



2-2009

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Melanie S. Hinojosa

Amanda Moras

*Sacred Heart University*, [morasa@sacredheart.edu](mailto:morasa@sacredheart.edu)

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## Recommended Citation

Hinojosa, Melanie Sberna and Amanda Moras. "Challenging Colorblind Education: A Descriptive Analysis of Teacher Racial Attitudes." *Research and Practice in Social Sciences* (2009) 4:2, 27-45.

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## **Challenging Colorblind Education: A Descriptive Analysis of Teacher Racial Attitudes**

**Melanie Sberna Hinojosa \***

*Medical College of Wisconsin*

**Amanda B. Moras \*\***

*University of Connecticut*

### **Abstract**

*Research suggests that many public school teachers are not prepared to deal with the growing number of diverse students in the schools. Questions are raised by researchers about the ability of the current teaching force to adequately meet the needs of the growing number of students of Color in the schools. Small-scale qualitative studies find that many White teachers feel unsure of their ability to teach students of Color, tend to hold stereotypical beliefs about urban students and/ or students of Color, and tend to use cultural deficiency models for explaining their academic performance. To date, no quantitative studies have attempted to systematically measure the racial attitudes of teachers as a group in the United States. This paper provides a descriptive analysis of White teachers' racial attitudes with an attempt to understand how these attitudes differ from the attitudes of the general public. Results indicate that generally teachers have racial attitudes that are similar to the general public, however teachers hold less tolerant attitudes when it comes to measures of equal treatment and social distance compared to non-teachers.*

( \* Melanie Sberna Hinojosa (Assistant Professor), Family and Community Medicine, Medical College of Wisconsin, 8701 Watertown Plank Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53226, E-mail: [mhinojosa@mcw.edu](mailto:mhinojosa@mcw.edu)

\*\* Amanda B. Moras (Assistant Professor in Residence), Department of Sociology, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-2068, Email: [amanda.moras@uconn.edu](mailto:amanda.moras@uconn.edu))

### **Introduction**

Fifty years after *Brown vs. Board of Education* desegregated schools in an attempt to equalize the social inequities facing African American students, they continue to be underprivileged compared to their White counterparts in what remain largely segregated schools (Orfield 2001). Presently, students of Color, with the exception of some Asian groups, are at a distinct disadvantage. African American and Latino students are more likely to drop out of school, obtain poor grades, occupy non-academic tracks, and score lower on standardized tests compared to White students (U.S. Department of Education 2001).

Today close to 90 percent of the teaching force is White while more than 30 percent of public schools are composed of children of Color (Bess & Manzo 2003; Howard 2003). Largely homogeneous teaching forces serve a base of students with a variety of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, racial and socioeconomic differences. Research suggests that many teachers are not prepared to deal with these growing groups of diverse students. Questions are raised by researchers about the ability of the current teaching force to adequately meet the needs of the growing number of students of Color in the schools. Recent qualitative studies examine White teachers (both pre-service and active teachers) and their attitudes toward students of Color (Ahlquist 1991; Bollin and Finkel 1995; Henze, Lucas and Scott 1998; King 2000; Lawrence 1997; McIntyre 1997; Sleeter 1992). These and other studies reveal that many White teachers feel unsure of their ability to teach students of Color (Weiner 1990), tend to hold stereotypical beliefs about urban students and/ or students of Color (Adams 1995), and tend to use cultural deficiency models for explaining their academic performance (Davis 1995; Avery & Walker 1993).

To date, no quantitative studies have attempted to systematically measure the racial attitudes of teachers as a group in the United States. This paper provides a descriptive analysis of White teachers' racial attitudes with an attempt to understand how these attitudes differ from those of the general public. How the public collectively views race is an important phenomenon and ultimately becomes a driving force when it comes time to vote on public policy. The racist stereotypes about African Americans are pervasive. This analysis will give an indication of the

degree to which teachers in the United States have internalized such stereotypes. The racial attitudes of the general public are well known. These types of attitudes have been measured by national sample of the adult population and documented year after year by social scientists and researchers (see Schuman et al. 1997). The racial attitudes of teachers, however, are less well known and have not been clearly documented by researchers. This analysis will provide insight into what attitudes White teachers do hold and whether those attitudes differ from those of the general public. Gaining an understanding of White teachers' racial attitudes is an important precursor to understanding how they may then affect student social and academic outcomes.

### **The Role of Teacher Racial Attitudes in the Schools**

In the school system, the teacher plays a very important role in the success of students. Teachers determine the students' grades, academic track, and their behavioral evaluations, thus arguably playing a central role in the students' ultimate success (or failure) in school. They spend large amounts of time with their students and continuously monitor and observe student learning and behavior.

When examining race as a factor in differential treatment of students, there is evidence that African American students are subject to this differential treatment. African American students are treated less positively by teachers, are less likely to be labeled "gifted", and are subjected to more discrimination from teachers than White students (McCormick and Noriega 1986). In the primary grades, teachers rate Black children as having more behavior problems and fewer academic competencies in the first 2 years of school (Sbarra and Pianta 2001). In the secondary grades, teachers do not expect Black students to perform as well academically as their White counterparts, and teachers hold higher academic expectations in general of White students (Dusek and Joseph 1983; McCormick & Noriega 1986). Black students are also rated as more appropriate for referral to school psychologists, counselors, social workers, or hospital for evaluation than White students (Bahr et. al. 1993).

Studies demonstrate that when teachers hold low academic expectations of particular students, they tend also to treat those students (consciously or unconsciously) in a negative way. Negative

treatment of students can materialize as seating the student farther away from the teacher, engaging in less verbal interaction, and in some cases belittlement by the teacher (McCormick and Noriega 1986). When teachers believe a student to be bright, their interactions also reflect this belief. Teachers, when interacting with “bright” students, smile and nod more often, offer more praise, make more eye contact, spend more classroom time with and pay more attention to these students when compared to students they believe are not as bright (regardless of the student’s actual level of intelligence) (Rosenthal 1974).

A recent survey of one school district demonstrates that teachers view Black students differently than they do White students. Teachers believed that their Black students came from ‘bad’ home environments, in which their parents do not value education. White high school teachers felt Black students were intimidating and admitted to being fearful of their Black students. Other teachers confessed that they often tried not to speak to Black students, or avoided eye contact with Black students. Some even admitted that they did not bother learning the names of African American students unless they were planning on writing a disciplinary note about their behavior (see Kailin 1999).

Other studies illustrate that teacher behavior toward students has the potential to increase or decrease students’ level of academic and school engagement (Tucker 2002) and teacher perception of students has an effect on the behavior and punishment outcomes of students (McCarthy and Hoge 1987). The level of involvement a teacher has with a student influences not only their school engagement and academic performance, but influences how students feel about their own behavioral and academic abilities (Skinner and Belmont 1993).

African American students report receiving less support from teachers than their White counterparts and report less interaction and praise from their teachers (Tucker 2002). African American students feel that their teachers have lower expectations for their academic success and they fail to show concern for their success in school (Miron and Lauria 1998). Students of Color report feeling “picked on” or “singled out” for disciplinary practices because of their race/ethnicity (Phelan, Yu and Davidson 1994). These students also feel that teachers’ lowered

academic expectations are based on cultural, linguistic, and ethnic factors rather than personal characteristics. In addition, perceived teacher bias by students of Color is correlated with these students' dropout rates (Wayman 2002).

Teacher expectations can have detrimental effects on those students whom they recognize as low achievers or as behavior problems. Students who feel their teachers have low expectations of them are "more likely to become passive spectators rather than active participants in the educational process" (McCormick and Noriega 1986). This internalization of teacher expectations and reaction to teacher behaviors leads "low achievers" to disengage from school. As such, teachers become actively involved in the engagement and attachment of Black and White students differentially.

Popular thinking suggests that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and expertise to be unbiased and fair when dealing with their students. The literature however, suggests that teachers, though equipped with college educations, generally are not exposed to collegiate training in topics on race, inequality, or multiculturalism (Sleeter 2001). In short, pre-service teachers (teachers in training) have little knowledge of or experience with students of different races. As such they tend to hold stereotypical beliefs about urban students, have little awareness of societal racism and discrimination, and are unsure of their ability to teach minority students (Sleeter 2001).

### **Theorizing Racial Attitudes**

The manifestations of racial prejudice today have evolved since the days of slavery and the time of Jim Crow. While overt racism may appear to be in decline, a new covert racism has filled its place. Whites surveyed today show upward trends in disagreement with negative stereotypes of African Americans and agreement with the principle of both residential and school integration over the last twenty years ago (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo & Krysan 1997). Despite this positive imagery, African Americans continue to be disadvantaged in most, if not all, areas of society in comparison to Whites. Bobo (1997) illustrates that the structural disadvantage of Blacks in America includes higher unemployment and underemployment rates, lower educational levels, higher rates of living in urban centers, lower earnings, higher likelihood of hitting a glass ceiling,

lower wealth accumulation (12 times lower than Whites), and less chance to secure a mortgage loan. All of these things are deeply suggestive of an overt, institutionalized racial system.

The legacy of racial prejudice continues and though many Whites “reject, at least on a public or conscious level, a blatantly biological based racism, they still hold without misgiving many of the negative conceptions and images of Black men and women that have long been associated with a biological racism accenting ‘inferior races’” (Feagin, 2000: 106). Contemporary race theorists, with some variation, speak of the same theme. Racism did not disappear after the Civil Rights Movement. Instead, the face of racism has changed. Rather than overt practices such as separate bathrooms and drinking fountains, covert practices such individualism and a liberal discourse have replaced them. Hostility need not be involved in this new form of racism. For example, individuals may say that they agree with residential integration, but also agree that most African Americans just cannot afford to live where Whites live (Bonilla-Silva 2001).

Many different contemporary race theorists identify this phenomenon and theorize about how race works in society today. Bobo (1997) believes that as a society, the United States has moved away from the overt racism of the Jim Crow era to a system of what he calls *laissez-faire* racism. “The institutionalized racial inequalities created by the long era of slavery followed by Jim Crow racism are now popularly accepted and condoned under a modern free market or *laissez-faire* racist ideology” (1997:16). *Laissez-faire* racism operates in society through the negative stereotyping of Blacks, through blaming Blacks for their position in society, and through resistance to policy changes. This discourse is mirrored on a smaller scale in the school system. The school system adopts this discourse by stereotyping Black students as violent, insolent, and not interested in school. African American students are blamed for their position in the class system primarily through the idea that they should have tried harder as students in school.

Bonilla-Silva (2001) argues that ideology is the mechanism that perpetuates racial disadvantage in the US today. Bonilla-Silva’s theory is based on the assumption that society is a *racialized social system*, that is, a society in which “economic, political, social and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races” (Bonilla-Silva

1996:469). In this type of system, dominant groups in society enjoy many advantages and rewards while subordinate groups suffer limitations on their life chances. Teachers exist in the context of this racialized social system and thus are immersed in its discourse.

## **Data and Methods**

### ***Research Questions***

This paper provides a descriptive analysis of White teachers' attitudes toward race with an attempt to understand how these attitudes differ from the attitudes of the general public. How the public collectively views race is an important phenomenon and ultimately becomes a driving force when it comes to public policy. The racial attitudes of the general public are well known and documented from year to year by social scientists and researchers. The racial attitudes of teachers are less well known and not clearly documented. This analysis will provide answers to the following research questions: (a) What are the racial attitudes of White teachers in the United States? (b) How do White teacher's racial attitudes differ from the attitudes of the general public?

### ***Data***

*The General Social Surveys* (1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004) are utilized for this analysis. *The General Social Surveys* (GSS hereafter) consist of cross-sectional nationally representative random samples of individuals in the United States. The GSS is an appropriate data set because of the wide range of questions available across years that intend to tap attitudes about race and specific issues surrounding race. We selected the years specified above in order to tap current racial attitudes over the last 10 years. For the years utilized the response rates varied between 70 and 78 percent.

### ***Variables***

#### ***Equal Treatment***

Racial attitudes that center on equal treatment have two different dimensions: principles of equal treatment, and implementation of equal treatment. Research suggests that people are much more tolerant on the issue of equal treatment when it is a hypothetical or theoretical question

(Schuman et al. 1997). For example, individuals are likely to state that they are generally in favor interracial marriage, but may be opposed to a close relative marrying someone of another race.

#### *Social Distance*

Social distance can be thought of as the physical or psychological distance Whites feel from people of color. Social distance measures the degree to which individuals would react in situations where there is a degree of personal integration (Schuman et al. 1997). Questions about social distance focus on individual support or opposition to living in a neighborhood with African Americans and sending children to schools with African Americans. Social distance is also measured by current racial neighborhood makeup, and family interactions with African Americans.

#### *Beliefs about Inequality*

Racial differences in educational, economic, and social outcomes are evident in society. Individuals in society characterize the reasons for these differences in a variety of ways. Some people subscribe to traditional explanations that involve innate difference, whereas others believe differences can be explained by structural elements that block opportunities. Questions about these beliefs focus on the reasons that African Americans have worse jobs, income, and housing when compared to White people today.

#### *Affirmative Action*

Questions about affirmative action involve the extent to which individuals agree that the government should become involved in righting past wrongs against African Americans in society. Affirmative action programs traditionally have extended preference, or special funding to the hiring, promotion and education of African Americans in order to make up for past discrimination. Individuals in society generally believe one of two things; that African Americans should have these preferences or that they should work their way up without any “special favors.”

### *Stereotyping*

Society today is laced with images in the media of young Black men as criminals and gangsters, young Black women as unwed teen mothers living off of welfare, and immigrants of Color as “illegals” coming to take jobs away from Americans (Giroux 1997). The popular book *The Bell Curve* got attention and legitimacy for its theory of racial and ethnic intellectual inferiority in the late 1990s (Herrnstein and Murray 1997). Conservative political talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh win over audiences by implying that White men are losing their privilege in society as a result of affirmative action programs that give their privileges away to minorities who do not want to work for their jobs and promotions.

### *Teachers*

We created as a dichotomous variable for occupation, respondents were coded as teachers or non-teachers. Teachers are defined as respondents who identified their occupation as a Pre-Kindergarten teacher, Kindergarten teacher, elementary school teacher, and secondary school teacher. This group is chosen in order to tap the attitudes of teachers teaching students who are high school age or younger. In the larger sample of teachers in the GSS, White teachers make up 88 percent of the sample, Black teachers make up close to 9 percent of the sample and other racial groups make up 3.5 percent of the sample. For this study only White teachers were included in the analysis in order to isolate how these racial attitudes function in a teaching force that is overwhelmingly White and to determine the implications of this for students of Color. This racial composition of teachers is consistent with the national racial composition of teachers in public schools across the nation (U.S. Department of Education 2005).

The omitted group of non-teachers represent respondents identifying with all other non-teaching occupations. Teachers as a group are required to hold a higher level of education than some occupations, thus we selected respondents who had at least 16 years of education (4 years past a high school diploma).

## **Results**

### ***Teacher Comparisons***

A simple one-way analysis of variance procedure was used to identify whether White teachers' attitudes differ from the attitudes of non-teachers in other occupations. Table 1 illustrates that White teachers differ significantly from non-teachers, holding education constant in only three instances. In each of the three cases, teachers are likely to hold views that are less tolerant than similarly educated non-teachers. The first case of teacher and non-teacher difference deals with equal treatment. Teachers are significantly more likely to favor a law against racial intermarriage, with 94.2% of teachers stating acceptance of intermarriage and 97.2% of non-teachers stating acceptance of intermarriage.

The other two cases where teachers and non-teachers differ have to do with social distance. A lower number of teachers live in neighborhoods where half of their neighbors are African American (57.7%) compared to the non-teacher population with 71.1 percent living in neighborhoods with African American neighbors. A lower percentage of teachers state that they have no objection to sending their child to a school where most of the students are African American (58.8%) compared to (69.0%) of non-teachers.

Here we see that when education is held constant, the attitudes that continue to be significant deal with the types of neighborhoods in which White teachers live, with the causes of black disadvantage in society and with government programs to help blacks. Again we see that these teachers have attitudes that are more tolerant than other workers. These findings are consistent with expected results reflecting that teachers are as much a part of the public discourse on race as people in other occupations. Simply having been trained as a teacher does not necessarily make an individual more racially aware and progressive than other individuals.

**Table 1: Oneway Analysis of Variance Comparing Teacher and Non-Teacher Racial Attitudes**

Variable	Range	Mean/Std. Dev.			N	F-Statistic	
		Total	Teachers	Non-Teachers			
<b>Equal Treatment</b>							
Law against intermarriage	0-1	.97/.17	.94/.23	.97/.17	2155	6.18	**
Whites have right to keep blacks out of neighborhood	1-4	3.68/.63	3.68/.66	3.68/.62	725	.005	
Vote for black presidential candidate	0-1	.97/.17	.96/.20	.97/.16	760	.563	
<b>Social Distance</b>							
Object to sending child to school with few blacks	0-1	.98/.15	.96/.20	.98/.14	771	1.35	
Object to sending child to school with half blacks	0-1	.89/.32	.92/.28	.88/.32	745	.952	
Object to sending child to school with most blacks	0-1	.68/.47	.59/.50	.69/.46	627	3.48	*
Blacks living in neighborhood now	0-1	.70/.46	.58/.49	.71/.45	3421	30.63	**
Family member brought black friend home	0-1	.47/.50	.43/.50	.48/.50	723	.671	
Favor living in half black neighborhood	1-5	3.09/1.00	3.17/1.08	3.08/.99	1756	1.46	
Favor close relative marrying a black	1-5	3.06/1.12	3.05/1.20	3.06/1.11	1756	.011	
<b>Origins of Inequality</b>							
Blacks lower position due to discrimination	0-1	.40/.49	.39/.49	.40/.49	2330	.177	
Blacks lower position due to less in-born ability	0-1	.96/.20	.97/.18	.96/.20	2410	.455	
Blacks lower position due to chance for education	0-1	.59/.49	.60/.49	.59/.49	2374	.032	
Blacks lower position due to lack of motivation	0-1	.66/.47	.63/.48	.66/.47	2318	1.31	
<b>Affirmative Action</b>							
Support blacks preference in hiring/promoting	1-4	1.71/.94	1.63/.90	1.72/.95	2206	2.30	
Agree, govt. is obligated to help blacks	1-5	2.51/1.16	2.48/1.01	2.51/1.18	2370	.238	
<b>Stereotypes</b>							
Are blacks hardworking?	1-7	3.91/1.02	3.90/.97	3.91/1.03	2075	.058	
Are blacks intelligent?	1-7	4.20/.93	4.18/.91	4.21/.93	1691	.106	

The remainder of this section will include a general discussion and descriptive analysis of the racial attitudes of teachers concentrating on different themes of race.

### **Equal treatment**

The variable equal treatment is based on a set of questions used to tap respondents' willingness to support broad principles of equal treatment in different situations concerning race. These

questions measure symbolic situations in which individuals respond to situations that are often far removed from their daily lives.

<b>Table 2: White Teachers and Equal Treatment</b>		
	Yes/Agree	No/Disagree
Support a Law Against Intermarriage	5.8%	94.2%
Whites Have Right to Keep Blacks Out of Neighborhoods	5.7%	94.3%
Vote for Black Presidential Candidate if Qualified	95.9%	4.1%

An understanding of teachers' ideologies regarding principles of equal treatment and teachers' beliefs about how this equal treatment should be implemented is influential in understanding the opportunities and treatment of children of Color in schools and recognizing the type of education necessary for teachers to create a fair and equitable classroom. Table 2 shows the results of White teachers' attitudes. Overall we illustrate that White teachers' racial attitudes are not significantly different from those of the general public, except for regarding laws against intermarriage. Teachers are more likely to support laws against intermarriage than the general population.

### ***Stereotypes***

The next category of questions captures general opinions about African Americans as a group and the stereotypes of African Americans specifically, and Table 3 displays teacher attitudes. One of the common misconceptions about affirmative action programs is that such programs place less qualified or unqualified applicants into positions over qualified applicants who are White. This misconception of the laws is reflected here in that a substantial majority of teachers feel that they are at least somewhat likely to lose an opportunity, either in college admissions or in jobs or promotions, as the result of affirmative action policies. These tables highlight that teachers often do use their preconceived notions and stereotypes of race to evaluate students.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Lazy						Hardworking
Do black people tend to be hard	0.8%	5.6%	21.8%	54.0%	12.5%	3.2%	2.0%
Working or Lazy							
	Unintelligent						Intelligent
Do black people tend to be	0.5%	1.5%	12.4%	61.7%	14.4%	7.5%	2.0%
unintelligent or intelligent?							

**Affirmative Action**

The next category of questions falls under queries about affirmative action programs. The idea of giving preference for hiring and promotion to a disadvantaged group relies on the assumption that there are external factors that have contributed to that group not being in those positions in the first place, namely discrimination.

	Agree	Disagree	Neither
Preference in hiring and promotion	14.9%	85.1%	.
Government obligation to help blacks	12.7%	51.5%	35.8%

The theme that emerges in Table 4 is one of placing emphasis on internal personal factors within African Americans, like motivation, rather than external factors like discrimination or lack of opportunity. Using this information, perhaps we can begin to explain how these types of attitudes are applied to students of Color in schools.

**Origins of Inequality**

The next set of questions taps into individuals’ beliefs about the origins of inequality and the reasons for Black disadvantage in the United States today. These questions assign responsibility in a couple ways; either on African Americans themselves (citing a lack of inborn ability or lack

of motivation) or on societal structural barriers (citing a lack of educational opportunities or discrimination).

<b>Table 5: White Teachers Beliefs about the Origins of Inequality</b>		
	Yes	No
On average, blacks have worse jobs, income and housing than White people.		
Do you think these differences are mainly due to:		
Blacks Face Discrimination in Society?	39.1%	60.9%
Most Blacks Have Less In-Born Ability to Learn?	3.4%	96.6%
Most Blacks Don't Have the Chance for Education?	59.8%	40.2%
Most Blacks Just Don't Have the Motivation or Willpower?	37.1%	62.9%

Teachers' attitudes toward the causes of black disadvantage could provide us with an indication of the way African Americans as a group are treated in the microcosm that is the school system. Table 5 shows the breakdown of teachers' beliefs about the origins of inequality, beliefs that are not significantly different from those of the general public.

**Social distance**

Questions about social distance gauge how respondents would respond or act in situations where a certain level of personal integration is involved. How will individuals respond, and how comfortable will they feel entering into situations where they must be close to African Americans? By gaining information on how close a White teacher might feel to African Americans, perhaps we can gain insight into how they may view their students. Table 6, 7, and 8 display White teachers' answers to questions about the social distance they feel from African Americans. These results suggest that many White teachers do not feel comfortable with themselves or their families being close to African Americans. This data is quite problematic given that many of these teachers educate African American children.

<b>Table 6: White Teachers Social Distance</b>		
	Yes/Agree/Favor	No/Disagree/Oppose
Would you send your children to a school:		
Where a few of the children are black?	96.0%	4.0%
Where half of the children are black?	91.7%	8.3%
Where more than half of the children are black?	58.8%	41.2%

<b>Table 7: White Teachers Social Distance</b>			
	Favor	Oppose	Neither
Favor a close relative marrying a black person?	30.4%	29.0%	40.6%
Favor living in a half black neighborhood?	30.9%	22.3%	46.9%

<b>Table 8: White Teachers Social Distance</b>		
	Yes	No
Are there any blacks living in your neighborhood now?	57.7%	42.3%
Had a black friend home for dinner in past year?	43.0%	57.0%

### **Discussion**

The U.S. public school system is a central institution in the shaping of youth both culturally and socially. Schools provide children with knowledge that is outside the scope of home and family. It is here that young people learn to develop skills that will ultimately define them as individuals (Levinson & Holland 1996). Critical examination also shows the school as a site of contradiction. While schools offer opportunities and advantages to some students, they also bind others “even more tightly to systems of class, gender, and race inequality” (Levinson & Holland 1996:1). Schools do this by emphasizing the hegemonic racial, class, and gender cultural norms, which in our society privilege White and middle-class expectations and values (Fordham 1996). Within our school systems, the eventual success or failure of children is influenced by many factors outside of the child’s individual agency. The distribution of resources and structure of opportunities available largely dictate which children will succeed, often recreating the existing structure of privilege. Furthermore, teachers play an integral role in the ultimate success and/or failure of students, especially in the early grades: teachers determine the students’ grade assessments, academic track, and their behavioral evaluations and are the primary person within the school system who shapes students’ perception of their ability to prosper. Therefore, understanding how teachers use cultural notions of race in their treatment of students, perception and evaluation are necessary additions to existing scholarship and policy on race and education.

The mirroring of White teachers' racial attitudes to society at large is not surprising given the pervasiveness of racist images and stereotypes. The effects however on both children of Color and White students in schools can be devastating. Besides lower academic achievement, disengagement, and lowered expectations, teachers are modeling a racialized social structure in their classrooms. This learning and teaching of racism in schools—what some have called the “hidden curriculum”—reinforces a White supremacist hierarchy. This research begins to uncover how “hidden” ideologies work to open and close opportunity structures.

Furthermore, White teachers' racial attitudes become especially dangerous when given the opportunity for subjective interpretation of actions. Certain racial groups, especially African Americans, are suspended and expelled at a disproportionate rate when compared to other racial groups in the schools (Gordon et al. 2001; Justice Policy Institute 2001). “When a school permits teachers to suspend students for ill-defined offenses, such as ‘defiance of authority’, it can open the way for bias and cross-cultural misunderstandings to affect the discipline process” (Gordon et al. 2001). Examining White teachers' attitudes and feelings about students of Color may provide insight into the ways students of Color experience both fair and unfair treatment in schools. It is the teacher who decides what behaviors warrant small or large punishments and which children will receive leniency and which children will not. Teachers can discipline students in one of two ways: informally inside the classroom, or formally, outside of the classroom. Informal disciplinary action allows the teacher and student to deal with the behavior in a way that does not earn a mark on their school record.

Compounding these issues is the severe segregation of racial communities in the United States, with Whites being the most residentially isolated group having little or no contact with people of races that are different from their own. In one study, Bonilla-Silva finds that White individuals have few close friends who are black. Two-thirds of White respondents state that none of the five people they interact most with on a daily basis are black and only 7% of respondents report having had black friends when growing up (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Teachers often do not live in the diverse communities they serve, and their experience may be limited to what they can see from their cars while driving to and from school. This limited experience may not be enough to

enable teachers to recognize that some structural elements of neighborhoods (unsafe areas, poor facilities) may affect students' ability or motivation to participate in school (Ladson-Billings 1992). As a result many teachers express fear and doubt about teaching in urban environments, often citing alienation from "tough looking city kids" (Weiner 1990:268). Through the process of understanding students and their communities, teachers may come to know their students not simply as "city kids" or "urban toughs" but as capable learners within different communities.

As this study highlights, teachers are not immune to racial discourse and the resulting internalization of stereotypes and ideologies. This places increased pressure on teacher education programs to highlight the continued impacts on the lives of students of structural racism and social class hierarchies, hopefully enabling teachers to institutionalize teaching based on anti-racist principles and equality. These results emphasize areas in which scholars and educators must focus in order to ensure equality in education. Future research must explore in depth how these attitudes are maintained in classrooms, with contemporaneous and lasting effects on the lives of students. The praxis then is to integrate knowledge of the workings of racial hierarchies in schools with teaching education and practice.

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