think you have been personally affected by television news coverage of the school system you work in?
- 14. Why do you choose to remain a teacher in BCPSS? Do the representations of BCPSS schools impact your decision to remain a teacher in the school district?

## Appendix C:

### Participant Informed Consent Form

#### **Whom to Contact about this study:**

Principal Investigator: Sedrick Smith

Department: Language, Literacy and Culture

Telephone number: 410-361-0693

#### **Depictions versus Reality: Countering the television mediated narratives of Black teachers in Baltimore.**

This is a consent form for participation in a research project. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

#### **I. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:**

The purpose of this study is to answer the question: How do Black teachers in Baltimore characterize the framing of Baltimore City public schools in local television news media? About 20 persons will be invited to participate.

#### **II. PROCEDURES:**

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to participate in an interview about my experiences within BCPSS and my reaction to local television news media depictions of the school system since 2017. My participation in this study will last for one 45-60-minute interview session which will include detailed note taking and will be audio recorded. All interviews will take place at Baltimore City College High School at 3220 The Alameda, Baltimore, MD 21218. No personal identifying information will be written with responses to the questions. My involvement in this study will begin when I agree to participate and will continue until the conclusion of the study in May 2020. I am being asked to volunteer because of my experience as a Black public-school teacher in the Baltimore City School system since at least the 2017-18 school year. I will be asked to come to Baltimore City College high school to participate in my interview.

#### **III. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

I have been informed that my participation in this research study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw or discontinue participation at any time. If I withdraw from this research study, I will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participating. I have been informed that data collected for this study will be retained by the investigator and analyzed even if I choose to withdraw from the research. If I



do choose to withdraw, the investigator and I have discussed my withdrawal and the investigator may use my information up to the time I decide to withdraw.

**IV. RISKS AND BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY:**

The study involves the following foreseeable risks: the potential loss of confidentiality. No physical risks are involved with this study.

The benefits to participation are: None.

**V. COMPENSATION/COSTS:**

My participation in this study will involve no cost to me. I will not be compensated for my participation.

**VI. CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Any information learned and collected from this study in which I might be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed ONLY if I give permission. The investigator (s) will attempt to keep my personal information confidential. To help protect my confidentiality a pseudonym will be used throughout the transcribing of the interview and the audio interview will be kept in a locked file.

Only the investigator and members of the research team will have access to these records. If information learned from this study is published, I will not be identified by name. By signing this form, however, I allow the research study investigator to make my records available to the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and regulatory agencies as required to do so by law. Consenting to participate in this research also indicates my agreement that all information collected from me individually may be used by current and future researchers in such a fashion that my personal identity will be protected. Such use will include presentations at scientific or professional meetings, publishing in scientific journals, sharing anonymous information with other researchers for checking the accuracy of study findings and for future approved research that has the potential for improving human knowledge.

☐ I give permission to record my voice and use in scientific publications or presentations.

☐ I do not give permission to record use my voice and use in scientific publications or presentations.

**VII. CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:**

The principal investigator(s), Sedrick Smith, under the advising of Dr. Kimberly Moffitt, has offered to and has answered any and all questions regarding my participation in this research study. If I have any further questions, I can contact Sedrick Smith at 410-361-0693, [sedrick1@umbc.edu](mailto:sedrick1@umbc.edu) or Dr. Moffitt at 410-455-2376, [kmoffitt@umbc.edu](mailto:kmoffitt@umbc.edu).

If I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this research study, I can contact the Office of Research Protections and Compliance at (410) 455-2737 or [compliance@umbc.edu](mailto:compliance@umbc.edu). All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

***I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.***

**VIII. SIGNATURE FOR CONSENT**

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Printed Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix D:  
Study Participants

Pseudonym	School Pseudonym	Grade Levels	Years of Experience	BCPSS Graduate
1. Ms. Logan	Morris Brown Elementary/Middle	K-2	11 years	Yes
2. Mr. Baxter	Grambling Academy	High School Biology	9 years	Yes
3. Mr. Davis	Bethune-Cookman Academy	6-8 ELA	7 years	Yes
4. Ms. Mason	Cheney	10 and 12 ELA	15 years (12 in BCPSS)	No
5. Mr. Richardson	Prairie View Tech	9-11 Government	20 years (13 <sup>th</sup> in BCPSS)	Yes
6. Ms. Watson	Grambling Academy	6-8 Social Studies	4 years	Yes
7. Ms. Peterson	Cheney	9-10 ELA/Drama	9 years	No
8. Ms. Baines	Wilberforce Elementary/Middle	IEP Associate/Special Education/ Middle school Science	16 years	No
9. Ms. Roberts	Hampton/Vance	Counselor/ Elementary Teacher	12 years	No
10. Mr. Stafford	Bennett Middle	Science/ Ed Associate	3 years	Yes
11. Mr. Oxford	Benedict School	9-12 ELA	4 years	No
12. Ms. Pence	Fisk Elementary/Middle	K-5 Reading	5 years	Yes
13. Mr. Pickford	Bethune-Cookman Academy	6-8 Music	11.5 years	Yes

14. Ms. Rooney	Voorhees Technical Academy	Special education	5 years	Yes
15. Mr. Rashford	Norfolk Middle	6-8 Social Studies	16 years	No
16. Ms. Spicer	Newton/Lincoln Elementary Middle	ELA	4 years	Yes
17. Ms. Simmons	Voorhees Technical Academy	ELA	4 years	Yes
18. Ms. Tyson	Dillard High	9-12 ELA	14 years	No
19. Mr. Wilson	Clinton Charter	Special Education	20 years	No
20. Ms. Jones	Cheney High	9-12 Foreign Language	22 years	Yes

Appendix E:

List of additional Project Baltimore Segments on BCPSS Teachers 2017-2019

<b>Air Date</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Segment Title</b>
9/6/17	<b>Violence in BCPSS</b>	<b>One school, six students killed</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/one-school-six-students-killed">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/one-school-six-students-killed</a>
7/2/18		<b>Defense Attorney: “Thousands Out There Like Dawnta Harris”</b>  <a href="http://foxbaltimore.com/news/local/defense-attorney-thousands-out-there-like-dawnta-harris">http://foxbaltimore.com/news/local/defense-attorney-thousands-out-there-like-dawnta-harris</a>
8/27/18		<b>Critics: Federal Push to Improve School Discipline Has Backfired</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/critics-federal-push-to-improve-school-discipline-has-backfired">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/critics-federal-push-to-improve-school-discipline-has-backfired</a>
12/19/18		<b>Caught on Camera: City Schools Employee Fights Student</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/caught-on-camera-city-schools-employee-fights-student">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/caught-on-camera-city-schools-employee-fights-student</a>
6/5/17	<b>Policy Makers React to BCPSS stories</b>	<b>Mayor Pugh on city schools: We need to experiment</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/mayor-pugh-on-city-schools-we-need-to-experiment">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/mayor-pugh-on-city-schools-we-need-to-experiment</a>
11/13/17		<b>"That's outrageous": Gov. Hogan on 13 High Schools, Zero Math Proficiency</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/thats-outrageous-gov-hogan-on-13-high-schools-zero-math-proficiency">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/thats-outrageous-gov-hogan-on-13-high-schools-zero-math-proficiency</a>
1/9/18		<b>Hogan calls for new State IG Office, cites Project Baltimore</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/hogan-calls-for-new-state-ig-office-cites-project-baltimore">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/hogan-calls-for-new-state-ig-office-cites-project-baltimore</a>

2/11/19		<b>Take Two: Hogan and City Mom Push for School Accountability</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/take-two-hogan-and-city-mom-push-for-school-accountability">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/take-two-hogan-and-city-mom-push-for-school-accountability</a>
4/18/19		<b>"I felt insulted": Former Senator Reacts to Project Baltimore Report</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/i-felt-insulted-former-senator-reacts-to-project-baltimore-report-04-09-2019">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/i-felt-insulted-former-senator-reacts-to-project-baltimore-report-04-09-2019</a>
12/11/19		<b>Hogan on BCPS Document Shredding: "It's totally unacceptable"</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/hogan-on-bcps-document-shredding-its-totally-unacceptable">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/hogan-on-bcps-document-shredding-its-totally-unacceptable</a>
3/22/17	<b>Teacher Work Conditions</b>	<b>Baltimore City Public Schools: The budget deficit</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-city-public-schools-the-budget-deficit">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-city-public-schools-the-budget-deficit</a>
3/27/17		<b>Proposed Baltimore City school cuts will hurt where it counts most - the classroom</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/proposed-baltimore-city-school-cuts-will-hurt-where-it-counts-most-the-classroom">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/proposed-baltimore-city-school-cuts-will-hurt-where-it-counts-most-the-classroom</a>
8/14/17		<b>Unsafe in the classroom, teachers describe culture of fear in city school</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/project-baltimore-teachers-express-concerns-over-poor-school-conditions">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/project-baltimore-teachers-express-concerns-over-poor-school-conditions</a>
8/30/17		<b>City Teacher Calls for "Total Revolution"</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-teacher-calls-for-total-revolution">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-teacher-calls-for-total-revolution</a>
1/17/18		<b>Baltimore Schools Maintenance Nightmare: Project Baltimore Follows the Money</b>  <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-schools-maintenance-nightmare-project-baltimore-follows-the-money">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-schools-maintenance-nightmare-project-baltimore-follows-the-money</a>

10/4/17	Grading	<p><b>North Avenue Administrator: 70% of Baltimore City Schools Change Grades</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/north-avenue-administrator-70-of-baltimore-city-schools-change-grades">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/north-avenue-administrator-70-of-baltimore-city-schools-change-grades</a></p>
10/30/17		<p><b>Mother Slams City Schools for Passing Daughter</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/mother-slams-city-schools-for-passing-daughter">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/mother-slams-city-schools-for-passing-daughter</a></p>
12/4/17		<p><b>City Students Promoted Despite Failing Report Cards</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-students-promoted-despite-failing-report-cards">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-students-promoted-despite-failing-report-cards</a></p>
2/28/18		<p><b>City Teacher Tired of Being Blamed: “Where are your parents?”</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-teacher-tired-of-being-blamed-where-are-your-parents-03-01-2018">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-teacher-tired-of-being-blamed-where-are-your-parents-03-01-2018</a></p>
3/12/18		<p><b>City Schools Investigation confirms grades “rounded-up” to pass students</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-schools-investigation-confirms-grades-rounded-up-to-pass-students">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-schools-investigation-confirms-grades-rounded-up-to-pass-students</a></p>
11/19/18		<p><b>Half Credit for No Work, Local Grading Policy Under Fire</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/half-credit-for-no-work-local-grading-policy-under-fire">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/half-credit-for-no-work-local-grading-policy-under-fire</a></p>
1/30/19		<p><b>Momentum Grows to Scrap 0-100 Grade Scale</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/momentum-grows-to-scrap-0-100-grade-scale">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/momentum-grows-to-scrap-0-100-grade-scale</a></p>
9/18/19		<p><b>City Schools Declines Interview, Writes Scathing Letter</b></p> <p><a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-schools-declines-interview-writes-scathing-letter">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-schools-declines-interview-writes-scathing-letter</a></p>

12/6/17	<b>General BCPSS School Dysfunction</b>	<b>Family Demands Answers After Teacher Caught Sleeping</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/family-demands-answers-after-teacher-caught-sleeping-12-07-2017">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/family-demands-answers-after-teacher-caught-sleeping-12-07-2017</a>
1/31/18		<b>City School Parent: “The students are running the school”</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-school-parent-the-students-are-running-the-school">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-school-parent-the-students-are-running-the-school</a>
2/5/18		<b>Baltimore Mom Blames City Schools: “They Failed Me”</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-mom-blames-city-schools-they-failed-me">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-mom-blames-city-schools-they-failed-me</a>
3/28/18	<b>Teacher Pay</b>	<b>In City Schools, 44 Employees Earn More than Governor</b> <a href="http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/in-city-schools-44-employees-earn-more-than-governor">http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/in-city-schools-44-employees-earn-more-than-governor</a>
4/30/18		<b>Cost of a Good Teacher: 131 City Teachers Make \$100k</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/cost-of-a-good-teacher-131-city-teachers-make-100k">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/cost-of-a-good-teacher-131-city-teachers-make-100k</a>
5/21/18		<b>City Teacher Earns \$63k to Teach One Class of Five Students</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-teacher-earns-63k-to-teach-one-class-of-five-students">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-teacher-earns-63k-to-teach-one-class-of-five-students</a>
8/22/18	<b>BCPSS Sued by Project Baltimore</b>	<b>Judge Orders City Schools to Provide More Information in Public Records Case</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/judge-orders-city-schools-to-provide-more-information-in-public-records-case">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/judge-orders-city-schools-to-provide-more-information-in-public-records-case</a>
3/12/19		<b>Judge Orders City Schools to Release Everything/Pay \$122K for Withholding Public Docs</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/judge-orders-city-schools-to-release-everythingpay-122k-for-withholding-public-docs">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/judge-orders-city-schools-to-release-everythingpay-122k-for-withholding-public-docs</a>



4/17/19		<b>43 Days Later, City Schools Has Yet To Release Court-Ordered Documents</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/43-days-later-city-schools-has-yet-to-release-court-ordered-documents">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/43-days-later-city-schools-has-yet-to-release-court-ordered-documents</a>
3/2/2020		<b>City Schools Fails to Meet Court Deadline in Fox45 Lawsuit</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-schools-fails-to-meet-court-deadline-in-fox45-lawsuit">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/city-schools-fails-to-meet-court-deadline-in-fox45-lawsuit</a>
2/21/18	Other	<b>Baltimore City Head Start Earns State's Highest Rating</b> <a href="http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-city-head-start-earns-states-highest-rating">http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-city-head-start-earns-states-highest-rating</a>
3/26/18		<b>Water Bill Turmoil Hits City Schools</b> <a href="https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/water-bill-turmoil-hits-city-schools">https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/water-bill-turmoil-hits-city-schools</a>
5/8/18		<b>"The Only Chance Program"   Dropouts Earn Diplomas at Freestate</b> <a href="http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/the-only-chance-program-dropouts-earn-diplomas-at-freestate">http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/the-only-chance-program-dropouts-earn-diplomas-at-freestate</a>
5/30/18		<b>Baltimore City Student Publishes Book at Age 9</b> <a href="http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-city-student-publishes-book-at-age-9">http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-city-student-publishes-book-at-age-9</a>

## References

- Acham, C. (2004). *Revolution televised: Prime time and the struggle for Black power*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Adegbola, O., Skarda-Mitchell, J., & Gearhart, S. (2018). Everything's negative about Nigeria: A study of US media reporting on Nigeria. *Global Media and Communication*, 14(1), 47-63.
- Adichie, C. N. (2009). *Chimamanda Adichie: The danger of a single story*. TED.
- Baldwin, J. (1963). A talk to teachers. *Child development and learning*, 7-12.
- Baltimore City Public Schools. (2018). Districtwide Profile. Baltimore, MD: Retrieved from <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/8048/999-DistrictProfile.pdf>
- Baker-Bell, A., Paris, D., & Jackson, D. (2017). Learning Black language matters: Humanizing research as culturally sustaining pedagogy. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 10(4), 360-377.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Bauer, D. (1998). Indecent proposals: Teachers in the movies. *College English*, 60(3), 301-317.
- Bell, D. (1980). Brown v. board of education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(1), 518-533.
- Bell, D. (1992) *Faces at the bottom of the well: the permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bell, D. (2004). *Silent covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the unfulfilled hopes for racial reform*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Bell, S. (1998). Dangerous morals: Hollywood puts a happy face on urban education. *Radical Teacher*, 54 (1), 23-30.
- Bell-Jordan, K. (2008). Black. White. and a survivor of the real world: Constructions of race on reality TV. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25(4), 353-372.
- Bergin, D., & Cooks, H. (2002). High school students of color talk about accusations of “acting white”. *The Urban Review*, 34(2), 113-134.
- Berliner, D., & Biddle, B. (1996). The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public schools. *Nassp Bulletin*, 80(576), 119-121.
- Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555–582.
- Bodenhausen, G., Schwarz, N., Bless, H., & Wänke, M. (1995). Effects of atypical exemplars on racial beliefs: Enlightened racism or generalized appraisals? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31(1), 48-63.
- Bogle, D. (2013). *Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: An interpretive history of Blacks in American films*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Bosso, D. (2017). Teacher morale, motivation and professional identity: Insight for educational policymakers from state teachers of the year. Teacher Researcher Policy Paper Series. *National Network of State Teachers of the Year*.
- Brown, K. & Kraehe, A. (2011). Sociocultural knowledge and visual re(-)presentations of black masculinity and community: Reading “The Wire” for critical multicultural teacher education. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 14(1), 73 – 89.
- Bryan, N., & Ford, D. (2014). Recruiting and retaining Black male teachers in gifted

- education. *Gifted Child Today*, 37(3), 156-161.
- Bulman, R. (2002). Teachers in the 'hood: Hollywood's middle-class fantasy. *The Urban Review*, 34(3), 251-276.
- Campbell, C. (1995). *Race, myth and the news*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Cannella, G., & Lincoln, Y. (2007). Predatory vs. dialogic ethics: Constructing an illusion or ethical practice as the core of research methods. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(3), 315-335.
- Carspecken, P. F., & Carspecken, F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. Psychology Press.
- Catalano, T., & Gatti, L. (2017). Representing teachers as criminals in the news: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of the Atlanta schools' "Cheating Scandal". *Social Semiotics*, 27(1), 59-80.
- Chaffee, S., & Kanihan, S. (1997). Learning about politics from the mass media. *Political communication*, 14(4), 421-430.
- Cohen, J. (2010). Teachers in the news: a critical analysis of one US newspaper's discourse on education, 2006–2007. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 31(1), 105-119.
- Conner, J., & Rosen, S. (2013). How students are leading us: Youth organizing and the fight for public education in Philadelphia. *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, 10(1), n1.
- Cook, D., & Dixon, A. (2013). Writing critical race theory and method: A composite counterstory on the experiences of Black teachers in New Orleans post-Katrina. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(10), 1238-1258.
- Cottle, S. (2009). Global crises in the news: Staging new wars, disasters and climate change.

*International Journal of Communication*, 3(1), 494–516.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2018). Beyond racism and misogyny: Black feminism and 2 Live Crew. In M.J. Matsuda, C.R. Lawrence, R. Delgado & K.W. Crenshaw (Eds.), *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the First Amendment*, (pp. 111-132). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G. & Thomas, K. (Eds.) (1995) *Critical race theory: the key writings that formed the movement*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Dalton, M. (1995). The Hollywood curriculum: who is the 'good' teacher?. *Curriculum Studies*, 3(1), 23-44.

DeCuir, J., & Dixson, A. (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(5), 26-31.

Delgado, R. (1990). When a story is just a story: Does voice really matter? *Virginia Law Review*, 76(1), 95-111.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Denby, D. (1999, May 31). High school confidential: Notes on teen movies. *New Yorker*, pp. 94–98.

- Dixson, A., & Rousseau, C. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical race theory in education ten years later. *Race ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 7-27.
- Druckman, J. (2001). The implications of framing effects for citizen competence. *Political Behavior*. 23(3): 225–56.
- Dumas, M. (2013). ‘Waiting for Superman’ to save black people: racial representation and the official antiracism of neoliberal school reform. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 34(4), 531-547.
- Duncan, G. (2002). Beyond love: A critical race ethnography of the schooling of adolescent Black males. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 131-143.
- Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Entman, R., & Rojecki, A. (2001). *The black image in the white mind: Media and race in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Eveland Jr, W., & Shah, D. (2003). The impact of individual and interpersonal factors on perceived news media bias. *Political Psychology*, 24(1), 101-117.
- Fairclough, A. (2004). The costs of Brown: Black teachers and school integration. *The Journal of American History*, 91(1), 43-55.
- Fairhurst, G., & Sarr, R. (1996). *The art of framing*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fernández, L. (2002). Telling stories about school: Using critical race and Latino critical theories to document Latina/Latino education and resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 45-65.
- Floyd, C. (1996). Achieving despite the odds: A study of resilience among a group of African American high school seniors. *Journal of Negro Education*, 65(2), 181-189.

- Foster, M. (1990). The politics of race: Through the eyes of African-American teachers. *Journal of education*, 172(3), 123-141.
- Foster, M. (1995). African-American teachers and culturally relevant pedagogy. In J. A. Banks & C.A.M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 570-581). New York: Macmillan.
- Foster, M. (1997). *Black teachers on teaching*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Fung, B. (2018, April 3). The nation's biggest conservative broadcaster is putting words in its anchors' mouths. Critics blame the FCC. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/04/03/the-nations-biggest-conservative-broadcaster-is-putting-words-in-its-anchors-mouths-critics-blame-the-fcc/>
- García, J. (2015). Learning from bad teachers: The neoliberal agenda for education in the popular media. *Critical Education*, 6(13). Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/184935>
- Gerstl-Pepin, C. I. (2002). Media (mis) representations of education in the 2000 presidential election. *Educational policy*, 16(1), 37-55.
- Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2007). Introduction to the special issue on the media, democracy, and the politics of education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(1), 1-9.
- Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2015). Popular media portrayals of inequity and school reform in "The Wire" and "Waiting for Superman". *Peabody Journal of Education*, 90(5), 691-710.
- Gillborn, D. (2013). The policy of inequity: Using CRT to unmask White supremacy in

- educational policy. In M. Lynn & A. Dixon (Eds.), *The handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 129-139). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gilliam Jr, F., & Iyengar, S. (2000). Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. *American Journal of Political Science*, 560-573.
- Giroux, H. (2004). Cultural studies, public pedagogy, and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Communication and critical/cultural studies*, 1(1), 59-79.
- Goldstein, R. (2011). Imaging the frame: Media representations of teachers, their unions, NCLB, and education reform. *Educational Policy*, 25(4), 543-576.
- Gosling, M. (1999, June 3). The role of television with regard to racial stereotypes. Ethics of Development in a Global Environment (EDGE). Retrieved from [https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty\\_prejudice/mediarace/role.htm](https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty_prejudice/mediarace/role.htm)
- Grant, P. (2002). Using popular films to challenge preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching in urban schools. *Urban education*, 37(1), 77-95.
- Greenberg, B., Mastro, D., & Brand, J. (2002). Minorities and the mass media: Television into the 21st century. *Media effects: Advances in theory and research*, 333-351.
- Gross, B., & Jochim, A. (2016). Incomplete reform in Baltimore: a shift in authority to school leaders falls short. *Education Next*, 16(4), 26-36.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Hall, S. (1973). Encoding and decoding in the television discourse. Stenciled occasional paper.



- University of Birmingham. Retrieved from  
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP07.pdf>
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language*. London: Hutchinson.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.
- Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. (2009). New evidence about Brown v. Board of Education: The complex effects of school racial composition on achievement. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 27(3), 349-383.
- Harcum, C., Smart-Smith, N., & Smith, S. (2019). Opening the door for all students. *Educational Leadership*, 76 (7). Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr19/vol76/num07/Opening-the-Door-for-All-Students.aspx>
- Harper, S. (2009). Niggers no more: A critical race counternarrative on Black male student achievement at predominantly White colleges and universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 697-712.
- Harris, C. (1995). Whiteness as property. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller and K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory: Key writings that formed the movement*, (pp.276–291). New York, NY: The New Press.
- Hayward, C. (2009). Urban space and American political development: Identity, interest, action. *The City in American Political Development*. New York: Routledge, 141-153.
- Higgins-Dobney, C. & Sussman, G. (2013). The growth of TV news, the demise of the journalism profession. *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(7), 847-863.

- Hollinger, D. (2008). Obama, the instability of color lines, and the promise of a post-ethnic future. *Callaloo*, 31(4), 1033-1037.
- hooks, b. (1990). Marginality as a site of resistance. In R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T. T. Minh-ha, & C. West (Eds.), *Out there: Marginalization and contemporary cultures* (pp. 341–344). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Howard, T. (2001). Telling their side of the story: African-American students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. *The Urban Review*, 33(2), 131-149.
- Howard, T. (2008). Who really cares? The disenfranchisement of African-American males in pre-K-12 schools: A critical race theory perspective. *Teachers College Record*, 110(5), 954-985.
- Hudson, M., & Holmes, B. (1994). Missing teachers, impaired communities: The unanticipated consequences of Brown v. Board of Education on the African American teaching force at the precollegiate level. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 63(3), 388-393.
- Hynes, J. (2006, September 20). Educational TV. *Salon.com*. Retrieved from [http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2006/09/20/the\\_wire/index.html](http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2006/09/20/the_wire/index.html)
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Jencks, C., & Phillips, M. (2011). The black–white test score gap: An introduction. In C. Jencks & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black–White test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.
- Jolls, T., & Wilson, C. (2014). The core concepts: Fundamental to media literacy yesterday, today and tomorrow. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 6(2), 68-78.
- Kanpol, B. (1992). *Towards a theory and practice of teacher cultural politics: Continuing the*

- postmodern debate*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Kaplan, G. (1990). TV's version of education (And what to do about it). *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(5), K1-K12.
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 26(3), 369-386.
- Keroes, J. (1999). *Tales out of school: Gender, longing, and the teacher in fiction and film*. SIU Press.
- Kim, J. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of higher education*, 6(5), 26-41.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47–68.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Lewis, C. & Toldson, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Black male teachers: Diversifying the United States' teacher workforce*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Lewis, C. (2006). African-American male teachers in public schools: An examination of three urban school districts. *Teachers College Record*, 108(2), 224-245.

- Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lincoln, Y. (1993). I and thou: Method, voice, and roles in research with the silenced. In D. McLaughlin & W. Tierney (Eds.), *Naming silenced lives* (pp. 29-47). Boston, MA: Routledge.
- Littlemore, J. (2015). *Metonymy: Hidden shortcuts in language, thought and communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Livingstone, S., & Das, R. (2013) The end of audiences? Theoretical echoes of reception amidst the uncertainties of use. In J. Hartley, J. Burgess and A. Bruns (Eds.) *Blackwell Companion to New Media Dynamics* (pp.104-121). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lutz, A. (2012, June 14). These 6 corporations control 90% of the media in America. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/these-6-corporations-control-90-of-the-media-in-america-2012-6>
- Lynn, M. (2002). Critical race theory and the perspectives of Black men teachers in the Los Angeles public schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 119-130.
- Maciver, M. & Vaughn III, E. (2007). "But How Long Will They Stay?" Alternative certification and new teacher retention in an urban district. *ERS Spectrum*, 25(2), 33-44.
- Madison, D. S. (2005). Introduction to critical ethnography: Theory and method. *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics & performance*, 1-16.
- Mallach, A. (2018). Millennials, immigrants, and the shrinking middle class. In *The Divided City* (pp. 33-48). Island Press, Washington, DC.
- Mastro, D. & Tropp, L. (2004). The effects of interracial contact, attitudes, and

stereotypical portrayals on evaluations of Black television sitcom characters.

*Communication Research Reports*, 21, 119-129.

Matsuda, M., Lawrence, C., Delgado, R. & Crenshaw, K. (1993) *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the first amendment*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Maurer, E. (2017, August 17). Why are so many teachers women? *Womenshistory.org*.

Retrieved from <https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/why-are-so-many-teachers-women>

McKanders, K. (2009). Black and brown coalition building during the post-racial Obama era. *Saint Louis University Public Law Review*, 29(2), 473-499.

Mears, R. (2010, June). The Overlap of constructivism and critical media literacy: The cognitive processes of learning with technology. In *Ed Media: World Conference on Educational Media and Technology* (pp. 1384-1388). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

Meier, K. (1984). Teachers, students, and discrimination: The policy impact of Black representation. *The Journal of Politics*, 46(1), 252-263.

Messaris, P., & Abraham, L. (2001). The role of images in framing news stories. In *Framing public life* (pp. 231-242). Routledge.

Mertens, D. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Mendez, L. & Knoff, H. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A

demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district.

*Education and Treatment of Children*, 26(1), 30-51

Milner IV, H. (2006). The promise of Black teachers' success with Black students. *Educational Foundations*, 20 (1), 89-104.

Milner IV, H. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational researcher*, 36(7), 388-400.

Milner IV, H., & Howard, T. (2004). Black teachers, Black students, Black communities and *Brown*: Perspectives and insights from experts. *Journal of Negro Education*, 73(3), 285-297.

Moffitt, K., & Harris, H. (2014). Of negation, princesses, beauty, and work: Black mothers reflect on Disney's The Princess and the Frog. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 25(1), 56-76.

Monroe, C. (2005). Why are "bad boys" always Black?: Causes of disproportionality in school discipline and recommendations for change. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 79(1), 45-50.

Monroe, C., & Obidah, J. (2004). The influence of cultural synchronization on a teacher's perceptions of disruption: A case study of an African-American middle-school classroom. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(3), 256-268.

Morgan, M., Shanahan, J. and Signorielli, N. (2009) Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. In J. Bryant and M. Oliver (Eds.) *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. New York: Routledge, pp.34-49.

Morgan, M. & Shanahan, J. (2010). The State of Cultivation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic*  
186

*Media*, 54(2), 337 – 355

Morris, E., & Perry, B. (2016). The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement. *Social Problems*, 63(1), 68-86.

Morris, J. (2001). Forgotten voices of Black educators: Critical race perspectives on the implementation of a desegregation plan. *Educational Policy*, 15(4), 575-600.

Mutz, D., & Nir, L. (2010). Not necessarily the news: Does fictional television influence real-world policy preferences? *Mass Communication and Society*, 13(2), 196-217.

National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter (2018). *2018 Emmy Award Nominations and Recipients*. Available at:  
<https://www.capitalemmys.tv/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/61st-Capital-Emmy-Awards-Nominations-and-Emmy-Recipients.pdf>

Nelson, C. (2009). Racial paradox and eclipse: Obama as a balm for what ails us. *Denver University Law Review*, 86(1), 743–782.

Nielsen. (2014). *The Total Audience Report: Q4 2014*. Available at:  
<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2015/the-total-audience-report-q4-2014.html>

Okwu, M. (1997, July 25). Critics say sitcoms reviving racial stereotypes. *CNN.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/SHOWBIZ/9707/25/tv.sitcoms/index.html>

Orbe, M. (2008). Representations of race in reality TV: Watch and discuss. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25(4), 345-352.

Palinkas, L., Horwitz, S., Green, C., Wisdom, J., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015).

- Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research*, 42(5), 533-544.
- Papageorge, N., Gershenson, S., & Kang, K.. (2018). *Teacher expectations matter* (Working paper No. 25255). Retrieved from National Bureau of Economic Research website <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25255>
- Papst, C. (2018, November 19). Half credit for no work, local grading policy under fire. *Fox 45 News*. Retrieved from <https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/half-credit-for-no-work-local-grading-policy-under-fire>
- Paris, D., & Winn, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Peffley, M., Avery, J., & Glass, J. (2001, April). Public perceptions of bias in the news media: Taking a closer look at the hostile media phenomenon. *Paper presented at the 2001 Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association*. Chicago, IL.
- Peffley, M., Hurwitz, J., & Sniderman, P. (1997). Racial stereotypes and whites' political views of blacks in the context of welfare and crime. *American Journal of Political Science*, 30-60.
- Poindexter, P., Smith, L., & Heider, D. (2003). Race and ethnicity in local television news: Framing, story assignments, and source selections. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47(4), 524-536.
- Pope, A. (2016). Musical artists capitalizing on hybrid identities: A case study of Drake the authentic Black Canadian rapper. *Stream: Culture/Politics/Technology*, 9(1), 3.



- Punyanunt-Carter, N. (2008). The perceived realism of African-American portrayals on television. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 19(3), 241- 257.
- Reyes, X., & Rios, D. (2003). Imaging teachers: In fact and in the mass media. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 2(1), 3-11.
- Reynolds, R. (2010). " They think you're lazy," and other messages Black parents send their Black sons: An exploration of critical race theory in the examination of educational outcomes for Black males. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 1(2), 144-163.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. (2013). *Read me first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Washington DC: Sage Publications.
- Richman, T. (2018, August 31). Baltimore schools stepping up efforts to recruit, retain more Black teachers. *The Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved from <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/k-12/bs-md-ci-black-teachers-20180822-story.html>
- Richman, T. (2018, June 1). Big success for Baltimore polytechnic institute's senior class. *The Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved from <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/bs-md-ci-poly-graduation-20180601-story.html>
- Rosenbloom, S., & Way, N. (2004). Experiences of discrimination among African-American, Asian-American, and Latino adolescents in an urban high school. *Youth & Society*, 35(4), 420-451.
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*. London. Sage.

- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in nursing & health*, 23(4), 334-340.
- San Pedro, T., & Kinloch, V. (2017). Toward projects in humanization: Research on co-creating and sustaining dialogic relationships. *American educational research journal*, 54(1\_suppl), 373S-394S.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
- Scull, W., & Peltier, G. (2007). Star power and the schools: Studying popular films' portrayal of educators. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 81(1), 13-17.
- Shabazz, M. (1965). Message to the grass roots. *Malcolm X speaks: Selected speeches and statements*, 3-17.
- Shannon, P., & Crawford, P. (1998). Summers off: Representations of teachers' work and other discontents. *Language Arts*, 75(4), 255-264.
- Shaw, M. (2005). *The new western way of war: Risk-transfer war and its crisis in Iraq*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Shine, K. (2017). 'Everything is negative': Schoolteachers' perceptions of news coverage of education. *Journalism*, doi:10.1177/1464884917743827
- Shine, K., & O'Donoghue, T. (2013). Teacher representation in news reporting on standardized testing: A case study from Western Australia. *Educational Studies*, 39(4), 385-398.
- Signorielli, N. & Kahlenberg, S. (2001) Television's world of work in the nineties. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 45: 4–22.

- Smith, S. (2019). Purple visions of blackness: Prince's expansion of the depictions of Black experiences through his music videos. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 30(2), 180-195.
- Smith, W. (2017). Picturing Obama: Race, high school students and a critical methodology of the visual. *Critical Questions in Education*, 8(2), 178-192.
- Solorzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24 (1), 5-19.
- Solórzano, D. (1998) Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano Scholars, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 121–136.
- Solórzano, D. , & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory, marginality, and the experience of students of color in higher education. In C. Torres & T. Mitchell (Eds.), *Sociology of education: Emerging perspectives* (pp. 211-224). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.
- Sleeter, C., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2003). Critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and anti-racist education: Implications for multicultural education. In J. Banks & C. Banks (Eds.), *The handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd Ed.) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Spradley, J. (1987). *The ethnographic interview*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Spencer, S. (2011). *Visual research methods in the social sciences: Awakening visions*. New York, 191

NY: Routledge.

Strauss, V. (2017, April 14). Minority teachers in U.S. more than doubled over 25 years — but still fewer than 20 percent of educators, study shows. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/04/14/minority-teachers-in-u-s-more-than-doubled-over-25-years-but-still-fewer-than-20-percent-of-educators-study-shows/>

Strauss, V. (2019, February 12). Donald Trump Jr.: 'You don't have to be indoctrinated by these loser teachers that are trying to sell you on socialism'. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/02/12/donald-trump-jr-you-dont-have-be-indoctrinated-by-these-loser-teachers-that-are-trying-sell-you-socialism/?utm\\_term=.e8c76646bd75](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/02/12/donald-trump-jr-you-dont-have-be-indoctrinated-by-these-loser-teachers-that-are-trying-sell-you-socialism/?utm_term=.e8c76646bd75)

Swetnam, L. A. (1992). Media distortion of the teacher image. *The Clearing House*, 66(1), 30-32.

Tate IV, W. (1997). Chapter 4: Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of research in education*, 22(1), 195-247.

Teachers Democracy Project (2018, November 29). Decline in black teachers. *Teachers Democracy Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.tdpbaltimore.org/teachers/>

Teranishi, R. (2002) Asian Pacific Americans and critical race theory: an examination of school racial climate, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 144–154.

Tesler, M., & Sears, D. (2010). *Obama's race: The 2008 election and the dream of a post-racial America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tillman, L. (2002). Culturally sensitive research approaches: An African-American perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 31(9), 3-12.

- Tillman, L., & Trier, J. (2007). Boston Public as public pedagogy: Implications for teacher preparation and school leadership. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(1), 121-149.
- Townsend, B. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African-American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional children*, 66(3), 381-391.
- Trier, J. (2005). 'Sordid Fantasies': reading popular 'inner-city' school films as racialized texts with pre-service teachers. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(2), 171-189.
- Trier, J. (2010). Representations of education in HBO's *The Wire*, season 4. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 179-200.
- U.S. Department of Education/ Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Performance Information Management Service. (2012). *Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility Data in EDFacts: A White Paper on Current Status and Potential Changes*, Washington, DC: Lee Hoffman
- U.S. Department of Education/ Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2016). *The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce*. Washington, DC: John King.
- Van Dijk, T. (1995). Power and the news media. *Political communication and action*, 6(1), 9-36.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vega, D., Moore III, J., & Miranda, A. (2015). In their own words: Perceived barriers to achievement by African-American and Latino high school students. *American Secondary Education*, 43(3), 36.

Villegas, A., & Irvine, J. (2010). Diversifying the teaching force: An examination of major arguments. *The Urban Review*, 42(3), 175-192.

Wallace, M. (1997). Guided by an unseen hand: The mass media and education policy. *Power and responsibility in education: Debate and diversity*, 147-155.

WBFF FOX45 Baltimore. *FOX45 Project Baltimore – Governor Hogan recognizes efforts of project Baltimore investigations* [Video File].

(2018, January 24). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agbf-LQn21k>

WBFF FOX45 Baltimore. *FOX45 Project Baltimore Investigation of City Schools* [Video File].

(2017, September 11). Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHyigaLmkKM>

Weaver, T. (2017). Urban crisis: The genealogy of a concept. *Urban Studies*, 54(9), 2039-2055.

Weems, L. (2003). Representations of substitute teachers and the paradoxes of professionalism. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54(3), 254-265.

West, C. (2004). *Democracy matters: Winning the fight against imperialism*. London: Penguin.

Williams, M. (2017). "Ain't I a Teacher?" A television analysis of Black male media-teachers on the Steve Harvey show. *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men*, 5(2), 45-70.

WMAR. (2018, May 7). Hundreds of teachers are quitting Baltimore City public schools.

Retrieved from <https://www.wmar2news.com/longform/hundreds-of-teachers-are-quitting-at-baltimore-city-public-schools>.

Wolcott, H. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. London. Sage.

Wolverton, T. (2018, October 21). The future is bright for Netflix and bleak for basic cable —

these 3 charts show why. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from

<https://www.businessinsider.com/cowen-survey-shows-netflix-topping-basic-cable-in-popularity-2018-10>

Yin, R. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods). *London and Singapore: Sage*.

Yosso, T. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 69-91.

Zamudio, M., Russell, C., Rios, F., & Bridgeman, J. (2011). *Critical race theory matters: Education and ideology*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Zhang, C. (2019, April 18). Baltimore sees biggest population loss in single year since 2001, census estimates show. *The Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved from <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-census-estimate-population-20190416-story.html>

