WHEN "THEY" ARE ALSO "US":
THE ROLE OF PEDAGOGY AND PROGRAMMING IN HELPING STUDENTS
OF COLOR (RE) NEGOTIATE RACE AND IDENTITY

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

The Opening Doors Summer Research Institute, a summer research program working to reverse negative retention trends among students of color in higher education, provides the focus for the research study. The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of students participating in a program designed to introduce students of color to the expectations of graduate study in education. The second purpose was to understand the ways that programs offering both systems of support, and challenging academic environments that are critical, multicultural, and meaningful, help students with the process of negotiating identity and community. Questions used to guide the study were: 1) How are racial/ethnic/cultural identities and differences re-constructed within culturally diverse groups of students of color? 2) How does developing/nurturing relationships help students to define themselves as people of color within and against socially constructed dichotomies of self and other? 3) What pedagogical strategies help the maintenance of a positive racial/ethnic/cultural identity for students of color as they negotiate cultural and racial issues within various contexts? Critical theories, qualitative research methods, and models of racial and ethnic identity development were used to address these questions.
Findings suggest that the curriculum, instruction, and approach of Opening Doors was instrumental in helping students create communities of academic and cultural support, by facilitating examinations of race and identity, which allowed students to develop new conceptions that did not rely on stereotypes or oppressive images. Data also suggest that educators must: 1) provide environments for intellectual development and self-reflection that are open, dialogic, and culturally relevant, 2) support students in a critical examination of their cultural identities; 3) provide models for future educators to understand the role of race in facilitating their students' academic and cultural understandings; 4) assist students in making meaningful connections between their lived experiences and those of other students of color; and 5) help students to disrupt stereotyped conceptions of "other" in order to develop their identity in alliance with other people of color.
Dedicated to
all of those who provided me with prayers, love, and support during this
process, and to everyone who will walk this path behind me.
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FIELDS OF STUDY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The Opening Doors Summer Research Institute, or “Opening Doors: The World of Graduate Study for Minority Students in Education,” is a six week summer intensive research program designed to reverse negative retention trends among students of color in higher education, and provides the focus for the research study. This research study responds to a specific need for models of recruitment, retention, and pedagogy for students of color in graduate programs that are relevant for them academically, spiritually, and culturally. It is hardly a secret that historically, education in the United States has been used as a means of socializing its citizens into Western culture, and has also historically been tailored to meet the needs of society (Anyon, 1980; Bell, 1992; Jordan, 1992; Wagner, 1998). In other words, because the educational system is also a societal institution, “the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society” (Baldwin, 1988; pg. 4). When that society is saturated with discrimination and unequal power distribution along the axes of race, class, language, and gender, it is no wonder that the structure of educational institutions and the process of schooling at all levels have reflected this power differential as well (Apple, 1979). For these reasons and others, the recruitment and retention of people of color into
higher education programs continues to be an issue across the country (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1999). Although there are programs seeking to offset the low numbers of those students at various levels of education, the problem continues to exist. While increasing the absolute numbers of students of color on college campuses is a beginning, there must also be ways to retain these students in an environment that is welcoming and that is responsive to their specific needs as students of color (Green, 1989; Valverde & Castenell, 1998). Such programs may play a role in creating a sense of belonging among students to the extent that they would not only matriculate through, but also find systems of support within, the higher education programs of which they are a part.

In order to be proactive in challenging inequity at all levels of education, and in creating successful and meaningful recruitment and retention programs, specifically at the graduate school level, it must first be understood that there exists no objective or politically neutral education (Apple, 1996; Freire, 1994; hooks, 1993). In other words, as these scholars and others have validated, the quality of teaching and learning in schools hinges upon, among other things, school funding, the selection and availability of materials and other resources, the views and positions of school administrators, the particular style and approach of teachers, and the lived experiences of the students (Kozo, 1991). All of these elements are very subjective and are determined by various sociopolitical factors. That is to say, both the product and process of schooling depend on the historical, social and political moment in which we live (Baldwin, 1988). Curiously, every aspect of schooling is
determined by unstable factors, yet the purpose of schooling, and therefore issues of equity and access within the schooling process have remained the same (Freire, 1994, Macedo, 1993). The Opening Doors program, whose curriculum and design takes account of these issues and their implications for students of color, focuses on recruiting and retaining undergraduate students of color into graduate programs in the field of education, and therefore provides the crux of the study. The following section discusses the research questions related to these issues, which were used to guide the study.

Research Questions

The research questions used to guide this study revolved around student involvement in a six-week intensive summer research program designed for undergraduate students of color interested in careers in the field of education. Specific research questions used in the study are as follows:

➢ How are racial/ethnic/cultural identities and differences re-constructed within culturally/racially diverse groups of students of color?

➢ How does developing/nurturing relationships help students of color come to define themselves as people of color, both within and against socially constructed dichotomies of self and other?

➢ What pedagogical strategies/conditions help the maintenance of a positive racial/ethnic/cultural identity for students of color as they negotiate cultural and racial issues within various contexts?
These research questions were used to determine if and how this type of program could be instrumental in the adoption of a positive racialized, multicultural identity for people of color interacting across historically marginalized cultures.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to determine the conditions under which students of color formed bonds across cultures in an environment where all participants and facilitators are members of historically marginalized cultures. In other words, the study examined what happened to the “us/them” dichotomy exclusively among people of color when there existed only “us,” meaning people of color, and therefore “them,” meaning those who were different, or outside of that frame, were also “us.” Specifically, the research sought to understand the processes that took place in these learning and social environments, in terms of how a racialized identity was created and/or re-created, and how those constructions affected the process of developing an understanding and respect for historically marginalized cultural backgrounds other than one’s own. The study described the ways in which a racially and culturally diverse group of students formed relationships across lines of race, ethnicity, culture, and gender within the context of the aforementioned program, as well as the processes they underwent in learning about themselves and others as racialized beings, and finally, to understand the meaning students attached to those experiences.

The second objective of this research study was to understand the role of critical multicultural pedagogies in the identity construction of culturally diverse
students in higher education programs. This study sought to examine how students in teacher education and other higher education programs negotiated issues related to race and identity within themselves and among one another given the context of a summer research program specifically designed for students of color in education. The study also examined the ways in which teacher education curricula designed to meet the needs of students of color could aid in that process, since as Ford and Dillard (1996) remind us, “embracing multiculturalism is more complex than simply being born a person of color” (p. 232). In researching this program, an examination was conducted of the ways that teacher educators might produce pedagogical strategies that do not reduce multicultural education to focusing merely on helping students of color ‘overcome’ racism, or on teaching White students to ‘tolerate’ people of color. Instead, within this study, there was a desire to understand how certain pedagogical approaches might offer a deeper level of student engagement: one that allows people of color to gauge themselves against something other than whiteness and/or racism.

Operational Definitions

Using labels are one way of identifying others in relation to oneself (Alcoff, 1995; hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1984). Unfortunately, when discussing issues connected to race or ethnicity, those labels are oftentimes either too general, or defined using narrow terms that collapse peoples of many different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds into a single category. inasmuch as I personally dislike being a target of such labeling, I also recognize that it may be the easiest and simplest way to
refer to groups of similar ethnic/linguistic backgrounds and/or cultural histories. However, for the purposes of this study, and where possible, I referred to each respondent given whatever language or terms they used to self-identify racially, culturally, ethnically, or nationally. For the purpose of continuity within this document, particularly within general discussions of race and ethnicity, I used the following general terms to designate the racial and/or ethnic identity of respondents in the study, unless otherwise identified within direct quotes: African American, Asian American, Black, Latino/a, Native American, and White. Finally, I used the terms 'person/people of color' and 'historically marginalized' to identify groups of traditionally oppressed or exploited ethnic backgrounds in total; that is, the groups mentioned above and any segments or subdivisions thereof. I remained hesitant to use the term people of color, because although it is less distorted and offensive to this researcher than the popular term 'minority,' it is not without its problems. For instance, Roman (1993) states that while the term people of color is “an alternative to the pejorative ‘racial’ distinctions” traditionally made by Whites, who had to that point primarily labeled and defined those groups of which they were not a part, she feels that the term remains “ambivalent and oxymoronic” (pg. 71). As Roman (1993) posits,

given the tendency of the multicultural discourse to celebrate diversity without adequately analyzing power differentials among groups positioned by racial categorizations and inequalities, the phrase ‘people of color’ still implies that White culture is the hidden norm against which all other racially
subordinate groups' so-called 'differences' are measured. At the same time, it can be used to imply that Whites are colorless, and hence without racial subjectivities, interests, and privileges. Still worse, it can convey the idea that Whites are free of the responsibility to challenge racism (p. 71).

While I disagree that people of color are racially subordinate, the point remains valid. Unfortunately, as Roman (1993) implies, labeling on the basis of race or ethnicity seems to center around whiteness and/or the absence thereof. The problem then becomes having no language with which to define ourselves as people of color that does not somehow either compare itself with or differentiate itself from whiteness. These problems notwithstanding, it seems difficult to function without some kind of language with which to describes ourselves as a collective, when not describing ourselves specifically as Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Panamanian, etc. Unfortunately, we do not always know what those specifics are.

Unlike when referring to other cultural groups, I referred to the racially constructed categories of Black and White specifically as such for particular reasons. While the terms Black and White are certainly not without problems, they have come to be fairly stable means of categorizations in this country (Omi & Winant, 1986; Roediger, 1991). While the preferred term for African-descended peoples is now African American, and is used synonymously in this document with Black, I also recognize that it is problematic to use this term exclusively to refer generally to peoples of African descent in this country. I find the more politicized term Black to be more inclusive of all Africans and African descendants in the Diaspora, both
inside and outside of the United States, not just those who have the dual identity of being American in nationality. However, my socialization is such that it seems almost mechanical, or at the least habitual to use both terms interchangeably. At the same time, because of the same racial constructions that produced the above categorization dilemmas, individuals with European backgrounds, (i.e., Polish, Italian, Scandinavian, etc.) have mostly been collapsed into the single category of White. In this country, they may even prefer to be referred to as ‘plain old-fashioned Americans’ (Omi & Winant, 1986; Roediger, 1991). In some cases, they may not know, acknowledge, nor want to be associated with whatever ‘pure’ or hybrid European cultures that represent their individual backgrounds. For these reasons, I use the term White to refer to individuals of central European background, with the recognition that until we can come to identify one another in ways other than by skin color, no particular label will be fully accurate.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this research study will contribute to a body of knowledge that validates alternative ways of being in the world. That is to say, I hope that it can help to inform members of all types of communities, and serve as point of departure for examination of other critical issues in education. In presenting a research study addressing issues of pedagogy in specific academic contexts, I hope to contribute generally to the field of multicultural education, by demonstrating how culturally relevant approaches can help future educators examine their assumptions about the teaching and learning of all students, leading them to a more critical and personal
approach to the field. The charge of self-examination and critical action is important for educators of all backgrounds, because fundamentally, if we are only committed to an improvement in that politic of domination that we feel leads directly to our individual exploitation or oppression, we not only remain attached to that status quo but act in complicity with it, nurturing and maintaining those very systems of domination (hooks, 1994a; p. 244).

Additionally, my intent with this study is to move people of color from the margins of hegemonic culture by increasing understanding between people of color, rather than focusing on dichotomies of self and other. Finally, in conducting this research study, I hope to help educators understand ways to structure recruitment and retention efforts for students of color that would increase their participation in graduate programs and that provide them with meaningful systems of support within those contexts.

Chapter Summary

The initial chapter of the study outlined the aims, purposes, and significance of this research study. Specifically, the study examined issues at the intersection of race, identity, community and pedagogy using a higher education summer research program as the site for the project. Specifically, the research project investigates the racial and ethnic identity development process among students of color when they are able to use one another as models and reflections of identity, rather than using the historical racial barometer of whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997; Roman,
in the chapter that follows, there is a review of the literature related to these issues, including an examination of critical multicultural pedagogies, racial identity development, and programming for students of color in higher education contexts.

Chapter three delineates the research philosophies, methodologies and data analysis strategies that undergird the study, including a detailed description of the research context and considerations of validity in qualitative research. Chapter four is a presentation of the data and analysis that emerged from the study, and the final chapter of this text is a discussion of the implications of those findings for theory, practice, recruitment, and retention.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This research study was conceptualized based upon the need for pedagogies and programming that are culturally relevant for students of color, particularly those students in higher education settings, and that help them to develop racial, ethnic and cultural understandings with regards to themselves and the larger society. The following review of literature was framed according to the research questions introduced in the previous chapter. In particular, this review of literature examines the relationships between of race, identity development, and pedagogy, and the ways that those three elements may be used to develop pedagogy and programming for students of color that helps them to develop and/or maintain a positive racial/ethnic/cultural identity.

The first section of the literature review examines issues of race and difference in relation to identity development, including empirical research that has been conducted in relation to identity development and schooling for people of color, and the process of building community across cultures. Secondly, this chapter examines various pedagogical approaches that have at their foundation a dedication to critically examining issues around race and power, and that envision the purpose of schooling both as having a social justice agenda, and as a vehicle to providing a
democratic education. More specifically, the literature is reviewed around critical and multicultural pedagogies and practices, including a discussion of the ways in which educational philosophies such as engaged, culturally relevant, culturally engaged, and antiracist pedagogies might serve as vehicles whereby educators can facilitate students in the process of critical self-examination, particularly as it pertains to race and ethnicity. Finally, there will be a discussion of recruitment and retention efforts for students of color at various academic levels, specifically those programs that incorporate the types of pedagogies and philosophies that would lend themselves to helping students of color develop a positive sense of racial and ethnic self beyond the individual program context. This section also addresses the need for programs that not only have a social justice agenda, but that attempt to retain students of color into the upper echelons of academia (i.e., graduate school), rather than just through undergraduate study. The culmination of these discussions provides an overview of the ways that educators might transform their own pedagogy in ways that help students begin to critically analyze difference and develop an understanding of one another by understanding how the notion of difference affects constructions of identity along the lines of race, ethnicity, and culture. At the same time, the literature described here provides the basis for the study by illuminating those places where this research study might contribute to or inform these discussions.
Constructing Race

Defining Difference

There are many theories that seek to explain both the notion of difference and our need for it. For example, Rowe (1994) suggests that the "nature of our sense organs is such that we can perceive only when we can identify some contrast or differential" (p. 294). In other words, in order to know who we are, we must know who we are not. This type of thinking forces us to define ourselves in opposition to other people, lending itself easily to the creation of 'others.' Freud (1994) would take that notion a step further to suggest that every human being has a need to affiliate with a group, yet in order to do so, there must be an 'other' with whom or against whom to affiliate. He states that we "create a 'They'-an enemy outside our family, tribe, or group-in order that we might bond together in kinship and camaraderie, and even love, against that enemy" (p. 290). While these ideas may provide some insight into basic human behavior, the issue becomes much more complex when put into current sociopolitical contexts.

Scholars such as Saussure and Derrida, as quoted in Burbules and Rice (1991) would argue that "which differences mean something is entirely a consequence of how those differences exist in the context of a system of differences; a point of difference only makes a difference under specific circumstances" (p. 400), which is why some differences may seem insignificant or easily 'overcome,' while others may seem more difficult. In other words, difference needs a specific context in order to have significant meaning. Following that notion, the primary ways by
which we define difference have been framed within constructions of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability.

Kang (1997) offers a similar perspective on the definition of difference. He sustains that the notion of difference has been situated around an ideology of a White aesthetic, which he defines as “the belief that the physical racial features of White Americans are [seen as] objectively appealing and universally true whereas the physical racial features of people of color are [seen as] subjective and deviant” (Kang, 1997, p. 286). This conception of difference places people of color as ‘other’ in relation to a seemingly predetermined standard of whiteness. Given these various definitions, difference seems to lend itself to being a socially constructed, political category.

Burbules and Rice (1991), who provide a more postmodern, deconstructive look at difference, caution against turning difference into a reified category. They state that the term difference is useful as a corrective to monolithic and dominating presumptions of homogeneity, and to the imposition of one subgroup’s world view as the ‘neutral’ or ‘universal’ one, which forces other subgroups either to accept the imposed view as their own or to remain silent (p. 403). At the same time, they maintain the importance of not exaggerating the term to the point where it is no longer useful or productive. They suggest reconceptualizing difference in a way that does not elevate it to such status. In this way, it is possible to see beyond difference to begin building bridges across such organizing principles.
as race, class, or gender, because in their conceptualization, difference would no longer seem an insurmountable category. The term diversity seems personally more useful than difference, because difference implies a dichotomy between the presence and absence of something, usually whiteness. On the other hand, these scholars imply that notions such as diversity may indicate more of a proliferation of ideas, and a valuing of every subculture’s unique experiences and ways of being, rather than focusing on difference.

McKay (1993) believes that a daily personal commitment to breaking down resistance to difference is a subversive act that can unite “differences and diversity without erasing the specificities of the histories and cultures that give each group of American citizens its own identity” (p. 280). Many critical theorists have suggested that change can only come when one can reevaluate his/her beliefs and ideologies. In the case of overcoming oppression and/or finding unity among diverse populations, that reevaluation must often include having hard conversations about race. Rush (1998) reminds us that colorblindness, silence, and ignorance, all of which come as a result of avoiding conversations about race, reinforce hegemony and work against liberation. McKay’s (1993) suggestion for bridging race and class refers specifically to women and feminism, but is also useful in breaking down stereotypes across other major boundaries of difference. In other words, being an agent for social change goes beyond changing racial constructions or class/gender oppression, but also breaking down stereotypes in other categories, such as lifestyle, sexuality, and ability, to name only a few.
Racial and Ethnic Identity

Discussions pertaining to race, race-based theories, and racial identity have become as volatile and ambivalent as the category of race itself, and as discussed in the previous section, race has also remained a primary category for constructing difference. Omi and Winant (1993) have suggested that race can be considered neither solely a biological category nor solely a social category. They suggest instead that race must be considered a socially constructed category that has physical manifestations and repercussions. As McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) maintain, “racial difference is the product of human interests, needs, desires, strategies, capacities, forms of organization, and forms of mobilization” (p. xv). They state further that these variables are manifested in the form of “grounded social constructs” such as identity, and are “subject to change, contradiction, variability, and revision within historically specific and determinate contexts” (p. xv). Race is differentiated as the primary foundation for conceptualizing the literature in this text because, as McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) state, “The race question brings into the foreground omissions and blind spots. It exposes callouses [sic] and bottlenecks in even the most radical and ameliorative of approaches to social themes of ‘exploitation,’ ‘domination,’ ‘resistance,’ and ‘human emancipation’” (p. xviii). In other words, looking at issues of access and equity in various contexts, and in this specific case the recruitment and retention of students of color in higher education, the lens of race illuminates those places where schooling at all educational levels has fallen short of the promise of providing a democratic education for all students.
Within this text, references are made to both racial and ethnic identity, although not synonymously, to describe the various stages and phases of identity development among people of color. Ethnic identity is distinguished from racial identity, in that while it includes race, it is not confined by the same social and political implications and connotations that discussions of race are known to include. While there are various models of ethnic identity development for both Whites and people of color (Phinney, 1989; Smith, 1991; Tajfel, 1978), according to Phinney (1990), “there is no widely agreed-on definition of ethnic identity” (p. 500).

Conceptions of ethnic identity, like race, vary across ethnic groups, disciplines and schools of thought. Smith (1991) provides a definition that is useful for the purposes of the study. Smith (1991) describes ethnic group membership and identity as

A reference group called upon by people who share a common history and culture, who may be identifiable because they share similar physical features and values and who, through the process of interacting with each other and establishing boundaries with others, identify themselves as being a member of that group. Ethnic identity is the sum total of group members’ feelings about those values, symbols and common histories that identify them as a distinct group (Smith, 1991; p. 181, 182).

Literature describing the collective cultural identity of diverse groups lists common history and cultural heritage, including traditions, values, customs and rituals, as ties that bind groups together under the term ‘ethnicity.’ Finally, she states that a person “does not belong to an ethnic group by choice, rather, he or she must be born into
such a group and becomes related to it through emotional and symbolic ties” (Smith, 1991; p. 182). Although this last point may be debatable on various fronts, it is the conception that was used for the purpose of this study.

Among the variables that can be considered to comprise ethnic identity are: self-identification/labeling of one’s ethnic group, as well as a sense of belonging to that particular group, or the salience of that group in one’s life. In addition are attitudes both regarding the group itself and regarding one’s membership in the group, and finally, participation in activities and practices specific to that group (Phinney, 1990; Sadowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995). Although the specific stages of ethnic and racial identity development differ, each model consists of movement between an unexamined ethnic identity and a more actualized ethnic identity (Tatum, 1997). Stages are also sometimes identified according to level of preference for, or identification with, the values of the dominant cultural group, with a subsequent questioning of those preferences, a rejection of those preferences, and a reconciliation of one’s own cultural group values and those of the dominant cultural group (Cross, 1995). In any case, these scholars maintain that interactions or encounters with members of another group, usually the dominant or most widely accepted group, acts as the catalyst for moving out of the initial stages of development (Phinney, 1990).

Race Beyond Black and White

Hacker (1992) suggests that while some groups may “prefer to emphasize their cultural and national identities rather than traits associated with race,” the rest
of this country, (i.e., those factions that determine policies regarding its populace), remains very much within a Black and White frame of reference (p. 6). Although race seems to be the primary way in which we come to be identified in this society (Omi & Winant, 1986), constructing identity in this way is layered with problems and contradictions. For example, other than that race is not scientifically a biological category, one problem with identifying one’s race as the primary defining or distinguishing characteristic is that it negates, and thereby erases, those who cannot be racially identified as Black or White. For example, some may self-identify as both Black and White, while others may identify as neither Black nor White. Labels may also pigeonhole those who perhaps can and do fit into the socially constructed categories of Black and White, creating conceptions of both groups that are homogenous and monolithic, ignoring the cultural nuances and distinctions within each group. Such misperceptions can and often do lead to the negative stereotyping of those groups (Stanfield, 1993a). At the same time, while discussions of race in the United States primarily focus on the polarities of Black and White, such discussions also ignore the cultural experiences, histories and contributions of other ethnic groups, particularly those that have been historically marginalized within the United States. For example, as Tatum (1997) explains,

Although non-Latinos often use Latino to refer to a racial group, it is an error to do so. The term Hispanic was used by the Bureau of the Census as an ethnic label and not to denote a race, because Hispanics are a racially mixed group, including combinations of European White, African Black, and
indigenous American Indian. It is possible for an individual to identify him or herself as ethnically Hispanic and racially Black or White at the same time (p. 136).

Because notions of race have become much more complex than Black and White, it seems that discussions and/or theory building on the topic of race must also reflect that complexity. These discussions must be broadened to include those groups that cannot or will not be collapsed into such narrowly defined categories. Alternatively, these categories could be exploded completely, in lieu of other, more self-defined alternatives. Although the terms Black and White are used in this text, they are used with the understanding of the problematics involved in doing so, and recognizing that skin color is not the primary identifier for any one of any background.

Other Presentations of Self

Markus and Nurius (1986) also address issues of identity, self-concept/self-perception, and presentation of self, although not specifically regarding race. They present a discourse on social identity and the implications and possibilities that may be held for the “selves” that one can become. This notion informs the thinking on student self-perception and self-esteem, and the possible ways in which various student identities can be constructed. Markus and Nurius (1986) define possible selves as the “ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming” (p.954). Markus and Nurius (1986) approach identity from a psychological standpoint, examining the issues that affect those selves and the presentation of those selves.
They build a framework for this theory based on the notion that selves past, present, and future, can and do inform and influence one another. Michael Ventura (1988) states that "...a memory always makes a demand upon the present" (p. 177). Markus and Nurius (1986) extend this notion by stating that the "self concept extends both backward and forward through time" (p. 957). In other words, possible or imagined future selves may be and usually are in some way, influenced by selves of the past or present, just as selves of the past may directly influence those of the present. This type of notion maps on to the literature around ethnic and racial identity development, in that individuals may move in and out, or between stages of identity development, dependent upon various lived experiences, and that having a model of the "selves" they can become may help students of color see new possibilities for themselves academically, professionally, and personally.

Markus and Nurius (1986) present the self as a plural, and as a collaboration of sorts among various possible selves. They posit that one's self is not a "thing" that one is or becomes and then stays there; instead, it is seen as a fluid, flexible, ever-changing entity. They would also argue that there is no "one true self," and that to deny the many parts that compose who we are is to deny certain selves from reaching their potential. They see the concept of possible selves in the context of "what others are now, I could become" (p. 954), which speaks to the importance of having life models, especially true for students of color. In other words, for a child/person of a specific race or class, having someone from that same background assume a particular role in their lives may provide them with incentive and
motivation to undertake a similar role. The possibility for such modeling in guiding students on particular professional and personal paths is a challenge that has been accepted by many programs and institutions across the country. Markus and Nurius (1986) contend that regardless of whether a certain possible self is ever actually achieved, if it can be modeled, it can be imagined, and thus may become a possibility.

Markus and Nurius (1986) offer a concept that seems very fundamental to the creation, perception and presentation of self. Although they outline what could be considered a very common-sense notion, it can also become complicated when negotiating the work others have done around issues of identity. Markus and Nurius provide a very thorough view of what it can mean to be a particular "self" and what that may mean in the context of school and society; however this issue of positioning these selves in a socio-historical context remains to be examined. For example, the researchers give little if any attention to how poverty, oppression, or institutionalized racism might affect student self-perception and motivation. Subjects in the study are not placed within the context of the racialized, engendered, socially stratified society in which we live, which would seem to have a great affect on imagined or feared selves.

The possible selves Markus and Nurius (1986) describe can also exist within a somewhat negative paradigm. They state that some of our possible selves are a direct result of a struggle not to become or fulfill other, more negative possible selves. This type of perception may have a negative effect on self-perception. For
example, Fordham (1988) examines the relationship between academic success and cultural affiliation, which also has implications for identity development and self-perception. Fordham (1988) presents the reader with one interpretation of the complexities for African American students who attempt to achieve a certain level of academic success, and the implications that may be embodied in those decisions, depending on the degree to which they dis/associate within their communities. She asserts that African American students who wish to succeed academically must sometimes adopt a persona of “racelessness,” which in turn disassociates them from the fictive kinship found within Black communities. By way of definition, Fordham (1988) asserts that students who “minimize their connection to the indigenous culture and assimilate into the school culture improve their chances of succeeding in school” (p. 57). In other words, the students who were successful constructed their social identity in ways very different from those who were not considered academically successful.

Fordham’s (1988) work seems to be presented in the type of “either/or” fashion that encourages the limited view that culture must be negated within the Black community in order for Black students to achieve success. The dichotomy that Fordham presents may not necessarily allow for alternative ways to negotiate the real or perceived gap between home and school cultures for African American students. In other words, although the students in the study disassociated with their ethnic identity in order to gain perceived success in school, there is little to no mention of other ways or examples that would allow students to maintain affiliation
and identity within their culture, yet still be what is labeled a ‘high achiever,’ taking on identities of success, such as has been put forth by other scholars (Ladson Billings, 1994). Fordham (1988) concludes that the choice to adopt racelessness in order to succeed is too high a price to pay, and that the “option is unacceptable” (p. 82) for Black students, yet the entire basis of her argument is that it is not only necessary to adopt such a persona to succeed, but that it is maybe even impossible not to do so. Fordham’s research is very important because it brings to light issues faced by youth in the Black community as they attempt to overcome barriers academically, socially, and politically; however, there seems to be a need to negotiate the ‘master the possibilities’ approach of Markus and Nurius (1986) with the realities of cultural sacrifices described by Fordham (1988). The negotiation of these issues may be found in other research studies.

**Building Communities Around Difference**

There are several empirical studies that approach the issues of racial and/or ethnic identity among adolescents. For example, in *Communities of difference: A critical look at desegregated spaces created for and by youth*, Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997) articulate the ways in which White students and students of color develop racialized identities in relation to, and at times in contrast to, one another. They state that because institutionalized racism makes it unnatural for multiracial relations to flourish, certain conditions must intentionally be put into place to bridge those spaces. Those conditions include “a sense of community, a commitment to creative analysis of difference, power and privilege; and an enduring investment in
democratic practice” (p. 249). They state that without these conditions, identities are shaped in opposition to others, which opens the doors to racial tensions and to the breakdown of group relations.

Their research found that in schools and classrooms where teachers and administrators made no attempt to help students think critically and openly about difference and race, White students specifically, constructed their own identities in opposition to the negative, non-White, ‘other.’ Specifically, the study illustrated that working-class White males constructed their identities in relation to those of African American males and females and White females, so that while they were writing their own identities, they were also simultaneously constructing the identity of the other, which was always subordinate to their own. Further, the researchers note that “the discursive construction of Black males and females and White females became a means by which White males could assert themselves - a vehicle for the formation of their own positively felt identities in contrast with the constructed negative others” (p. 257).

The above research study, although conducted primarily with White students, demonstrates the ways in which race and race relations are constructed primarily in Black and White, muting the third space of all things neither Black nor White. Secondly, the study illuminates the need for teachers and administrators to open up spaces for students to develop a sense of self in which their identity is not contingent upon the subordination of another group. The suggestions made by Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997) can easily be applied outside of this particular racialized context. In
other words, even among students of color it is necessary for teachers and
administrators to assist students in constructing identities that are neither
oppositional to whiteness, nor oppositional to other people of color. The authors
suggested that educators help to build community among students in which every
student has an equal voice, and each participates in the co-construction of the
realities and knowledge out of which their identities are based. Teachers can do this
by accepting the responsibility to stand firm against racism, rather than by
perpetuating it through silence, racist action, or perceived neutrality. At the same
time, the Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997) study is demonstrative of the research
literature outlining the development of racial and cultural identity. Like other
studies, it examines race as a dichotomy of Black and White, or White and other.
While examining such interactions and constructions is critical, there seems to
remain a need to examine the development of a confident racialized identity that
does not build itself in relation to being different from another racial or cultural
group.

Twine (1996) takes a look at difference in examining the identity
construction of African descended females who have a Black racial identity but who
developed a White cultural identity as adolescents and returned to a Black cultural
identity while in college. She examines the significant role of class status,
specifically middle and upper middle class, in developing a particular racialized
gender identity among African descended young women. In the study, Twine uses
as research subjects women of African descent who are the biological children of

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European and/or Jewish/Asian women, but who grew up in a household with two European American parents. She provides several conditions which, when in place may lead, as with these young women, to adopting a White cultural identity among women of known African descent. Among these conditions are being raised in a White household, although that factor was least significant. The most significant factor, however, was class. These women associated themselves with White culture much less because they grew up in a White household, and more so because they had the same or similar material wealth, middle class interests, and academic achievements as their classmates. Living in middle class communities led them to feel as if they were part of the culture of their suburban peers, all of whom were White. As a result, these women developed a familiarity and high level of comfort within this suburban, racially homogenous society. Coupled with being demographically and culturally segregated from Blacks and other people of color, these women came to feel themselves to be racially neutral, and therefore equal to their White peers.

Twine defines the ‘pre-college’ identity of these women as ‘racially unmarked, middle-class’ (p. 208), a metaphor she uses throughout the study, and one that seems to be synonymous with White. Other metaphors Twine uses to describe difference or a lack thereof, are: color blind, racially neutral, racially invisible, power-evasive, ideology of individualism, and racially marked/unmarked. These metaphors demonstrate the ways in which these women thought of themselves: as no different culturally and financially from their White peers. Twine finds that not until
puberty, when dating rituals begin and cultural codes change, do these women find themselves to be different or 'other.' It is not until this time, when White peers begin to find 'culturally appropriate' romantic partners (Twine uses the term public partners), do these women find that their White peers do in fact see them as different. Later, when they attend the local university and begin to interact with people of color (Twine would suggest that dating Black men was also a factor), they become more able to recognize their differences. She posits that once they are able to see White people as racially other, they begin to lose a White cultural identity in exchange for a Black one. Unfortunately for these women, before attending college, many of them became aware of not being White, but still had no real sense of cultural identity. While referring specifically to African Americans, this research study seems applicable across ethnic groups, and maps on to research covered in this literature review on the harm that can be caused by cultural isolation and racial misperception.

**The Crossroads of Racial Identity and Pedagogy**

Based within theoretical constructs of social identity theory, acculturation/culture conflict, and finally identity formation theories, identity development models have largely dealt with the psychological and sociological factors associated with ethnic, cultural, or racial identity (Cross, 1995; Phinney, 1989, et. al.). Recently, more work has been done that looks at ethnic and cultural identity factors as they relate specifically to academic contexts (Banks 1994; Ladson billings, 1994; Tatum, 1992). Tatum (1997) has taken the discussion of identity formation and related it specifically to the schooling experiences of people of color,
using the revised Cross (1995) model of racial identity development as part of her theoretical framework.

Using the sitting patterns of students in the high school cafeteria as a metaphor, Tatum (1997) reveals the complexities students of color face in schools as they attempt to negotiate their perceptions and acceptance of themselves as racial beings in opposition to, and sometimes in conflict with, how they are perceived by their White counterparts. She states that in racially mixed settings, students are more prone to align themselves according to racial background in response to the/a real or perceived threat of racism. Moreover, “joining with one’s peers for support in the face of stress is a positive coping strategy,” that students of color may employ in those situations under the oftentimes stressful tensions around race (Tatum, 1997; pg 62). Tatum comments that educators are often times uncomfortable with the idea of prioritizing those situations where students can have experiences that are identity-affirming, rather than stressful, or that provide information on students’ histories and the contributions of their specific cultures, because teachers have not traditionally received that information as part of their own educational experiences. Tatum (1997) states that teachers’ understanding of adolescent development has been limited to the White middle-class norms. They sometimes say… that parents should provide this kind of education for their children. Unfortunately, Black parents often attended the same schools the teachers did and have the same informational gaps. We need to acknowledge that an important part of interrupting the
cycle of oppression is constant re-education, and sharing what we learn with the next generation (p. 74).

Tatum (1997) posits that schooling is an experience that will either perpetuate stereotypes and re-inscribe institutional racism, or that will help students unlearn and explode stereotypes about both themselves and one another. Rather than remaining ignorant to the very real effects of race/class/gender-based oppression in the lives of all students, Tatum (1997) suggests that teachers learn to identify those factors. She states that students are better able to recognized and resist the negative impact of oppression when those factors are not rendered invisible, but instead are brought to the forefront of discussion. Much like Freire (1994), hooks (1994b), and others, Tatum encourages teachers to help develop critical consciousness in their students as a partial solution.

The Phenomenon of Colorblindness

Delpit (1995), Nieto (1996), Sleeter (1995), Tatum (1997), and others, have examined some of the ways in which traditional ideas of democratic education have been misconstrued in both theory and practice, particularly the negative effect of avoiding discussions of race in the classroom, which some have examined as directly related to student identity formation. They note that failing to acknowledge race sends a negative message to children because race is a difference children naturally notice. Sleeter (1993) contends that “in an effort not to be racist themselves and to treat all children equally, many White teachers try to suppress what they understand about people of color, which leads them to try not to ‘see’ color” (p. 162).
Teachers who lay claim to a colorblind approach to students of color do those students a great disservice. hooks suggests that in order “to intervene and transform those politics of representation informed by colonialism, imperialism, and White supremacy, we have to be willing to challenge mainstream culture’s efforts to ‘erase racism’ by suggesting it does not really exist” (hooks, 1994a; p. 181). Claiming not to see color, and in essence race, assumes that all students are the same; particularly, it implies that these same students are culture-less, color-less, race-less, and therefore devoid of the rich histories and cultural values that make them unique collectively and individually. Unfortunately, this implication not only ‘whitewashes’ the ethos of the classroom, but forces cultural and ethnic assumptions on White students as well. Such an approach universalizes whiteness by re-coding all students as White. These are the very same attitudes that may inadvertently perpetuate racism. For example, Ladson-Billings (1994) argues that teachers who are reluctant to acknowledge race, in essence exhibit what Rist (1970) calls “dysconscious racism,” meaning that they fail to challenge the status quo, and thereby re-inscribe oppression. Ladson-Billings (1994) further argues that if teachers “pretend not to see students’ racial and ethnic differences, they really do not see the students at all and are limited in their ability to meet their educational needs” (p. 33). Similarly, Yamato (1990) suggests that “with the best of intentions... and the greatest generosity of heart, Whites, operating on the misinformation fed to them from day one, will behave in ways that are racist, will perpetuate racism by being ‘nice’” (p. 21). She further suggests that “...you can just ‘nice’ somebody to death with naiveté and lack of awareness of privilege” (p. 21).
These scholars elucidate the ways in which attempting to live “color-blind,” denying white privilege, or pretending that racism does not exist creates a distorted view of the world, and reflects into the classroom a value different from what students will learn outside of the classroom. Such attitudes create an injustice to both teacher and student. Approaching the issues of color-blindness from a mother’s point of view, Rush (1998) discussed the dangers of allowing a child to grow up in an environment where color or difference is not acknowledged. Such an ideology leads to an equation of racially neutral with White, which not only reinforces hegemony, but also reinforces an attitude of privilege and superiority among White children while leaving children of color confused, trying to negotiate codes which a color-blind mentality would deny even exists. These phenomena must be critically interrogated, deconstructed, and eliminated with teacher self-reflection, and the development of pedagogical practices that are both critical, and multicultural in nature (Dillard, 1996a; Ford and Dillard, 1996; Freire, 1994; hooks, 1993).

Models of Critical Multicultural Pedagogies

In order to address pedagogy and programming for students of color in ways that are relevant, appropriate, and that advocate education for equity and social justice, it is crucial to look at the educational process as both highly contextual and highly political. Pedagogical approaches that have at their core a critical, multicultural agenda, address the complexities involved in bridging the various gaps between students’ home and school lives, and use their cultural capital to create knowledge and develop broader understandings among members of the classroom.
community. These approaches, which are also antiracist in nature, disrupt the conservative, racist systems into which we have been socialized, and explode the melting pot myth that “the point of America was not to preserve old cultures, but to forge a new American culture” (Schlesinger; 1991, p. 13). That is to say, even within pedagogical approaches that attend to issues of culture primarily, discourses addressing race cannot be absent from the conversation. Likewise, no discussions around race can really begin until or unless the specific problem of institutionalized racism is also addressed. There are scholars who would argue for a closer analysis of the effects of institutional racism as a strategy of bringing critical, (multi) cultural awareness to our students, and a more genuine sense of democracy to our schools (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Many pedagogical models, such as those outlined here, have attempted to address the long reaching effects of silence and mis-education around both race and gender, as well as the power and patriarchy that follow them (Freire, 1994 ed.; Asante, 1988; Banks, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Defining Multicultural Education

Each of the pedagogical frameworks described in this literature review could be said to work toward the goal of multicultural education. As a reform movement, multicultural education has changed the face of education forever. Multicultural education has made inroads in recent decades as both an educational reform and as a philosophy of education. Multicultural education as we know it is not a new or “politically correct” concept. It has its roots in political struggle, emerging in its
contemporary form from the civil rights movement of the 1960's (Banks, 1996, 1993). Multicultural education was designed to bring about a more equitable educational experience for all students, while also attending specifically to the educational needs of students of color. Definitions of multicultural education can vary widely, dependent upon the perspective and discipline of the person presenting the definition. Recent literature has come to a closer consensus of what can be considered a more formalized definition of multicultural education (Banks, 1995; Bennett, 1995; Gollnick & China, 1990; Nieto, 1996). As a “concept, idea, or philosophy,” Gay (1995) states that multicultural education is a “set of beliefs and explanations that recognize and value the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity in shaping lifestyles, social experiences, personal identities, and educational opportunities of individuals, groups and nations” (p. 28). Gay provides a broad and general definition, yet even operationally, multicultural education is multi-layered, has several goals, and a far-reaching scope. More specifically, the goals of multicultural education are to integrate curriculum content, to help students understand the knowledge construction process, to reduce prejudice among students, to produce and employ equity pedagogy, and to create a school culture and social structure that are empowering to all students, particularly marginalized students (Banks, 1995). Bennett’s (1995) definition of multicultural education is that it “is an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs, and seeks to foster cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world” (p. 12). Scholars have also described multicultural education
as a process, whereby one develops certain skills, described by Ford and Dillard (1996) as "competencies of perceiving, evaluating, believing and doing in multiple ways" (p. 232). For example, Bennett (1995) adds to her definition of multicultural education that multiculturalism must be seen as a process of becoming, in addition to including the following dimensions: "The movement toward equity, the multicultural curriculum approach, and the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination" (p. 12). Ford and Dillard (1996) also imply that, because human beings are ever changing and ever growing, this process of becoming multicultural is ongoing and may never be fully realized as an end to a linear process, but that we continue to develop proficiency toward that goal.

Given the definitions and dimensions outlined by Banks (1995), Bennett (1995), and Gay (1995), one can assume that the role of multicultural education is to develop critical thinkers who have cultural knowledge outside of their own locations, who are connected to their worlds, and who have the skills needed to effectively negotiate life in a diverse society. Unfortunately, some interpretations of multicultural education only examine the influences of culture and socio-historical or political location, yet give little attention to the institutional effects of racism and hegemony. Ladson-Billings (1996) notes that race "has been marginalized within the very paradigm it helped to construct and shape," and calls for a "re-examination and restoration of race/racism as a part of the multicultural agenda" (p. 248). In other words, in an attempt to challenge and overcome past injustices, those concerned with multicultural education may take an ethnicity or culture-based
approach; however in doing so, race/racism may sometimes be conveniently excluded from the dialogue. For this reason, a conception of multicultural education that is also critical must continue to examine race and hegemony.

Defining Critical Education

Freire (1994) introduces the discourse of liberation both in and through education, which is part of the theoretical basis for critical, multicultural education. This theoretical discourse inherently includes a critique of patriarchy, colonialism, and the uses/abuses of power. Freire’s conception of education is that it is critical, that it helps individuals make connections between their lived experiences and the larger context of society, and that it moves individuals toward empowerment by encouraging them to act in opposition to the oppression they are able to recognize as a result of making those connections. In other words, “to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation....” (p. 29). He offers this view of education as “problem-posing” education, which is antithetical to the traditional “banking” method of education whereby individuals are educated in a highly polarized environment in which the teacher is the sole authority and sole producer of knowledge and truth. Freire visualized education as a site for the oppressed to achieve the level of humanity to which we are all naturally oriented, a concept which is also referred to as education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994b). The notion of practicing teaching and learning as deliberate acts of liberation is an idea that critical theorists have used to help transform the traditionally discriminatory
nature of education, and lends itself to conceptions of critical multicultural education. Many scholars, particularly those concerned with race and cultural diversity issues, gender issues, and/or class constructions, have taken up these Freirian edicts in developing curricula and pedagogy that allow traditionally oppressed or marginalized groups to move from object to subject and to be empowered in their own education processes (Freire, 1994). This Freinian notion of education challenges traditional ‘sit and get’ educational philosophies in which the student mind is a passive, non-critical container into which selected knowledge is sieved. Multicultural pedagogies are also antithetical to assimilationist educational practices that reinforce hegemony, domination, and the status quo (Ladson Billings, 1994); instead, they are openly value-based, rejecting the idea of neutrality in education (Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994b).

The Crossroads of Multicultural and Critical Education

The objective of critical multicultural pedagogies is to help its students become whole, integrated human beings who reflect upon and are connected to the world in which they live; that includes developing a sense of open-mindedness across cultures (Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994, Macedo, 1993). Freire (1989) uses the term integration to describe this relationship. He states that integration “results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality” (p. 4). This integration helps develop a sense of critical consciousness that helps students interpret, analyze, and act accordingly when issues
arise that affect them or their communities directly, while allowing them to see how these same issues affect communities and institutions on a global level.

Delpit (1995), who also complements the theoretical framework for critical multicultural education by addressing what she calls “the culture of power” (p. 24), considers the role of culture and power in all parts of the education equation, from the parents and community, to the students and teachers, to the classroom content. She examines all of the players, and the power dynamics affecting the relationships between them. Although Delpit couches discussions of culture, power, and privilege within dialogue around the literacy development of African American children, these discussions can also be applied to broader educational contexts, and to other cultural groups. Delpit (1995) addresses the assumptions around power, equity and education in her discussion of the culture of power, which is itself a form of institutionalized oppression. She contends that there is a “culture of power,” a system of codes and behaviors that reflect the “rules of the culture of those who have power” (read: White, hegemonic culture), and that determine level of success, as defined by that same culture, for students in classrooms (p. 24, 25). Unfortunately, this culture of power, which is many times the culture of the school as well, is not always explicitly transmitted to students of color, or to others whose culture is not reflected in the culture of power. Because cultural prejudices remain largely unexamined in our society, and therefore encouraged and perpetuated, those who wish to teach for liberation must be able to recognize and problematize the hidden assumptions ingrained specifically within the culture of schooling (Baldwin, 1988;
hooks, 1994; Jordan,). This is why Delpit suggests adopting pedagogy that, like critical multicultural education, is grounded in and is relevant to the lives and cultures of students: pedagogy that not only builds upon and validates their culture, but also explicitly transmits the codes of power.

Delpit’s position is that schools perpetuate a “silenced dialogue,” in which the voices and experiences of students and teachers of color are largely ignored or devalued. She contends that this type of behavior negates the experiences of people of color, thereby excluding them from the discourse and culture of schools. Unfortunately, this type of covert, institutionalized oppression may be such a daily part of schooling, that it becomes subconscious, almost natural. Delpit contends, however, that teachers are in an ideal position to change the course of institutionalized oppression within schools.

Delpit (1995) offers that many spaces exist where cultural biases can be challenged in the classroom. For example, teachers can examine stereotypes of race, class, and gender embedded within the texts they teach. Textbooks and materials that negatively target and invalidate difference establish a “norm” that projects negative images of those outside of that norm. Delpit (1995) suggests that “the key is to understand the variety of meanings available for any human interaction, and not to assume that the voice of the majority speak for all” (p. 20). Teachers must help their students identify negative stereotypes and oppressive group portrayals within these texts, giving students the tools to critique information that encourages or legitimates social inequity, an idea that is responsive to Freire’s (1994, 1989)
theoretical constructs on education. She provides several guidelines that can be used as a rubric by which to determine the quality of teaching for students of color, adding that “it is impossible to create a model for the good teacher without taking issues of culture and community context into account” (Delpit, 1995; p. 37). Among other suggestions: challenge students; have high expectations of students and help them to meet those expectations; help them connect what they learn to real-life contexts; teach students to think critically; and be concerned with them culturally, rather than just academically. This guide can be used for those who are rethinking oppression and power relationships within their classrooms.

Many critical pedagogues maintain that in order to change the oppressive nature of schooling and to develop a culturally responsive and engaging teaching philosophy, teachers must first examine their own locations, including their personal, educational, and professional experiences (Dillard & Ransom, forthcoming; Sleeter, 1993). The self-reflection involved in that process is a way to begin to understand cultural differences and to critique the inequities sometimes produced by those differences (Greene, 1978). As Delpit (1995) states, “learning to interpret across cultures demands reflecting on our own experiences, analyzing our own culture, examining and comparing varying perspectives. Engaging in the hard work of seeing the world as others see it must be a fundamental goal for any move to reform the education of teachers and their assessment” (p. 151). Approaching teaching using this model both helps teachers, and supports students in learning to look at the world critically and objectively. Engaging in critical, culturally responsive pedagogy
and practice, or teaching as the act of freedom, creates a teaching and learning situation that is not mediated strictly by content, but that is more dialogic and that allows both teachers and students to become critical shapers of the educational experience (Freire, 1994, 1989).

As Delpit (1995) and Freire (1994) suggest, the experiences shaping the learning environment for each member of that environment must be validated and allowed to enhance the classroom experience for all involved. Without routine reflection on philosophies and pedagogical practices, “not only might we not be allowing students to bring their critical intelligence to bear upon the teaching task, but we as teacher educators may be modeling behavior that is just the opposite of what we wish to engender” (Delpit, 1995; p. 125). Although she illustrates the notion of bringing students’ lived experiences to bear in discussions around cultural relevance, she does not exclude teachers from this challenge. For example, regardless of how or what teachers have been taught, either formally or informally, they must always recognize and critically evaluate those influences on their philosophies and pedagogical strategies. Delpit (1995) contends that it is very important for teachers to use not only their own lived experiences, but also those of the students, to enhance the learning environment, rather than ignore or devalue the significance of these experiences. Delpit (1995) is corroborated by scholars such as Ford and Dillard (1996), who recognize the significance of re-evaluating values, ideals, and beliefs around education and schooling. The only way to alter these values and beliefs is by knowing what they are, which is part and parcel to the
practice of self-discovery/recovery. Bringing together ideas of culture, inequity, and power as related to education, returns us to developing critical consciousness through education. As the work of Delpit (1995), Freire (1994), and others considered in this review of literature suggest, we must begin to educate students to examine issues critically and to link them to the greater reality.

Conceptions of critical multicultural education such as engaged, culturally relevant, and antiracist pedagogies, all of which are conceived around critical multicultural education as it has been defined in this text, are also tied into the notion of educating for critical consciousness. Each approach described below helps students to reflect, think critically, and thereby participate fully in the academic process. These approaches also address the historical and contemporary effects of inequity in education, exemplifying how full incorporation of a multiplicity of views and appreciation of various cultural, social and political norms and values can enrich the quality of education for all students.

Engaged Pedagogy

hooks (1994b) introduces the concept of "engaged pedagogy" as a way to embrace education as the practice of freedom. As hooks (1994b) states, "the engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself" (p. 11). Engaged pedagogy emphasizes teacher and student welfare in the process of empowerment, rather than just the oppressor/oppressed dialectic proposed by critical pedagogy. In other words, "teachers must be actively committed to a process of self actualization that promotes
their own well being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (hooks, 1994b; p. 15). Self-actualization and discovery as a starting point for helping others is a very important aspect of developing programs for students of color that are critical and multicultural. It seems that the only way any educator can effectively develop an all inclusive way of teaching is to understand how he or she is placed in this world, i.e., what relationship one has to the rest of humanity. Because the notion of neutral education does not exist, each educator must begin the teaching and learning process with an examination of his or her own positionality before effectively moving toward helping others on their own journey to empowerment as self-actualized beings (Freire, 1994; Dillard, 1996a, 1996b). hooks’ model seeks to educate with the notion that both students and teachers are whole human beings in communion with the world, rather than compartmentalized or fragmented objects (Macedo, 1993). Teaching to the entire student, body mind and spirit, is a revolutionary idea in an educational system that constantly seeks to divide the whole into the sum of its parts, especially when those parts consist of one’s race, class, gender and sexuality (Lorde, 1984). hooks (1994b) also suggests that the emancipation and empowerment which comes through practicing education as liberation is for both teacher and student, stating that “any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process” (p. 21). In this way, teacher and student are engaging together in the struggle for freedom.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson Billings (1994) outlines the research study she conducted to determine characteristics of successful teachers of African American students. As a result of this study, she suggests utilizing students’ home culture as a foundation for building their knowledge base. Ladson Billings (1994) applies the term ‘cultural relevance,’ which involves addressing issues of race and culture in every aspect of the teaching and learning process, and linking students’ home cultures with the school culture to promote each student’s academic success, particularly among students of color. Ladson-Billings (1994) defines her approach to teaching as ‘pedagogy of opposition,’ and much in line with critical pedagogy; it focuses on students’ academic success and on developing both their cultural competence and critical consciousness. Ladson Billings (1994) describes culturally relevant teaching as a

Pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right (p. 17-18).

Ladson-Billings also implies that a culturally relevant notion of teaching uses the cultural capital that each student brings to the classroom, and is based on Freire’s (1994) notion of ‘problem posing’ education. She notes specifically that a “hallmark of the culturally relevant notion of knowledge is that it is something that each student
brings to the classroom” (Ladson-Billings, 1994; p. 87). She goes on to state that within her conception of pedagogy, students are not seen as “empty vessels to be filled by all-knowing teachers; instead, what they know and bring is acknowledged, valued, and incorporated into the classroom” (Ladson-Billings, 1994; p. 87). Part of what students of color often know and bring, as Ladson Billings states, are their experiences with racism, either at a personal or institutional level. Creating effective dialogues around students’ experiences (or lack thereof) with race is another avenue that teachers may choose in creating pedagogies that are critical and multicultural.

**Antiracist Pedagogy**

In order to conceptualize antiracist pedagogy, we must first understand the meaning(s) of racism. Thompson (1997) conceptualizes racism as “structural and embodied inequities that are rendered ‘legitimate’ and appropriate by particular conventions of policy, law, common sense, and even science” (p. 8). She notes that racism must be seen as a deep-seated institutional problem, rather than merely an individual behavior or attitude in order to be addressed effectively. So although racism does indeed manifest itself on an individual and personal level, in order to be eradicated, racism must be confronted on both the personal as well as the societal/institutional level. Thompson also differentiates between the concepts ‘non-racist’ and ‘antiracist,’ defining antiracist as a more proactive, aggressive approach to recognizing and ending racism, in contrast to non-racist, which assumes that there is or can be such things as racial innocence or colorblindness. On the contrary, because every human being in this society is somehow racialized and race is a part of
identity development, no one can be racially innocent or colorblind (Omi & Winant, 1993, 1986).

Wellman (1977) defines racism as a set of "culturally sanctioned beliefs which, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the advantages Whites have because of the subordinated positions of racial minorities" (p. xviii). Similarly, Scheurich and Young (1996) discuss institutional racism in terms of embedded beliefs or assumptions based on race. Scholars of color have added to that definition the ability of a power structure to broadly exercise sanctions based on socially constructed notions of race, while at the same time allowing Whites specifically to benefit from the privileges of those institutionalized biases (McKay, 1993; Zou and Trueba, 1998). Evelyn Hanssen (1998), a grade school teacher who reflects on the role institutional racism continues to play in her school and classroom, recognizes several areas in which racism is embedded in the culture of schools, the first being curriculum. Firstly, she noticed that there were few to no authors/scholars of color selected for the new English curriculum at her school.

At the same time, when an author of color was suggested, he/she was immediately dismissed as too sexually explicit, yet her colleagues accepted European canonized authors who were also admittedly sexually explicit. Secondly, she noted that the faculty was nearly all White in a school with a predominantly Black student population, and again, viable African American candidates were dismissed on what she considered to be vague, subjective grounds, yet these same teachers complained of a lack of teachers of color in their school. Finally, she noted that the ethos of the
school itself was problematic. While the school was primarily African American, there were little to no elements of African American culture reflected anywhere else in the school other than in the student population. The examples Hanssen provides, along with such elements as tracking, disciplinary procedures/programs, and policy decisions, are just a few of the ways that institutional racism can assert itself in schooling (Crossland, 1971; Ward & Cross, 1989). The problems associated with institutional racism also provide an argument as to why race must be addressed specifically both in the curriculum, as well as in other areas of educational institutions.

Nieto (1996) contends that practicing antiracism and/or anti-discrimination means paying attention to the entire structure of schooling and all the areas in which some students may be favored over others, including curricula, materials, teacher-student relationships, teaching strategies, and policies on grouping/ranking students. Nieto asserts that by being proactive in addressing racism, an antiracist philosophy assists students in gaining skills needed to confront racism. At the same time, it teaches them to be critical and honest about the relationship of race and ethnicity to power, and how that relationship gives rise to privilege for some groups and oppression for others. These realizations may help students build bridges with one another across racial, ethnic, and other cultural boundaries, as they continue to define and re-define their own racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.

While parallel definitions of multicultural education have already been provided, Nieto (1996) provides an extensive definition of multiculturalism within a
sociopolitical context that incorporates the notion of multicultural education not only as a process, but also as one that is specifically antiracist. In her definition of multicultural education,

It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism... that students, their communities, and teachers represent. [It] permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes the democratic principles of social justice (Nieto, 1996; p. 307).

Nieto’s definition not only addresses the traditional notions of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism as a process rather than a product, but also acknowledges that racism cannot be ignored in developing a multicultural, open-minded and accepting way of being that is penetrating and permanent. Within Nieto’s definition of multicultural education, students not only gain cultural knowledge, but also are able to critically reflect on the nature and influence of race and racism in their lives and the role of those factors in their identity formation. Students are then able to address, discuss, process, and understand the nature of racism on a broader level. Helping students understand that the threat of racism anywhere is a threat to racism
everywhere, is an essential part of critiquing racism and power, and to being able to make connections across contexts and experiences. As hooks (1994a) reminds us, as a nation we have made little transformative progress to eradicate sexism and racism precisely because most citizens of the United States believe in their heart of hearts that it is natural for a group or an individual to dominate over others. Even though marginalized groups have greater access to civil rights in this society than in many societies in the world, our exercise of these rights has done little to change the overall cultural assumption that domination is essential to the progress of civilization, to the making of social order (p. 200).

By changing the ways in which students perceive institutional racism, power and hegemony, they are able to see the role institutionalized racism plays both in their daily lives, and in the ways they relate to those not like themselves (hooks, 1994a, 1994b; West, 1994). Racism is then no longer seen as the natural way of things, or as an entity that cannot, will not, or even should not change. In this way, racism is also not seen as something that ‘happens to’ people of color, or as a problem that people of color address exclusively in reference to Whites. At the same time, students understand that by creating situations of mistrust, misjudgment, or misunderstanding based on ignorance or intolerance, racism does not solely hurt members of oppressed groups, but members of privileged groups as well (Tatum, 1992). Specifically attending to racism also encourages students to talk about race and racial formation; students no longer have to view these as delicate or
unapproachable subjects, but instead as relevant and critical topics of discussion and analysis.

The literature reviewed here illustrates the inter-connectedness between culture and power, and how those connections affect the quality of education for students in this country. It also implies that schools are designed to disseminate the norms, mores, and values of a culture, and that a society plagued by a complex system of oppression will continue to transfer and ingrain those values into the educational system, whether covertly within the curriculum, as demonstrated by tracking and discipline issues, or economically through school funding patterns, staffing and resource availability (Apple, 1996, Ward & Cross, 1989). It seems that there are many things done in schools and educational institutions that both challenge and perpetuate inequity in education. This dichotomy seems to place teachers and/or program administrators, who inevitably carry out the practices and policies implemented, in the middle. However, although inequalities in education exist, there are many educators who not only provide, but aid one another in providing, a culturally relevant educational experience for their students. As Delpit (1995) has shown, this is not necessarily an easy task. It is a process requiring educators of different cultural backgrounds to be willing to both talk to and hear one another and their students, as opposed to making assumptions about one another’s pedagogical practices, or their students’ abilities and cultural knowledge. Nowhere is this more important than in the creation of contexts conducive to the recruitment and retention of students of color.
Recruitment and Retention of Students of Color

Educational Access and Statistics

Much of the literature speaks to the disheartening statistics regarding the disparaging educational trends among people from marginalized ethnic groups (Boone, Young & Associates, 1984; Green, 1989; Richardson & Bender, 1987). These trends, which show both absolute numbers and proportions of people of color decreasing dramatically between high school and graduate school, demonstrate that "the birthrates of children from traditionally disadvantaged minority groups are exceeding those of Whites, and minority children will be the college students of the future. If current trends continue, members of racial or ethnic minority groups will not be the faculty members, the creators of new knowledge, or the leaders of business and industry" (Pruitt, 1989, p. 81). The literature goes on to offer this analysis of the problem:

The reasons for declining participation are many and complex. They include increasing numbers of minorities choosing to enroll in professional schools such as law and medicine rather than graduate school; inadequate finances; choices made for work that leads to long-awaited income rather than graduate study that will further postpone income; a declining pool of college graduates; perceived low payoff of college teaching as a profession; and, importantly, graduate school procedures (Pruitt, 1989; p. 81).

Given this assessment, confronting the issues of racial identity and education among students of color in higher education begs to question the role of the university in
recruiting and retaining students of color into advanced degree programs. Pruitt (1989) also states that "major research universities serve as the ports of entry for large numbers of Asians and a few Hispanics who go on for the doctorate. They are not, however, sending Black students on to the terminal degree. Blacks and Hispanics are relying more heavily on the smaller comprehensive universities and liberal arts colleges" (pp. 80). By recruiting and retaining students of color into universities with highly regarded research standards, students of color from all cultural groups may have a greater opportunity to receive the research training they may not have received at smaller institutions. At the same time, these universities demonstrate their commitment to diversity by increasing meaningful programming that will allow students of color to gain both needed research skills and advanced degrees.

Finally, there are interventions that could possibly help to increase the numbers of students of color entering graduate studies programs, among them are strategies for increasing the applicant pool, recruitment, admission, and providing financial support for students (Valverde & Castenell, Jr., 1998). Pruitt (1989) suggests "summer school research activities at the graduate university might be arranged at the sophomore, junior, and senior years, thereby providing a bridge to graduate school and an incentive to pursue graduate education" (p. 84), which could provide the necessary bridge to graduate study that students of color may need.
Recruitment and Retention Programs

There are several examples of institutions that provide various versions of ‘bridge’ programs for recruiting and/or retaining students of color, and are sponsored through a host of institutions from local communities to educational institutions. At the same time, these programs may have ethnic specific or content specific foci, and be designed for students anywhere from kindergarten through high school. For example, Jones (1990) describes science and math related programs in which the local university collaborates with the school district to increase math and science skills for high school students who may eventually attend a local university. These programs, the beginnings of which have been in existence for over ten years, have been successful in placing African American students in pharmacy, medical, and dental schools, boasting of some of the highest placement rates of any college in the state of Louisiana. He states that their summer programs often serve as a pipeline that “lead into other academic-year spin offs,” in certain academic fields (p. 110).

Similarly, Apodaca (1990) examines an “early outreach program... designed to address the problem of eligibility [of students of color to university programs] by assisting students to prepare for college-level work” (p. 116). This program is sponsored through the University of California, California State University and the California Independent post-secondary institutions, and serves as a conduit from local junior and senior high schools to the recruitment and admissions programs of these institutions (p. 116). The outreach program he describes was developed based on a concern over the disparities between state high school graduation rates and
college representation among students of color. By providing academic advising, tutorials and learning skills services, college and career counseling, campus tours and summer programs, the university has succeeded in increasing “the number of eligible entering underrepresented students” to the university (p. 123). The programs described here seek to serve the needs of individual ethnic and geographical groups, and while that is crucial to retention rates, it may be limiting in terms of contributing to a general body of knowledge on cross cultural programming and on ways to retain students of color into advanced degree programs. A research study such as the one described in this text begins the work of filling that gap.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Scott (1989) conducted research on successful programs for recruiting and retaining graduate students of color at universities in Florida, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and Ohio. Of the programs mentioned, three were geared primarily to recruiting and retaining faculty, while only one was designed to recruit students. In none of the programs described was there an emphasis specifically on recruiting and retaining students into the field of education. In addition, these programs were more focused on providing financial support as a sole recruitment incentive. The exception was the Ohio program, which sponsors a two-day campus visit as part of its process. However, none of the described programs provided the intensive, long-term interaction with the university and its faculty that would provide a more intimate look at both the process of graduate study and the university itself, as does the program under study in this research project. According to Scott (1989), “none
of these graduate programs formally addresses the recommendations regarding recruitment-faculty networking, early identification, and faculty mentoring of minority undergraduates—which the literature identifies as crucial to consideration, application, and eventual acceptance to graduate education” (p. 113). Similarly, Barse (1989) describes other programs, specifically designed for Native Americans, that also provide financial support administered after admission, rather than as part of a more comprehensive program. While each of the programs outlined here may be beneficial to students of color entering graduate studies, they seem to lack crucial elements that would entice students to the program beyond the financial support provided for currently enrolled students.

As has been briefly discussed here, statistics and research studies reporting the trends among students of color in higher education are well documented in the literature (Cabrera, 1978; Crossland, 1971; Cummins, 1989; Green, 1989). These scholars note that the population of students of color in our elementary and secondary schools has steadily increased over the years, yet the numbers of teachers and professors of color have not been reflective of that growth. Corroborating earlier statements by Pruitt (1989), et al., Dillard and Ransom (1994) state that “part of the reason for this trend is closely linked to the relatively small number of minority students who are selecting and completing advanced degrees which allow them to become educators in K-12 public schools and higher education institutions” (p. 3). It is at this juncture that this research project on the Opening Doors program enters. This particular study specifically addresses issues around recruiting students of color
into advance degree programs, including ways to entice them to graduate study above and beyond providing financial support, as described in the literature. Fortunately, the students participating in the program under study are not required to be currently enrolled, which opens opportunities for returning graduate students, or for those who may be making a career change. At the same time, this study documents the progress of the students in the program, which directly speaks to the literature on access and retention.

Purpose of the Study

Opening Doors, the program examined in this research study, prepares students for careers in education, while socializing them into the graduate school environment and addressing the specific concerns of communities of color. University outreach programs like those described in the literature, aid students of color in becoming academically prepared for undergraduate study. However, this research project considers the student who has progressed through undergraduate study successfully, but who either has no real idea of the next academic or professional step, or who has never thought about the possible benefits of graduate study in education. At the same time, the program recruits students from across the country rather than across any particular state, which may allow for a more diverse cultural collective, a factor that speaks directly to the purposes of the study.

Given the statistics and estimations related to educational trends for students of color in education presented in the literature, particularly for those at the graduate level, there seems to be a need to develop research that further examines the
educational and social needs of students of color in order to recruit and retain them into graduate programs. This research project addressed some of these needs. There were two distinct purposes to this research study. The first of which was to examine the experiences of students participating in the Opening Doors program, a six-week college of education intensive research program designed to introduce undergraduate students from culturally diverse backgrounds to the life and world of graduate study, including its academic, social, and political expectations. Secondly, the study sought to understand the ways that the design, curricula, and process of the program might help students negotiate issues of identity and community, by offering systems of support for students, and providing an educational environment that is academically challenging, yet critical, multicultural, and relevant to them as students of color.

Chapter Summary

Although this chapter addressed the roles of pedagogy and programming given the particular effects of race and institutional racism, in no way is that an attempt to compartmentalize race-related issues within a “constellation of subjectivities” (Ladson-Billings, 1996; pg. ). On the contrary, as Yamato (1990) argues, each of the ‘isms’ need one another to survive. She states that “all these ism’s are systemic, that is, not only are these parasites feeding off our lives, they are also dependent on one another for foundation” (Yamato, 1990, p. 22). Instead, understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of race, class, gender and sexuality, race is discussed as merely a springboard, both for the study and for conceptualizing the issues around critical multicultural education, identity
development, and student programming, all of which are addressed in this research study.

Finally, because racist values and assumptions are so intertwined in our society, they often are no longer questioned, but have instead become the norm (Maher & Tetreault 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Tatum, 1992). Until these assumptions can be challenged and changed, education will continue to reinforce privilege on one side and prejudice on the other. There are scholars, such as Delpit (1995), Freire (1994), hooks (1994b), Ladson-Billings (1994), however, who provide both frameworks and models for education that do not reinforce oppression, but that are critical, multicultural, and that lend themselves to the transformation of society. These scholars also remind us that there are no hard and fast rules for teaching or facilitating in the classroom setting, and no recipes for success when engaging a multicultural approach to teaching. However, it is important to remember that attending to the roles and effects of culture, race, patriarchy, and hegemony are valuable ways to approach any teaching and learning situation.

The literature outlined in this chapter provides an understanding of the concepts that under gird this research project. At the same time, it demonstrates that there are studies examining the racial identity development of adolescents, or of people of color and Whites as directly related to one another. However, there is a dearth of literature examining racial identity development specifically for students of color in higher education as it relates to their experiences in teacher education programs, and the influence of their schooling experience on that development. This
chapter provided a review of the bodies of literature related to those issues as covered in the study. The ensuing chapter is a thorough discussion of the research designs and methodologies that provide the structure for the study.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter one of this text established the goals, purposes, and need for this research study, while chapter two outlined literature related to those goals and purposes, further corroborating the significance of this study to the body of knowledge related to race, identity, pedagogy, and programming. Chapter three is a description of the paradigms, theories, and methods that provided the foundation of the processes involved in the study. This chapter begins with a rationale for the use of qualitative inquiry, and why it was the most appropriate form of inquiry for the study. That discussion is followed by an outline of the theoretical framework, research design, and methods of data collection used to guide the study. In addition, there is a short description of the program itself, including a brief summary of its participants, goals, and activities. Finally, there is a discussion of the techniques used to analyze the data, as well as those used to assure the quality and integrity of the study.

Use of Qualitative Inquiry

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) characterize qualitative research as a field “defined primarily by a series of essential tensions and contradictions” and that it is
the job of researchers to “first locate ourselves in these tensions and contradictions” (p. ix, x). Critical and critical feminist approaches for example, provide theoretical alternatives that hinge upon positioning oneself in the research amongst those tensions and contradictions, while challenging the hierarchical power relationship between the researcher and the researched found in many Eurocentric, patriarchal approaches (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1994; Stanfield & Dennis, 1993). Likewise, because all theoretical and epistemological assumptions arise out of particular contexts or realities, their associated methodological considerations naturally reflect the same realities (Stanfield, 1993a; Scheurich & Young, 1996). For that reason, Eurocentric methods of inquiry, particularly those based in racist, sexist, and classist beliefs may be inappropriate for communities that have traditionally been marginalized within those belief systems. At the same time, within critical research traditions, methodological approaches are as ideologically bound to the ethics and values of the researcher as are the theoretical frames used to conduct the research. Therefore, my biggest consideration in approaching research methodology is being able to conduct research that, as Reason (1988) states, is “with and for people rather than on people” (p. 1). Qualitative research, specifically methods such as those used in this study, provides a way to capture these notions in ways that are diverse and creative, and that are spiritually, culturally and personally relevant both for me as a woman of color conducting research on issues affecting the communities of which I am a part, and for the participants in the study, who represent diverse ways of being in the world.
Use of Narrative in Qualitative Inquiry

Another way of portraying alternative ways of being in the world is through the use of narrative writing styles in representing data. Richardson (1994) states that by “writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable” (p. 516). The way in which the data is (re) presented is important for those of us who continue to search for models that are culturally relevant and important to us as people of color representing our communities. Alternative, non-traditional writing styles push the envelope of creativity in social science writing, and are political in nature, because as Richardson (1994) also asserts, “how we are expected to write affects what we can write about” (p. 520). For many scholars of color writing about communities of color in particular, there has been the dilemma of presenting data in ways that are culturally consistent, and that are validated by those who have the power to publish (or not) what we write. Collins (1991) states that “oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group” (p. xiii). Fortunately, many scholars (Collins, 1991; Harding, 1993; Lather, 1994, 1986; Stanfield & Dennis, 1993) provide options for reconceptualizing and redefining validity, so that social justice agendas can move forward while we continue interrogating and critiquing the very criteria used to legitimate those agendas.

In producing theory grounded in the daily experiences of the researched ‘subject,’ narrative is one method that women of color in particular have used to
present and represent the lives of people of color in research (Anzaldúa, 1990; Bell-Scott, 1994; Bell-Scott et al., 1991; Wade-Gales, 1995; Washington, 1991). Concrete experience, as outlined by Collins (1991) is an essential source of knowledge within many culturally diverse communities. For example, there are historical accounts of Black lives dating back to slavery, Native American and Latino lives predating European colonization that have been captured through oral and other non-written tradition. Historically, dominant thought has not legitimated the value of traditions of people of color (Lee, 1996). However, narrative has provided examples of the struggles, victories and defeats within the lives of people of color: histories of families, relationships, selfhood, and the ways in which we have negotiated individual and institutional racism to carve out spaces that are self-defined, validating and affirming. It is in that spirit that narrative is used as a form of representation in the study. At the same time, Dillard (forthcoming 2000) recognizes that “the underlying use of dialogue both in conducting research and in assessing claims is that there is value in the telling” (p. __). Utilizing storytelling and narrative as forms of data analysis and representation allows the researcher to construct alternative social realities that critique current oppressive realities and that validate the realities of traditionally oppressed peoples and communities.

Theoretical Framework

The first theoretical framework used in the study had to do with the overarching theoretical paradigm out of which I work as a researcher: critical theory as conceptualized by Freire (1994), particularly his notions of problem-posing.
education as previously outlined in the review of literature. I refer to critical theories in plural because there are several interpretations or ‘camps’ within the overall paradigm that apply critical notions to specific group interests, such as race and gender. The second theoretical frame was based on models of racial identity development, specifically the Cross (1995) revised model of racial identity development for African Americans.

Use of Critical Theories in Qualitative Research

Given the need to work within and against paradigms based in Western ideologies, critical theories have provided a theoretical framework through which I could conceptualize this research project. Likewise, critical theories provide the theoretical grounding that informs my life in general as a researcher who is also a woman of color, and who is also deeply connected to that positioning. Kincheloe & McLaren (1994) state that the project of critical research “is not simply the empirical re-presentation of the world but the transgressive task of posing the research itself as a set of ideological practices” (p. 144). This is especially true when working with people of color, because critical theories analyze the far-reaching and debilitating effects of hegemony and power relationships in our society. At the same time, these theories maintain concern with how our lived experiences are socially constructed and situated within changing sociopolitical contexts (Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994b).

Critical approaches to research involve analyzing both the process of research itself, and the position/standpoint of the researcher, in order to avoid reifying research as the road to ‘absolute truth.’ For example, living in the United States, a
country plagued by racism, sexism, class disparity and the universalization of
whiteness, it is sometimes necessary to find ways of critiquing and changing those
realities that are based within a self-defined standpoint. As Freire (1994) states, “to
surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes,
so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes
possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (p. 29). The impetus for creating theories
that help us to move toward a fuller humanity is to give rise to liberation from
“interlocking systems” of oppression, as characterized by Collins (1991; pg.).

Critical theories also problematize knowledge itself, meaning that no
knowledge is blindly received as concrete or ‘true’ (Ladson Billings, 1994). Instead,
the authority of knowledge is displaced from the researcher and is dispersed within
the research context among all participants and stakeholders. In rejecting traditional
views of knowledge, research respondents and other participants can become active
contributors to the knowledge construction process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba
& Lincoln, 1989). This critical view of knowledge allows for the rejection of
traditional academic knowledge as absolute and the acceptance of both cultural and
experiential knowledge as ‘real’ or valuable ways of knowing. At the same time it
reinforces the idea that neither research nor knowledge construction are politically
neutral or value free (hooks, 1993).

Critical research paradigms also recognize that racism is a deeply embedded
institution and should be viewed as such, rather than as an individual deviation from
an otherwise democratic and just way of life. Rather, racism is understood to be an
institution that informs every aspect of our lives. To view racism as a temporary
cycle of events or as an anomaly is to misunderstand the myriad ways that race and
the power associated with race are historically rooted and deeply inscribed (Bell,
1987; DuBois, 1994; Hacker, 1992; West, 1994; Woodson, 1933). Finally, critical
theories identify the role of culture in constructing reality. In other words, although
every culture has its own system of mores, values, and ways of constructing reality,
Western hegemonic culture has changed and/or shaped the realities of other cultures,
and in most cases, is also constructed as universal—the ‘watermark’ against which
other cultures are defined (Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Sleeter, 1993). Because these
philosophies have “constructed the world we live in-named it, discussed it, explained
it” (Scheurich & Young, 1996; p. 8), critical theories seek to recognize and
legitimate the ways in which historically marginalized cultures construct their/our
own social realities within the context of their/our own socio-political positions
(Dillard, forthcoming 2000).

While the critical theory camp has primarily been concerned with critiquing
systems of oppression, it has at the same time, often failed to critique the rampant
patriarchy that informs the gendered realities of those oppressions (Christian, 1990;
hooks, 1993; Wing, 1997). For this reason, feminists of color in particular, have
adopted epistemologies and methodologies that, unlike some critical approaches, do
not make assumptions of universal personhood based on men’s lives and generalized
to an entire body of people. Instead, their theories are based upon women’s unique
ways of knowing and being as defined by women themselves and that critique the
role of patriarchy in shaping gender identities (Anzaldúa, 1990; hooks, 1989; Noddings, 1984). These multi-layered analyses of race, gender, class and their related oppressions help me to have a fuller understanding of systems of oppression, and how those systems affect my life as a Black woman concerned with creating a more democratic society. At the same time, they allow for the alternate realities or ways of beings that the research participants in the study may have, given they are a diverse group of students of color. Recent theoretical constructs have undertaken the examination of the intersections of race and gender within various contexts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999; Wing, 1997). Wing (1997) states that critical race feminism, the body of scholarship specifically addressing the intersection of race and gender, examines “the intersections of race, gender, and sometimes class within a legal or multidisciplinary context” (p. 2). This multidisciplinary field has yet to define organizing principles of its own; however, because it arises out of the legal genre of Critical Legal Studies and Critical Race Theory, it borrows precepts from these theoretical frameworks. Like traditional critical theories, critical race feminism draws on, among others, such traditions as liberalism, feminism, Marxism, and postmodernism in an attempt to avert traditional legal theories and policies that support “hierarchy, neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, meritocracy, ahistoricism, and single axis analyses” (Wing, 1997; p. 3). Critical race feminism is an outgrowth of the need for theories that include a multidimensional analysis of the experiences and identities of women of color, particularly as it pertains to the legal system. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) apply their notion of a critical race theory specifically
to education, and bases it on the following precepts: "1) Race continues to be significant in the United States; 2) U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights; and 3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity," particularly in regards to education (p. 47). The notions of critical race theory offered by Ladson Billings & Tate (1995) also inform my understandings of racial and ethnic identity development, which represents the second theoretical frame used in the study.

Models of Racial and Ethnic Identity Development

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the racial identity development of former participants of the Opening Doors program, various models of racial identity development were used. The first, William Cross' (1995) revised model of The Psychology of Nigrescence, or the psychology of becoming Black, provides the primary framework for racial identity development in this study, although his theory was developed specifically regarding African American identity development. The Cross (1995) model provided the primary theoretical frame for the examination of racial identity development among research participants, both because it helped to lay the groundwork in this area and is therefore widely cited among scholars of color, and because at the very least it provides a place to begin an analysis of ethnic identity development that can be applied in a general way to the lives of respondents engaged in this study. The Cross (1995) model consists of five stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. Cross (1995) maintains that for persons in the first stage, race has low
salience; they are instead indoctrinated into the values of hegemonic Western culture. Race is a physical reality for them, but plays “an insignificant role in their everyday life” (p. 98). Tatum (1997) adds that in this stage, “the personal and social significance of one’s racial group membership has not yet been realized, and racial identity is not yet under examination” (p. 55). In the second stage, encounter, a significant event or experience causes a re-evaluation of current attitudes on race, resulting in a process whereby those attitudes are challenged. Cross (1995) states that the encounter need not be negative: “it may, instead, revolve around exposure to powerful cultural-historical information about the Black experience previously unknown to the person” (p. 105). Stage three, immersion-emersion, involves deconstructing previous perspectives, “while simultaneously trying to construct what will become his or her new frame of reference” (p. 106). Individuals in this stage may adopt many of the codes and symbols that they perceive to be associated with their new racialized identity—although they do not fully realize what this new identity will become. This stage is marked with the “either/or” thinking that demonizes whiteness, and rejects anything that does not represent their interpretations of ‘real’ Blackness.

Cross (1995) describes stage four as the point of “dissonance resolution,” or a time when a balance is reached between one’s feelings regarding White cultural groups, and one’s feelings of self as a person of color, in this case an African American (p. 113). He further states that as one’s “general defensiveness fades, simplistic thinking and simple solutions become transparently inadequate, and the
full complexity and inherent texture of the Black condition mark the point of departure for serious analysis” (p. 114). The final stage of Nigrescence, a stage Cross describes as essentially equivalent to stage four, is internalization-commitment, which is characterized by sustained interest and commitment to a “personal sense of Blackness” (p.121). These five stages were used as the general guide by which to discuss and analyze the racial identity development of respondents in the study. However, because this model remains problematic in its absolute descriptions of character/personality “types” for each stage, other models were also used to support the theoretical frame for the study. Characteristics critical to the development of a racial or ethnic identity for groups such Asian, Hispanic, and Native American communities in the United States have been identified by other researchers of color as well (Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995). There are many similarities between those models and the Cross model, with the basic characteristics being a move from possessing an unexamined sense of self ethically, into an ethnic identity search, eventually developing a more ‘achieved’ sense of ethnic identity.

It should be noted that no category or stage is linear or completely independent of another. Any member of any group can be in any stage at any point in life. Likewise, movement between stages is not fixed. In fact, “given the ever-changing cross-racial/ethnic interactions that individuals can experience in their lifetime, it is quite possible for an individual to stay at one specific stage, move forward, or even move backward” (Cases and Pytluk, 1995; p. 166). Tatum (1997)
takes this notion a step further by stating that not all people (speaking of Blacks in particular) move through every stage. Finally, it should be noted that identity “achievement” or “actualization,” as outlined in the literature as the final step, is indeed, not static (Ford & Dillard, 1996). The process of ethnic identity development according to Phinney (1990) does “not necessarily end with ethnic identity achievement but may [and does] continue in cycles that involve further exploration or rethinking of the role or meaning of one’s ethnicity” (p. 503). It would be problematic to assume that ethnic identity development ends in a destination, rather than being an ongoing process of self-reflection and awareness.

**Situating Self As Researcher**

Being an African American woman, the world has been seen through those lenses and has been interpreted and translated through those lived experiences. Dillard (1996b) suggests that understanding these influences provides “a way to not only understand how we have constructed ourselves in particular social contexts, but the ways in which those constructions shape ethnic, cultural, gender, and other personal identities…” (p. 33). Further, she states, “it is only through understanding the intricacies of personal histories and identities that we can move past the traditional stereotypes and generalizations that have shaped our perceptions…” (p. 33). In other words, only when we place ourselves and our work within the proper socio-historical and political contexts, can we begin to develop theories that are informed by an all inclusive, critical way of thinking and being, relative to a changing society. As a researcher and educator, I am concerned with confronting
oppression in whatever form it presents itself, which entails, as Dillard (1996a, 1996b) has indicated, critically examining the nature of relationships: both my relationship to the rest of the world, and its relationship with itself.

Taking into consideration the scholarship of feminists of color has helped me to locate a space for my voice and ways of being and knowing both as a person and as a researcher. The term ‘feminism’ however, has traditionally erased that which is not White, privileged, and heterosexual about women, by employing universal definitions of woman that place sometimes false assumptions of White womanhood at the center (Collins, 1991; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Richards, 1951; Smith, 1990). For this reason, I lean on conceptions of feminism that challenge traditional representations of womanhood. Smith (1990) provides one alternative, defining feminism as the

Political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women—as well as White, economically privileged, heterosexual women.

Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism… (p. 25).

This inclusive definition of feminism challenges traditional conceptions of feminism, which have implicitly excluded women of color and working class White women. In some cases, traditional conceptions of feminism has erased women of color altogether, by assuming that women of color are simply White women with “some ineffable and secondary characteristic, such as skin tone, added on” (Wing, 1997; p. 3). Collins (1991) describes Black feminist thought specifically as encompassing
"theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it" (p. 22). The reality of which she speaks includes a legacy of struggle and activism against racism, sexism, classism and negative stereotypes associated with Black women's sexuality. Like Collins (1991), I also add the descriptor "Black" to my conception of feminism because I am a Black woman specifically concerned with the realities and struggles of all women, but particularly those of other Black women, as described by Collins, and how those realities and struggles inform my own.

My position as a woman of color in the context of an oppressive society is vital to my agenda as a researcher seeking social justice and equity. As African American women and women of color, the intersections of race, class and gender are of extreme importance because of the ways in which we have been situated in this society. Bound by hierarchies in which whiteness and maleness are privileged, many social relationships have typically consisted of the privileged White male voice as most meaningful in relation to all other voices. Such hierarchies produce binaries of, among others, man/woman and Black/White. These 'self/other' relationships establish either/or categories that restrict the ways in which we can define ourselves. Contemporary critiques challenge these polarities, opting instead for a 'both/and' approach to identity and research (Collins, 1991; Lather, 1986b). For Black women, that 'both/and' means understanding and fighting the effects of both racism and sexism, since it is impossible, especially for women of color, to fight oppression along a single axis (Anzaldúa, 1990; Christian, 1990; Lorde, 1984). As duCille (1996) states, the attributes of our race and gender make Black women "not only the
second sex... but also the last race, the most oppressed, the most marginalized, the most deviant, the quintessential site of difference” (p. 82). As these Black feminist scholars have demonstrated, Black women have had to develop alternative means of defining our realities that are based within the understanding of and a struggle against oppressive realities, given the equally debilitating effects of institutionalized racism and sexism both inside and outside of the Black community. It is only then that we can produce scholarship that is meaningful individually and collectively. It is at this juncture that I present my positioning as a researcher in this project.

**Situating Self in the Research**

Postmodern claims to openly ideological research follow the premise that researchers and research have always had implicit and/or explicit agendas, and that those agendas have always been based on researcher values and ideologies. I openly acknowledge to the reader my position to this research as a participant observer who was also a member of the Opening Doors 1993 cohort, and who is also now the researcher in a study about the Opening Doors program. By doing so, I was able to examine the values I brought to the study throughout the research process, and the ways in which those values influenced the research process. In other words, because I am a Black woman who is also a former participant of this program, I recognize that there are certain personal, epistemological, and ethical stances that I bring to the project that are particularly notable because of my relationship to the research. For example, I recognize the importance of relationship building for people of color in academia particularly, as well as the possibilities for culturally relevant pedagogy.
and programming in building systems of support in higher education, which are stances built directly out of my experiences as a program participant. While these prior experiences and personal standpoints add another layer to the research, it was nevertheless necessary to use triangulation techniques to keep me as the researcher from speaking for the data, and to help allay the effect of what some may define as the “biases” I bring to the research. According to Olesen (1994), for those concerned with research as a liberatory practice, acknowledging and defining one’s position to and relationship with the researched subject(s) can have a positive effect on the overall outcome of the research, rather than a negative, as is assumed within positivist research approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Situating oneself as researcher, despite impossible claims of objectivity or value-free research, is an essential element in deciding who or what is researched and in what way. For example, in Ladson-Billings’ (1994) text The Dreamkeepers, many of the political and ethical issues centered on her position as an African American woman researcher conducting research with African American children. Ladson-Billings’ research, which centers on the cultural relevance of education and teaching for African American children, explicitly identifies her personal investment, because as Michelle Fine (1994) states, “It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak” (p. 70). Issues become even more complicated when asking not just what we speak about, but about whom we speak, and for what purpose. Because of the ‘isms’ sometimes found in research historically conducted about marginalized communities from those identifying outside of those
communities, there is definitely a need for scholars and researchers of color like myself, to conduct research within their/our communities, keeping in mind that they/we cannot be considered the sole voice of a group or community. Stanfield (1994) notes that the tendency for “dominant researchers... to impose even their most enlightened cultural constructs on Others rather than creating indigenized theories and methods to grasp the ontological essences of people of color is, of course, legendary” (p. 176). So although I do have direct and multiple ties to this research project, I am but one voice adding to the body of knowledge on issues regarding people of color.

Along that same line, my choice to situate myself as a researcher who is also a participant, in the sense of being a member of particular communities, calls into question the issue of ‘insider/outsider’ research, an idea that is often associated with discussions of research validity. Conducting research within a ‘self/other’ binary has traditionally meant that groups marginalized along axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, et al., have been conceptualized as ‘other’ (Fine, 1994). It has also meant that those within the hegemonic Western culture have traditionally been granted authority to interpret, analyze and generalize about marginalized groups using the values, biases, and criteria of hegemonic Western culture (Collins, 1991; hooks 1994b; Lee, 1996; Stanfield & Dennis, 1993). It is important to note also, that assumptions of authority within a group or community can be easily essentialized or romanticized if the researcher/researched/audience fail to realize that not even a voice from within a community can be taken as the definitive voice about that
community. Therefore, although it is problematic for members of dominant groups to conduct research within marginalized groups without critical examination of those positions, it is also problematic to essentialize voices from within a group, particularly if those voices reinforce hegemonic beliefs.

By way of example, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) and Lisa Delpit (1995) both African American women, conduct research on African American children. Although ethnically and by nature of being teachers, they are considered ‘insiders,’ neither women claim to have the recipe for teaching African American children. Instead, as is my intention, they develop theories that are theoretically grounded within the related literature and the research context. Ladson-Billings (1995) states that “this location of myself as native can work against me. My work may be perceived as biased or, at the least, skewed, because of my vested interests in the African American community” (pg. 471). At the same time, the work we do as researchers who acknowledge and value our positions in relation to the research is openly ideological, challenging the ‘grand narratives’ of validity that have so inscribed Western philosophies. For that reason, researchers of color, like those described throughout this study, have begun to develop means of validating research done in our communities that are based out of paradigms different from those that have historically oppressed those communities.

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to assume that people of color have an automatic “native” status within the communities with which we identify, because as many researchers of color have found, even as research “insiders” we can be, and
oftentimes are, simultaneously both insiders and outsiders (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nelson, 1996). The points at which one moves inside or outside of a given group or subculture depends on the axis along which we choose to travel, as well as the specificity of our definition of group membership. In the case of this particular research project, I am both a person of color conducting research with/about people of color, and a former participant of the Opening Doors program. As Alcoff (1995) states, “where an individual speaks from affects both the meaning and truth” of what is said, such that “there is no possibility of rendering positionality, location, or context irrelevant to content” (p. 98, 104). That being the case, each researcher’s positionality necessarily affects the research, both in the approach and handling of the research, as well as how it is represented. The narrative presentation of the research, as well as the literature, theories, methodologies, and modes of analysis presented in this text are all demonstrative of my positionalities in and to the research.

Research Design and Methodology

Because qualitative research has no single set of methodologies that are distinct or privileged, it was necessary to employ a variety of methodological approaches in order to provide a multi-dimensional view of the lives and experiences of the respondents in the study, as well as of the research setting and program context. Because traditional Western philosophies and theories have often been insufficient and inappropriate to describe the realities of those who live in the margins of those philosophies, researchers of color in particular have had to develop
alternative ways of theorizing around our individual and collective realities (Anzaldúa, 1990; Christian, 1990). It is from those theories that provide methodological alternatives of representing diverse realities and communities that I draw the design for this research study.

Patti Lather's (1994) exploration of critical research designs provides a framework for conceptualizing methodology as tied to a struggle against domination, and is useful to my own conceptualization of methodology as it relates to this research project. Firstly, critical research designs “explore more interactive, dialogic, and reciprocal research methods that work toward transformative action” (p. 107). Utilizing interactive methods involved being engaged with the research participants on a more personal level than positivist methods traditionally require (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For the purposes of this study, those methods consisted of face-to-face interviews in intimate, comfortable settings. Conducting research also involves building relationships: with the researched, other researchers, and those associated with the research study and the research process. Building rapport within those relationships is vital in moving the researcher agenda forward, especially considering that power and privilege is both fluid and mutable depending on the context (Fine, Weis, and Powell, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tatum, 1997).

Having been a former participant in the Opening Doors program and being familiar with several other students who participated in various cohorts of the program facilitated the process of building rapport with potential research subjects.
My personal relationship to the many of the research participants may have also had some effect on the research outcomes, because as Altheide & Johnson (1994) maintain, “personal relations with the members in a setting, how field research data (are) conceived and recorded, and a host of other pragmatic issues (have) important implications for what a particular observer (reports) as the ‘findings’ of the research” (p. 486). As a former program participant myself, it is possible that my experiences in the program and relationship to many other program participants throughout the years may have given me access to respondents or provided me with background knowledge that I would not otherwise have had. While these circumstances may be considered by some to be limitations, they nevertheless were brought to bear as I approached the research context. The second characteristic of critical research designs is that they “connect meaning to broader structures of social power, control, and history” (Lather, 1994; p. 107). A critical part of conducting research is de-compartmentalizing lived experiences and positioning those experiences within the larger societal context, including the racism, sexism, classism, and other ‘isms’ that plague this society. This notion was particularly important, specifically as it related to the ways in which the Opening Doors program helped students negotiate various personal and political issues, both inside of educational contexts and in a global context. Because neither knowledge nor lived experience exists inside of a vacuum, failing to locate meaning within the ‘big picture’ perpetuates the oppressive nature of hegemonic culture. In this case, locating the big picture involved using a critical and racial identity development
framework to analyze the ways students of color came to understand both their experiences and those of others in the context of a racialized society.

Thirdly, Lather (1994) asserts that research designs based within a critical frame "work toward open, flexible theory building grounded in both confrontation with and respect for the experiences of people in their daily lives" (p. 107). Part of my charge as a post-positivist researcher with a critical, feminist, emancipatory agenda is to recognize any issues related to the research that might affect the outcomes of the study, because researchers who enter the research situation with predetermined notions of what they should find will probably find them. However, entering the research context prepared to work with the researched 'subjects' to find meaning challenges traditional ideas of molding data to fit theory, in addition to moving the locus of sole authority away from the researcher. In this case, respondents' recitation of their diverse experiences during the course of a six-week summer program provided the data for determining the effects of the Opening Doors Program on their perceptions of themselves and their conceptions of individuals outside of their particular racial or cultural group.

Finally, critical research designs "foreground the tensions involved in speaking with rather than to/for marginalized groups" (Lather, 1994; p. 107). Because claims to authority of knowledge and truth have traditionally had Eurocentric, patriarchal interests at their center, the research outcomes, analyses, and cultural critiques conducted by members of those groups have oftentimes reflected those interests as well. The assumption of privilege and power, whether that is along
lines of race, class, gender or education, can produce an anti-dialogic relationship between the researcher and the researched, such that the researcher easily falls into the snare of conducting research on or for groups rather than with them. I attempted instead to view the research context as “mutually educative,” in the sense of expecting to gain knowledge, wisdom, and insight from research participants as they share their lived experiences particularly in regards to race, community, and the Opening Doors program; likewise I shared my perceptions and interpretations of those experiences with them, avoiding missionary tendencies to see myself as their savior (Lather, 1994).

Participant Selection

Respondents in the study included twenty former participants of the Opening Doors Summer Research Institute, all of whose names and identifying information was concealed by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality (See Figures 3.1 and 3.2 for a more detailed description of respondents in the study). Each research participant was a person of color and represented a variety of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Initially, two research participants were to be selected from each of the seven graduating classes of the program, which existed from 1992 to 1998. There were on average, twenty participants per year that the program was in place, for a total of approximately 140 students; therefore the number of students selected for the study would have represented approximately ten percent of the total number of students who had participated in the program during its seven year span. However, because of my desire to actually meet with and interview each respondent
## Opening Doors

### Individual Student Interview Participants

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<th>Participant</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>OD YEAR</th>
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<th>GENDER</th>
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Figure 3.1: Opening Doors Individual Student Interview Participants (continued)

¹ Each graduate program listed is in the field of Education unless otherwise stated.
Figure 3.1: Continued

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<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
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</table>
## Opening Doors

### Group Interview Participants

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<th>Gender</th>
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Figure 3.2: Opening Doors Group Interview Participants
in person, there was a need to narrow the respondent group to a purposeful sample of representative individuals who were, among other things, physically accessible to the researcher. Morse (1994) states that “a good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study” (p. 228). Based on these criteria, and a desire for a respondent group that was also rich in the necessary information (Patton, 1990), the respondent group was selected. The students who eventually comprised the respondent group were taken from those potential respondents who had current and accurate contact information on file with the program’s facilitators. Likewise, of the potential respondents contacted for the study, the final group of participants was selected from those who could be accessed by the researcher for a face-to-face interview, rather than attempting to conduct interviews via telephone or regular mail.

In building a respondent group according to previously outlined specifications, I attempted initial contact with former participants of the Opening Doors program via telephone, regular mail, or electronic mail. As this process continued, several individuals relayed contact information of those for whom I had none. Many of the individuals initially contacted were still in communication with at least one other member of their cohorts, and in some cases were in contact with members of other cohorts as well. The majority of those who responded to my initial attempts at contact volunteered to participate. Of those who volunteered, actual respondents were purposefully selected based on the primary criterion of sample
diversity: there had to be a gender and ethnic/cultural mixture in the final group of respondents, a variety of experiences and backgrounds represented, and when possible, representation of at least one voice from each Opening Doors cohort. In this way, a minimum of one voice would be represented from each cohort of the program and each ethnic group served by the program, yet a variety of voices would be represented.

Methods of Data Collection

Data collection for the study began in the summer of 1999. The first form of data collection in the study involved the use of interviews to describe and examine the experiences of students of color in the Opening Doors program, also referred to by participants in the study and in the narrative of the text as “OD.” The second form of data collection in the study involved an analysis of documents related to the structure of the Opening Doors program itself. Initially, potential candidates for the study were contacted to introduce them to the study, to gain consent from those chosen to participate in the study, and to schedule interviews. During the initial contact, I approached each potential respondent with an oral and/or written solicitation explaining my research project and agenda (See Appendix A). Each potential respondent, even those who later withdrew their participation due to personal reasons, expressed interest in the topic and were enthusiastic about the potential outcomes of the study on many levels, including feeling a need for this program to be acknowledged within the field of education, and being impassioned that voices of color would be heard in regards to race and education. Data collecting
methods for the study consisted of 20 student interviews: 14 open-ended individual interviews and one group interview with six members of the final Opening Doors cohort. An interview of the program director/facilitator was conducted at the beginning of the study to establish the foundation for the study and to gain an idea of the history and philosophy of the program, as well as her perceptions of various cohorts of the Opening Doors program as a collective. In addition, I held various informal conversations with former Opening Doors participants not directly involved in the study. Both the individual interviews and the group interview were conducted in home settings and designated areas at both of the universities at which the program was housed. Finally, documents relevant to the study were also collected throughout the study. Each of these methods is outlined below.

**Director/Facilitator Interview**

The primary facilitator of the program was also its creator and director, and was therefore critical to discerning the original goals and mission of the program. There were multiple purposes for conducting this interview. Firstly, this interview allowed me to gain background knowledge regarding the conception and birth of the program (See Appendix B). In addition, as the only person who has had intimate contact with each of the seven cohorts, this interview allowed me to ‘fill in the gaps,’ and to gain a perspective across groups. Finally, the director/facilitator interview provided a perspective of someone technically outside of the group, but who was very much inside of the Opening Doors experience, and was therefore also a triangulation source.
Because qualitative inquiry seeks to determine the nature of relationships within a particular group, system or culture, in addition to incorporating the personal (Janesick, 1994), I desired to portray the facilitator not as a disembodied figure who was merely in charge of a program, but as a human being in relationship with other human beings. In order to understand the perspective with which she approached the Opening Doors experience, I felt it necessary to gain personal background information on her as well. I asked her various questions about her teaching philosophies and experiences and how those affected the product and process of the program. Like with the student interviews, I also inquired as to her experiences with race, and with her own K-12 and undergraduate schooling. Finally, I made inquiries into her specific Opening Doors experiences and recounted to her several ideas and concerns expressed by student respondents in order to gain comments on those events filtered through her experiences as director and facilitator.

**Individual Student Interviews**

As mentioned, one structured interview was conducted with each individual respondent involved in the study, and each agreed to participate in one follow-up interview, which was conducted with various respondents in order to gain further information not available in the initial interview transcript. Research interviews explored several factors within the life of each subject, including their personal backgrounds, educational/professional experiences, and perceptions of their identity development in whatever way they chose to define it. Moreover, this interview assessed their experiences in the Opening Doors program, particularly as those
experiences related to: negotiating racialized identities both within and outside of the Opening Doors context; to developing a sense of community within their cohorts; and to influencing career choices with regard to the field of education. These interviews helped to determine the ways in which a more complex understanding of other people of color and of themselves as part of a collective of people of color was obtained as a result of participation in the group. As mentioned, follow-up interviews were scheduled as needed when themes or topics that were not addressed in initial interviews, but were critical to the study, arose during the course of data collection or analysis. The unstructured, open-ended ethnographic method described by Fontana & Frey (1994), also referred to as the in-depth interview method, was used to conduct each interview.

Each of the twenty student respondents provided informed consent and participated in a minimum of one interview which, for individual sessions, ranged in length from 45 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes, and consisted of twenty open ended questions, each of which was audiotaped. The same interview protocol was used with each student respondent, both individual and group (See Appendix C), and was organized into four sections. The first section covered personal background, including K-12 educational experiences, and school and community peer groups. In addition, students were asked to describe the ethnic make-up of the communities in which they lived as adolescents. The second section of the interview had to do with their experiences with race. Specifically, I desired to know their most significant racial experience(s), at what age the experience(s) occurred, and the impact of the
experience(s) on their lives. The majority of the interview questions regarded their experiences in the Opening Doors program. For this reason, interviews were guided, but unstructured. I desired to hear whatever specific memories or events they could recall, along with their interpretations of those experiences. Finally, they were asked about their experiences as undergraduate students, both academically and socially. In addition, they were asked, given the topics previously covered, to describe their educational philosophies and their definitions of a “good teacher.”

Because I desired to document a variety of ethnicities and experiences, I interviewed respondents across Opening Doors groups rather than entirely within one particular group. A minimum of one interview was conducted with each year’s cohort, although in most cases, there was more than one interview conducted within each cohort. The exception was the group interview, which was conducted with six members of the 1998 cohort, which was also the final year of the Opening Doors program. This group was gathered for two specific reasons: 1). to get a group perspective in a context where each individual experienced the same summer of the program, but could offer various perspectives on the same experience, 2). this specific group had the largest number of same-group members in one geographic location.

Group Interview

Because there was a small cadre of 1998 cohort members working and/or attending graduate school in the same city, I conducted a group interview with those six individuals as a way to gain a deeper understanding of relationship and
community building within the group and to provide member checks for the study. The group interview, which was audiotaped, allowed for a dialogue among students from the same Opening Doors cohort, who have had a variety of experiences in the program, and each of whom are currently enrolled in, or are in the process of enrolling in higher education programs at the program’s home institution. Fontana & Frey (1994) describe the group interview as a technique for gathering qualitative data that can “provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interviews” (p. 365). For the purpose of the study, the group interview was utilized to find out specific information about the group dynamics of the Opening Doors program. Each of the seven local individuals who were members of the 1998 cohort was contacted in reference to the study. Several of these individuals had been previously informed of the study through other sources and had already approached me to volunteer their participation, and each was excited at the possibility of participating in the study. However, because scheduling seven busy individuals for an interview session proved to be a grueling task, only six of the seven were able to meet for the interview. Because I was previously acquainted with each of them and because many of them lived in close proximity, I gave them the option of meeting either at my house or in a designated location at the university. Each desired to meet in a comfortable, home-like atmosphere, and decided to meet at my home. This interview was approximately 3 ½ hours in length, but also included separate conversations among them so they could ‘catch up’ with
the lives of their cohort members, both those represented and those who sent along updates through local cohort members.

The roundtable-discussion method used to conduct the interview allowed each respondent to react to and feed off one another, as well as to relive various shared experiences. Fontana & Frey (1994) go on to state that the task of the interview in this setting is twofold: to keep one person from dominating the discussion, and to “encourage recalcitrant respondents to participate” (p. 365). These were sometimes difficult tasks; however, the process was such that one question at a time was posed to the entire group, and beginning with volunteers, each person took a turn answering the question. One particular respondent, who began to dominate the discussion, was at times asked to respond last so that each voice could be heard, while other times I had to make the decision to ask this respondent to limit comments in the interest of time.

Document Collection

Aside from formal interviews, an examination was conducted of the written data collected from each respondent during their tenure in the Opening Doors program. These data included demographic information in the form of biographical information sheets, autobiographical information obtained from videotaped autobiography presentations; weekly journals; final evaluations distributed to each cohort at the end of the summer session; and final research papers. Unfortunately, the program, which operated consecutively for the past seven years, did not resume during the period of this study; therefore, observations were limited solely to
videotaped presentations and class sessions from each participating year’s cohort. The design and curriculum of the program, including information on all formal and informal activities and events were among the data collected. Finally, all documents related to the structure of the program, including mission statements, year-end reports, course syllabi, and class handouts were collected and analyzed in order to assess the ways in which Opening Doors functions, and how those purposes could be instrumental in helping students develop cultural understandings that could be transferred to classroom and other contexts.

**Researcher Journal**

Lastly, keeping a reflexive research journal and taking field notes are forms of narrative that positivist researchers use as methods of collecting and analyzing data, as well as a way to engage in self-reflection, and was therefore a critical aspect of the methodology used in this study. As Altheide & Johnson (1994) state, “one meaning of reflexivity is that the scientific observer is part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent” (p. ). To that end, there are certain things I wanted to understand about myself as a researcher in the reflexive journaling process. Dillard (1996a) recommends journaling as a strategy that can “provide critical pedagogical possibilities for teacher educators to reflect, pose questions to the world, and to interrogate their own pedagogy and practice” (p. 13). Transferring Dillard’s idea to the research field, being able to reflect and interrogate my various positions within the context of research around educational practices was important to me as a researcher. Dillard
(1996a) suggests reflective writing as a way to stay engaged in the process of literacy development and of connecting the ‘word to the world’ in the Freirian sense. She suggests that these connections cannot be maintained if teachers “continue to sit outside the influence of [their] pedagogical practice,” or if they “are not situated in the process of [their] teaching as learners as well” (p. 20), ideas that can be easily situated in a research context, particularly that of educational research. The process Dillard describes includes understanding and recognizing what our politics are as researchers and human beings, critiquing the ways in which we view the world, interrogating our philosophies and beliefs about both teaching learning, and thoroughly examining our attitudes towards students, their experiences, and the multiple roles they play in society.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis can be described as an ongoing process that starts from the moment the first piece of data is collected in the study (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Viewing the analysis process in this way keeps the research ‘alive,’ since the researcher is in constant interaction with the data. To that end, I engaged in various stages of analysis throughout the data collection process in conjunction with conducting interviews and document collection, up to the formal write-up of the data early into the following calendar year. Research journals cataloguing the field experience were also used as an ongoing aid, particularly in initial data reduction and analysis. To facilitate data analysis and to honor my desire to remain immersed in the data, I personally transcribed each interview verbatim from audiotapes. Formal
data analysis strategies included using the code & retrieve process, as outlined in Richards & Richards (1994), who define this process as consisting of "labeling passages of the data according to what they are about or other content of interest in them (coding or indexing), then providing a way of collecting identically labeled passages (retrieving)" (p. 446). Coding, the method by which data are reduced and more easily retrieved and categorized, was used to construct building blocks of meaning regarding the data collected in the study. This process was conducted both manually and using a computer software program designed to aid in the qualitative research process. I analyzed each interview transcript and other related documents separately in order to establish codes with which to categorize the data. Transcripts were coded for references relevant to the goals and purposes of the study, and in most cases, interviews were categorized using codes that had been established from previously transcribed interviews. For this reason, each interview was coded a second time to add or subtract codes or categorizations as needed. This second wave of coding also allowed me to detect patterns that had emerged across the data, in accordance with the research questions and agenda guiding the study.

The number of codes increased as ideas or concepts within and across cases were analyzed. A total of 36 codes were extrapolated from the data. To ease the process of reducing and managing the data, 10 broad categories were developed from these codes, and each code was amassed within these categories. Among the initial coding categories were peer group influences, personal and educational background, Opening Doors experiences, student understanding of racial identity, both their own
and others, and finally the role of the Opening Doors program in encouraging those understandings. Other coding categories included community/relationship building, particularly across cultures, and the benefits of the curriculum and instruction of the Opening Doors program. These categories were refined during the analysis process, as other patterns emerged, and were eventually molded into the themes and categories used to sort and analyze the data (see figure 3.3).

QSR*Nudist, the computer program used to aid in the data analysis process, allowed me to more easily identify commonalities and differences across the data. In addition, it provided a crosscheck for the patterns I had previously detected using manual coding. Aside from being useful in the data coding and retrieving processes, computer software programs can aid in the theory-building process as well. Richards & Richards (1994) remind us that not only can computer software be useful in discovering patterns across data sets, but that their ability to generate categories can contribute to theory building as well. Decisions made about the significance of certain categories and what codes or segments of text or other data are relevant to a category, as well as analyzing the data on a particular topic using multiple data sources all involve theoretical considerations and can be done with the use of specifically designed computer software programs like the one used in this study.

I conducted a cross-case analysis of emerging codes and patterns in the study, a process consisting of “grouping together answers from different perspectives on central issues” (Patton, 1990; p. 376). Huberman & Miles (1994) state that a tension in comparing data across cases in this way is that “there is a danger that multiple
1. Establishing a Racial Identity: Student Understanding of Self Before Entering Opening Doors

- Negotiating Racial Encounters
- Examining Perceptions of Racial Self
- Understanding the Polarities of Race
- Racial Identity Development in Schooling Contexts: Elementary and Secondary Experiences/Undergraduate Experiences

2. Enter The Opening Doors Program: Dispelling the Myths and Envisioning New Possibilities

**Opening Doors as a Model for Building Cultural Relationships**

- The Role of Diversity
- The Role of Personal Location
- The Role of Reciprocity

**Opening Doors as a Model of 'Becoming'**

- Becoming Graduate Students: The Importance of Exemplars
- Becoming Researchers and Scholars: The Role of High Expectations
- Becoming Educators: The Importance of Pedagogy in Professional Development

**Opening Doors as a Pedagogical Model**

- Breaking Down the Teacher/Student Binary: Constructing a Learning Community
- Opening Spaces for Self Reflection: Identifying Our Lives as Works in progress
- Moving From Object To Subject: Seeing Others As We See Ourselves

3. Current Perceptions of Identity: Continuing the Cross Model

Figure 3.3: Grounded Data Categories and Themes
cases will be analyzed at high levels of inference, aggregating out the local webs of causality and ending with a smoothed set of generalizations that may not apply to any single case” (p. 435). For this reason, throughout both the data collection and data analysis processes, attempts were made to triangulate research findings, including using respondents in the study as part of the triangulation process. In other words, as patterns emerged, various research subjects were contacted to verify information and/or provide feedback on initial findings. I persistently read and re-read data both as they were collected and as they were coded. Furthermore, I routinely referred back to the research questions and the theoretical suppositions used to frame the study to ensure that my findings and analysis were consistent with the aims and purposes of the study.

The Research Setting

As mentioned, the Opening Doors Summer Research Institute is an intensive summer intensive research program that works to reverse negative recruitment and retention trends among students of color in the field of education while helping them to understand the process and rigors of research and graduate study. The program originated at Pacific State University,² a large Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in Collegetown, USA, a small town in the Pacific Northwest United States in 1992. In 1994 the program moved to Heartland State University, an even larger research university in Capital City, USA, a major city in the Midwest United States.

² The names of all universities and cities have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.
The Opening Doors program was originally developed in part, as a recruitment and retention method intended to fulfill the university’s desire to increase representation among historically underrepresented groups in graduate programs, specifically programs in education, with the eventual goal being to advance them into professional positions at the K-12 and university levels. In addition, the program was designed to provide these undergraduate students an opportunity to conduct and produce research comparable to that expected of students at the graduate level, in a structured, yet nurturing and supportive environment.

Goals of the Opening Doors Program

According to its research grant (Dillard & Ransom, 1994), the Opening Doors program has several objectives. Among those objectives are to identify and recruit qualified students of color from across the country to participate in the program. Other outlined objectives are:

✓ To provide an interactive environment for participating students to in order to increase an understanding of “self” and identity;

✓ To increase student understanding and knowledge of graduate study in education, educational research, and scholarship;

✓ To assist participants, through faculty mentoring activities in completion of a major research project; and to expose students to major university research activities in a variety of social and natural science disciplines;

✓ To provide academic and career counseling necessary for the students to effectively pursue graduate study in education; and
To realize at least a fifty-percent success rate in enrollment of Opening Doors students into graduate programs within one year of completing the program.

Selection of Opening Doors Participants

Students are selected for participation in the Opening Doors program from across the country, based on a number of criteria, including academic excellence and economic need. In addition, each participant must be from a historically marginalized ethnic background, as previously defined. Selected participants must also be current undergraduate students or college graduates with no post-Baccalaureate education, interested in pursuing careers in the field of education.

There were, on average, twenty participants in the program each year, representing dozens of academic institutions and various cultural backgrounds within the Asian/Pacific, Native, Black, and Latino communities. Selected students spent each summer living in single and/or double occupancy graduate student housing and received a $2000.00 scholarship award for the summer, which served as a summer salary. Room and board, including meals and a $200.00 stipend for travel expenses, was provided for each student as well. Funding for the Opening Doors program was originally obtained through the U.S. Department of Education, but was thereafter funded by both grants and university funds.

Program Activities

Activities for the Opening Doors program were both academic and social in nature. Many of the social activities were unstructured and usually planned and
facilitated by group members themselves. Academically however, the program had a very structured and specific agenda.

**Autobiography:** Each year, participating students began the summer session by presenting a creative autobiography, which is a short oral presentation of their personal histories—an activity in which the director/facilitator participated as well. As Dillard (1996b) states, “examining autobiographies provides insight into both our particular realities and the broader requirements of social living, complete with the conflicts and struggles that define our individual interpretations of lived experiences” (p. 33). Therefore, the purpose of this activity was not only to help students begin the process of reflecting on their realities and connecting their realities to those of others; it was also to acquaint the group and have each individual starting the summer in the same accord.

**Reflective Journals:** In addition to creative autobiographies, students also wrote weekly journals. The journals could be related to any topic, with a general focus being on the research process and/or other experiences directly related to the program. Each student wrote a journal and printed two copies: one to submit to the director/facilitator and one to trade with another student in the group. At the same time, the director/facilitator of the program also wrote journals, which she disseminated to the group each week. Aside from turning in a journal of their own each week, students provided thoughtful responses to both the facilitator’s journal and that of whomever they shared journals with during a particular week. Dillard
(1996a) calls this type of journal sharing a “collective process to engage [both teacher and learner] in multicultural issues” (p. 14).

**Research Projects:** One of the primary activities in which these twenty students participated each summer was the selection of a research topic of interest to them related to education. Under the guidance of both their faculty mentors and the program’s facilitators, each student then submitted a research proposal, including a detailed review of the literature, based on an annotated bibliography assignment. Students present their proposal orally in the company of their peers, mentors, and the Opening Doors administration and support staff. After the proposal was presented, each student continued to conduct a full research study based on the proposed topic within the six weeks of the program.

**Research Methods Course:** Simultaneously with conducting research projects, students attended a program-related research methods course each week, which was taught by the director/facilitator and which yielded graduate level academic credit. The course covered various aspects of quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to give students an overview of the ways in which research can be conducted.

**Research Colloquium:** The program culminated in a final colloquium during which time each student conducted a thorough 20 minute presentation of the data and findings of his/her research study, in the company of their peers and mentors, as well as other members of the academic community.
Trustworthiness and Credibility

While positivist inquiry relies on what has been traditionally called internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln 1994), post positivist, qualitative inquiry questions the very nature of the assumed truths and realities posited within this paradigm, and instead acknowledges the relationship of researcher to knowledge and knowledge to power. Even in choosing such an openly ideological approach to research, there remains a need to work within criteria that can determine the quality of the research data, and that are systematic, generally agreed upon, and that recognize the values researchers bring to the research process. For this reason, terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability have come to replace these criteria among post-positivist research.

Guba & Lincoln (1994) state that appropriate criteria for judging the quality of empirical data based on a critical theory approach to qualitative inquiry are historically situated, in that they “take account of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender antecedents of the studied situation” (p. 114). Likewise, they state other criteria as “the extent to which the inquiry acts to erode ignorance and mis-apprehensions, and the extent to which it provides a stimulus to action, that is, to the transformation of the existing structure” (p. 114). In reconceptualizing validity concerns according to Guba & Lincoln (1994; 1986) and Lather (1986a; 1986b), I utilized the following techniques to establish trustworthiness and credibility in my research study: triangulation, prolonged
engagement, member-checks, and reflexivity. At the same time, I also took steps to assure the dependability, transferability and confirmability of the research.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation techniques expand the idea of multiple voices in (re) presenting the data. In other words, in order to triangulate, or to provide a multi-dimensional view of the findings and analysis in the study, multiple data sources, methods and theories must be used. Lather (1986a) states that the research design must “seek counter patterns as well as convergences if data are to be credible” (p. 67). In other words, the study must seek not just the victory narratives, but the negative case analyses as well.

For the purposes of the study, the primary data sources were twenty men and women of various ages, ethnic backgrounds and lived experiences from across seven years of the program under study. Secondary sources included videotaped presentations, weekly journals, final surveys and the completed research projects of these same individuals, completed during their respective summers in the program. Finally, a thorough semi-structured interview was conducted with the program’s director/facilitator. Methodologically, research interviews were conducted and transcribed for each respondent in the study, and extensive reflexive journal and field notes based on the interview process were used as a way to triangulate the research. In addition, manual and computerized data coding aided in providing perspectives that may have been unattainable utilizing manual coding procedures alone. Finally, the data were informed by a variety of approaches based within critical,
emancipatory education, and standpoint theories. Lather (1986b) states that data "must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured" (p. 267). So while these theoretical approaches were a priori in nature, the data was not molded to fit these theories, but rather these approaches were used as a lens or filter through which to see various aspects of the data.

Credibility

Extending notions of the relationship between data and theory, Lather (1986b) reminds us that "determining that constructs are actually occurring, rather than they are merely inventions of the researcher's perspective requires a self-critical attitude toward how one's own preconceptions affect the research" (p. 271). To combat this tendency, she suggests a "ceaseless confrontation with and respect for the experiences of people in their daily lives to guard against theoretical imposition" (p. 271). Use of a reflective journal, and constant re-reading of the data and emerging analysis was useful in the process of re-examining the relationship of the data to theory used in the study. Rather than taking theory at face value as an unchanging entity, theories were critiqued, extended, rejected or corroborated when and where necessary based upon the outcomes of the data and my own reflections on the data.

Lather (1986b) states that credibility is also established by "recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a sub-sample"
of respondents,” which is where member checking enters the process (p. 271). By performing this action, researchers are able to gain the perspectives of those about whose lives we research. More importantly, we as researchers gain their perspectives of our interpretation of their lived realities. This also makes the respondent a stakeholder and collaborator in the research product and process. In addition, this process allows respondents to “correct errors of fact or errors of interpretation” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; p. 239). During the course of this research study, I conducted several informal member checks. Firstly, during and after each individual interview was conducted, I noted my interpretations and analysis of the interviewee’s comments. After transcribing interviews, each respondent’s transcript was given to him/her to verify information provided. I also shared my interpretation of those comments in some cases, and in other cases, asked for clarification on their responses. Finally, without compromising the anonymity of respondents, I used the group interview and the director/facilitator interview as means of discussing issues and concerns that arose during individual student interviews. This allowed for the perspectives of someone inside of the same context, who could offer interpretations based on similar experiences and circumstances.

Prolonged Engagement

Also related to issues of credibility, prolonged engagement involves remaining in the research field for a length of time appropriate for learning as much as possible about the context of the research site or sample (Guba & Lincoln, 1986). In terms of engagement with the research project itself, I began the data collection
process early in the summer of 1999. My research study was unique in that I conducted research on a program that had recently ceased to exist; this situation brought with it its own set of limitations, primarily in terms of my not being able to conduct direct observations of any one Opening Doors group. Fortunately, I was able to rely on prior association with many of the research subjects as part of establishing credibility. During the summer before the research study began, I worked very closely with 1998 Opening Doors participants as a graduate research associate. In this capacity, I spent the entire six weeks of their stay working with them on a daily basis, both individually and collectively. Consequently, I was able to form bonds with many of them, building a trust and rapport that would allow me greater access to them later in the role of researcher. Prior to that, I worked with other cohorts in previous years of the program in a less intimate capacity. These encounters, coupled with my own experience as a former program participant, equate to the sufficient amount of time that should be invested in the research setting. They have also allowed me to have a greater and clearer understanding of the inner-workings of the program, its culture and its dynamics. Knowing that I was a former program participant also aided in gaining the trust of other former participants and potential respondents in the study with whom I was not initially acquainted.

Transferability

Parallel to generalizability, this criterion intends to "set out all the working hypotheses for this study, and to provide an extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context, the culture in which those hypotheses were found to be
salient,” to aid in transferability judgments for those who wish to apply these same conditions to their particular research contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1986, p. 242). In this study, thick descriptions of respondents’ lived experiences in a variety of situations allow readers and other researchers to understand the context from which interpretations and analyses for the study emerged. The goal of my research study is not to provide absolutes or stark generalizations regarding particular groups or large populations. In addition, it is not to describe situations that can be considered universal to individuals with characteristics similar to those in the study. Instead, I attempt only to thoroughly examine issues related to the goal of the study that have affected the lives of respondents in the study. However, while similarities may indeed exist between respondents in the study and the lived experience of others in similar circumstances, making transferability judgments easier among those who may wish to replicate the study, it is important to bear in mind that no experience described here can be an exact fit to another individual’s experience.

**Confirmability**

Guba & Lincoln (1986) relate the idea of confirmability to the positivist criterion of objectivity, and that, “like objectivity, confirmability is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator’s imagination,” (p. 243) but does not rely on the belief that following the scientific method will lead to outcomes that are objective and disembodied. Confirmability relies instead on the integrity of the data themselves, rather than on the method. In
other words, the data “can be tracked back to their sources, and the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicitly in the narrative of a case study” (Guba & Lincoln, 1986, p. 243). At the same time, researchers such as Sandra Harding (1993) would instead call for ‘strong objectivity,’ in which the researcher makes claims to objectivity, but based on criteria different than those traditionally used to judge the ‘hard sciences.’

Postpositive researchers suggest that making both the product and the process of the research available to be scrutinized and corroborated by those outside of the study is a way to ensure confirmability in the research. This process involves accountability on the part of the researcher. In this study, each piece of the data set can be verified and tracked to their original sources, which are listed in this chapter, and are referenced throughout the following chapter. Likewise, all of the constructions, interpretations, and findings in the study are grounded in specific events based on the lived experiences of the respondents in the study, and all of which are demonstrated with excerpts from the data. Moreover, a variety of data sources were used from which to draw interpretation and analysis. Finally, each data source was organized and labeled in such a way that it can be easily filed and referenced. In this way, each statement made in the study can be traced back to its source using a systematic record keeping process.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 focused on the methodological and theoretical approaches used to collect and interpret the lived experiences of respondents in the study as they related
to the topic and issues under examination in the study, particularly those regarding racial identity, and critical, culturally relevant pedagogy in classroom contexts generally and the context of the Opening Doors program specifically. These approaches help to elucidate my position as an openly ideological researcher who is also closely and personally tied to the research project. In the chapter that follows, the lived experiences of twenty former Opening Doors participants will be presented in the context of a discussion and analysis of themes that emerged from their individual and collective stories.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

Introduction

Thorough analysis of the data found that the Opening Doors program held a host of benefits for each of the student participants in the study. While many of them described their various expectations, the fact remained that they had no idea what involvement in the program would in fact accomplish for them both in the short and long term. Naturally, the outcomes of this study can only be applied to the individuals and contexts described here, yet given the findings outlined in this chapter, it seems safe to say that meaningful interaction and intimate contact with a group of strangers having common goals and/or parallel experiences over an extended period of time, and under certain conditions, will have at the very least, a minuscule effect on one’s life and development, and at the most, a life changing one. For the respondents who chose to participate in the study, the Opening Doors program played a pivotal role in both their social and scholarly development. Students learned to conduct research, and were able to recognize their academic potential as a result. While it is possible that they may have learned the basics of research in another context, Opening Doors was unique in its cultural and demographic constitutions. At the same time, the program and its facilitators established an academic standard and expectation for a high level of scholarship, and provided an open environment for
all of the heated debates, personal narratives, and lives as works in progress that
accompanied it. As a result of participating in the Opening Doors program, students
found that they could use the academic and personal proficiencies they gained as a
springboard into other successful scholarship or professional ventures. This chapter
begins with a discussion of the role and purpose of a program such as Opening
Doors, given the experiences of the program’s participants. This conversation is
followed by a discussion of the themes and findings revealed through the data.

One of the specific themes that emerged from the study revolved around the
role of developing relationships within and across cultures in helping students build
community and create an atmosphere in which they could form intimate relationships
and help one another in their personal and academic growth processes. Another
theme had to do with ways in which students were able to reconceptualize the
function of mentoring and role modeling in perceiving themselves as graduate
students, scholars, and educators. The final theme was related to the ways in which
the pedagogy and the structure of the program allowed for spaces in which students
could examine their own racial identities while building trust, at the same time
teaching them to be self-reflective critical thinkers. These three themes are
categorized within a conversation about the racial identity development of these
students before, during, and after their participation in the Opening Doors program.
Ethnicity-Based Programming

What Is Its Purpose?

The two primary foci of the program were academic and social development, as defined by the program goals outlined in chapter three. However, the question of which of the two aspects was most important (if one aspect could even be considered more important than the other), was an idea that several students considered as former program participants. In some cases, students felt that the research aspects were more important, and the fact that the group was specifically for people of color merely provided an opportunity to learn in an environment where race in Black and White, or White and Other, would or should not be an issue. Raquel offers this analysis:

*I think as people of color sometimes we-like I thought it was great to use your cultural experiences as part of your research, [and] as a basis for your learning, but don’t make that the thing you’re there for. Like we were in Collegetown: ‘oh, this is a White this, I’m Black,’ you know what I mean? You’re going to miss the point if that’s what you’re doing. I feel like OD is designed to alleviate that bit of pressure, and appreciate and celebrate that about you, so you don’t have to try to hold that [race] peg up while you’re holding this [academic] peg up. You focus more on this [academic] peg. Because people are there trying to get that peg, the educational one: the one where you’re learning how to do this and feel good about doing it, and comfortable, and getting evaluated and seeing where you need to strengthen*
yourself and where you need to do work. That’s what you really need to be able to take away from that, because that part you might not get again. You always can fight the race thing. This time, you’re in this little safe zone, so take advantage of the other part.

Raquel’s argument is that because the program is specifically designed for people of color, students can focus on the academic aspects of the program without having to deal with possible issues that may arise in an environment that includes White students also. By participating in a program such as this one, students may perhaps feel confident that they could take advantage of the academic benefits of the program, and while various problems may arise within the group, those problems would be unlike the issues they have typically faced in groups with Whites. At the same time, although Raquel felt that the research aspects of Opening Doors were most salient, Dr. B, the program’s director and facilitator, would disagree. Instead, Dr. B felt that any similar program could teach students about research. However, the interpersonal connections made, or at least the door being open for those experiences to happen, is what makes Opening Doors special. Dr. B maintains:

I’m not sure that I see the research piece as the biggest benefit, although I see it as an important benefit. I think I see the biggest benefit of Opening Doors as folks’ own self-awareness, folks’ own identity awareness, folks’ own understanding of themselves as brilliant. There are very few settings, even for folks who go to all Black colleges, and all identity-based spaces: Native American colleges, whatever. There are rare opportunities for you to
be in a cross-cultural, multicultural group of folks, and everybody has some sort of affirmation of themselves as who they are. And Opening Doors, I think provides that. It is also, in my mind, a lesson that very few people forget, even though they’ll have other experiences along the way, being in that context learning their own brilliance with other people, and with people who they care about, that for me is the biggest benefit of OD, because those lessons transcend grad school.

As Dr. B asserts, there seem to be rare opportunities for students to partake in programs in which students of color are in the majority population. At the same time, because the program did not focus on one ethnic group in particular, it still allowed spaces for cross-cultural relationship building. In this context, students of color can share cultural knowledge with other students of color, which was a rare experience for respondents in the study. While there may be some difference in how these two benefits were perceived, both by the students and the program’s facilitator/director, each agreed that both the research and cultural aspects of the program were important, even critical, to the academic development of the students involved in the program.

Is It Realistic?

At the same time that Opening Doors was an excellent experience for the students participating in the study, there remained the conflict between the realities presented by the Opening Doors program, and the realities of graduate school. Many participants in the study found Opening Doors to be a supportive, affirming
environment in which they could learn about research and the dynamics of graduate study. Unfortunately, their naivété led them to believe that graduate school would have the same nurturing qualities. As Lindsay affirms:

I don't want to say [the program is] unrealistic, but in some way, not even necessarily racially, but even just again sort of the great disappointment for me here is there's not sort of that mentoring that we got from the fellows\(^3\) who were there, who were willing to read our work. And the help amongst each other, but I mean it was good. I'm sure there are departments where there is that; I mean I know there are departments where there are cohorts that kind of work together and form bonds. I think it is a possibility. But also think, that I wasn't prepared for some of the hostility from other people, in terms of coming into grad school. And part of its being from Sun Valley part of it was OD, and not realizing you're gonna come up against colleagues who think that you're there because you're a minority, and what that does to you. So, the assumption here, dealing with stuff like that in an academic environment was so alien to me. So maybe in that way, if not unrealistic, unexpected, unprepared, cuz I didn't feel that at OD, it wasn't like that cuz we were all people of color.

\(^3\) Doctoral candidates involved in a similar program, which worked in conjunction with the Opening Doors program during the 1993 summer.
Lindsay realized that being a graduate student was much different than being an
Opening Doors intern. She did not feel the same camaraderie in graduate school that
she felt while a participant in the Opening Doors Program. Instead, she found the
graduate school environment to be competitive and unwelcoming to her as a person
of color who was also not from the region in which the university is located. Other
participants in the study made similar comments, in that while Opening Doors did
prepare them for the academic challenges of graduate study, the program provided a
support system that was not always found in their actual graduate programs. In
response to these sentiments, Dr. B states:

*Our goal, while it's to expose them to graduate level research, is not to say
'this is what graduate school will be about.' As I talk to people who have
been through Opening Doors, they would say that grad school was nothing
like OD, but what OD did, was to give them some insight into that whole
process of research especially, but also the whole intensity of it all. No, grad
school isn't like Opening Doors: Opening Doors as I tell the students all the
time in the program, is unrealistic. No one does a research study in six
weeks. That isn't our goal to have you experience grad school. Our goals it
have you experience the *process* of research, so that when you get to grad
school it won't be foreign to you. So no. Most people would tell me 'no, it's
not anything like grad school,' but what it does is to free me up in grad
school in a different kind of way, because I know some things about
qualitative and quantitative research.*
While the expectation is not that students will actually experience graduate school, they will learn both the process and expectations of conducting graduate level scholarship. Therefore, regardless of the type of environment students find when they enter graduate school, they will have received the academic training and support they will need to survive and succeed as graduate students. As Janet explains:

_You sink or swim so you figure it out, and a lot of people that came and talked to us during OD said ‘well I just had to figure it out, and I wish I’d had an experience like Opening Doors.’ So of course you know, I would have figured it out eventually, but to come in with more of an understanding of what the process is, start to finish, what to expect, how professors [and the] College of Education usually works in terms of access to professors and all that. That put me far ahead of where I would have been—especially being a student coming back to school after three years._

Students may have found the Opening Doors program to be dissimilar to their actual graduate experiences, but as Janet explained, it was still an opportunity that they would not have traded. Despite sometimes negative, or at the very least isolating graduate school experiences, each found both the knowledge and the personal support gained in the Opening Doors program to be well worth it. These discussions of the general benefits of ethnicity-based programming serve as a starting point for the analysis of the themes in the study, which revolve around students’ perceptions of racial/ethnic/cultural self before entering the Opening Doors program, shifts in those perceptions while in the program, and finally, current understandings of
themselves in relationship with and to other people of color as a result of participating in the Opening Doors program.

Establishing a Racial Identity:

Student Understanding of Self Before Entering Opening Doors

This section discusses the issues around race and identity that surfaced during the course of the study. Race is discussed here not as a fixed category, nor are the experiences profiled here generalized to other contexts; instead these experiences are discussed as specific to the contexts provided, with analysis and suggestions based on those contexts. This section is framed according to four of Cross’ (1995) five stages of racial identity development: encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization/commitment. Pre-encounter, the first stage of the Cross (1995) model, will not be explicitly discussed as a separate stage, but will be referenced as appropriate throughout the text. I do not attempt here to re-theorize race or racial identity development; instead the Cross (1995) model is used to inform the examination of educational issues through the lens of race based on the specific experiences of the participants in this study.

Each of the Opening Doors students involved in the research study had various experiences that marked significant stages in their racial identity development. According to the Cross (1995) revised model of Nigrescence, the experiences described in this portion of the text is referred to as the “encounter” stage, in which a significant experience causes an individual to reassess their racial identity. For the students in this study, and consistent with Cross’ theory, these
experiences included both positive and negative events, and taught them how to negotiate being a person of color in what they deemed to be a ‘White’ world. Consistent with the encounter stage of racial identity development in which students have a first interaction with someone outside of their race who forces them to examine their own racial identity, students were asked to reveal the most significant racial event that had happened in their lives, and what effects the event(s) had on their racial identity development and/or on the ways in which they constructed race. Many could not name just one event; they felt for the most part that there had been several critical moments in which they were explicitly made cognizant of their humanity as racialized individuals. Generally, respondents in the study relayed experiences that were positive and/or negative with individuals of diverse race, class, and gender backgrounds. However, the majority of subjects in the study noted significant experiences in opposition to White mainstream culture, rather than to another racially marginalized ethnic group. That is not to say that none of these students have had significant racial experiences (positive or negative) involving members of their own, or other non-White ethnic groups, but for the purpose of describing “the most significant racial experience” they had ever had, they chose incidents involving Whites.

Some of the experiences students described with regards to racial events involved people they knew well and/or someone with whom they thought there was some level of trust, while others had significant racial experiences with strangers. Many of the Black respondents explicitly mention the significance of being Black
students at predominantly White institutions, in addition to whatever other experiences they may have had. One unique entry was Malcolm’s incident, which had more to do with his own behavior in the presence of his White friends and how that affected him, rather than their behavior towards him. He stated of the incident, “I wanted to be White at that moment.” It wasn’t until after ‘that moment,’ which involved him thinking that his younger brother was acting ‘too black’ in front of Malcolm’s White friends, that he began to consider what it meant to be a part of a Black collective, and to be proud of that, regardless of anything else that may happen.

**Negotiating Racial Encounters**

Awareness of the realities of race came in various ways for the students involved in the study. Regardless of individual ethnicity, class background, or gender, each participant had an encounter with someone of a different racial background, in most cases someone White, who brought the realities of race and the meaning of difference home to them. While there were students in the study who were taught either explicitly or implicitly not to trust those of other races or backgrounds, there were others who were more naive in their understandings of themselves as racialized beings, and to the meanings that were attached to those understandings. While these stories mark the ‘encounter’ stage of racial identity development, many of the participants had been exposed to Whites in some capacity previous to the experiences they described in the study. For each of the subjects, the encounter either started them, or aided them in continuing, on the path to examining
their racial identities, which also eventually affected and was affected by, their participation in the Opening Doors program.

For example, because Raquel lived in diverse, albeit predominantly African American environments, she has had a variety of interactions with a variety of people throughout her life. While such a background may have kept her from some of the more blatant racial incidents described by other respondents in this study, she has nevertheless had quite a few experiences with the implicit forms of racism that many face each day just by nature of their ethnic background. These experiences are what some may call 'sins of omission' rather than 'sins of commission.' For example, as an undergraduate, Raquel found that it was always she who was forced to make compromises in order to appease her White peers and friends by adjusting herself to situations in which she didn't necessarily feel comfortable, so that they would be. Raquel describes an incident from high school that was critical in helping her understand both the complexities and subtleties of race for people of color:

*Much to my surprise, I was nominated for the homecoming court. I had never even dreamed that that would happen to me, and ended up winning homecoming queen. I was totally shocked and surprised-and happy! I was cool enough to be voted for homecoming queen. But then the dance rolls around and nobody will take me. There was one brother there who I was like 'come on L***, let's go. Since I'm homecoming queen, we get in for free;* 

*Consecutive asterisks denote individuals or places outside of the research study.*
our pictures are free. I'm gonna borrow this dress from my friend, you just put something on. I got a coupon for dinner, we can have a $10 dollar dinner.' And the deal sounded good enough to him that we were able to go. My dad literally was even trying to figure out who could take me to the dance. Now I'm cool enough to be voted homecoming queen, but you cannot take me to the dance.

She goes on to offer the following analysis of the experience:

'It was the whole, 'folks didn't know what to say to their parents about going out with a Black person.' They were intimidated. That just kind of shows that it's okay to associate with Black people to an extent, but when you get to a certain point there's a line you can't cross. It's not that I ever was hoping to go out with any of those guys, not that I was interested in them hooking up with me or taking me home. But it's just the whole thought. Because of that it probably was more significant, because it's like 'I'm not even trying to date you; I'm just trying to go fulfill my obligation as homecoming queen, dance my one dance, and cut out. You can't even do that with me? You'd rather sit at home than do that?'

Raquel's experience may not be unlike other African Americans, particularly African American women, who may have felt accepted among their White peers until the awkward stage of puberty, when the decisions adolescents make around dating become more clearly racialized (Twine, 1996). Her reaction to winning as prestigious a title among her White peers as prom queen, yet being unable to get one
of them to accompany her to the dance, was one of anger and hurt, yet it allowed her to see, as she stated later, that there was a line that she could not cross with them. For many of the respondents described in the study, and possibly many more students of color in similar situations, living among Whites meant that there were invisible boundaries that made them acceptable in some contexts but not all. Recognizing these unspoken parameters can be disconcerting for students of color, and may have adverse effects on their self-concepts as well as on the development of a positive racial identity. Fortunately, such an encounter with Whites had the opposite effect on Tonya, who describes this encounter in her formal interview:

My sister and I were waiting in the car while my mother went into the grocery store. The kids in the van next to us began calling us niggers, and telling us that they needed a new maid. My ten-year-old sister was challenged to a fistfight, but one of the kids saw her height and decided against it. The taunting continued until my mother approached the car. It was interesting to note that one of the teenagers was apologetic when they realized our mother was Filipino. It was as if her blood negated any Black blood flowing through us. Then as we drove away, the kids started smiling and waving at a Black man who happened to be their neighbor. That basically got me started early on my “trust no one” theory. It also made me proud to be a person of color, probably the opposite of the effect the kids wanted to have on us.
Tonya considers herself bi-racial, being of both African American and Filipino ancestry. She has described being perceived as either one or the other, depending on the context. Biracial men and women represent a growing ‘category’ among the racial boxes, and unfortunately many have to spend a significant amount of time defending one or both sides of their identity, particularly if any of that identity is African American. Tonya’s experience specifically points out the problem of one aspect of her identity being insulted by someone who, in their ignorance, doesn’t realize that she also represents another culture in addition to the one they are insulting. Her experiences also illustrate the negative inner feelings that may result when differing identity positions are put in direct conflict with one another.

**Shaping a Racial Self**

Subjects in the study constructed race and came to identify themselves racially according to their personal background and upbringing. For example, for many of the African American students interviewed in the study, learning the explicit and implicit lessons regarding race, as Omar stated in informal conversation, was “a given.” That is to say, in many cases, the African American students in the study had parents, elders, church leaders, or community members who relayed to them ideologies about the value and meaning of race for them as Black people as well as the importance of possessing a strong racial identity. Janet offered the following insight in her interview: “the background you grow up in determines how you see the world. And because Black and White was always so rigidly defined, I was always aware of it growing up.” While many of the African American respondents were
aware of race, not all were necessarily active in pursuing knowledge and history of African American culture prior to adulthood. Instead, many of the respondents in the study who were reared in predominantly Black environments never had to confront race as an issue, problem, or especially as a deficiency in their lives, until changing to a racially/ethnically mixed environment, or until some encounter, event, or experience caused them to see race in different ways. In cases where students did learn about race, however, they learned about race in Black and White. That is to say, they learned either explicitly or implicitly, certain lessons about the nature of race specific to life in the United States.

Malcolm noted his greatest influence in learning about race was his mother. In his opinion, she was always a very proud woman who instilled that same pride in her children. They had open conversations about race, creating an atmosphere that welcomed the sometimes hard questions about the significance of race in every aspect of American life. Malcolm states of his mother in his student interview:

She instilled in us, when we were very young, to be proud of who we are. I guess that also went with the fact that we got to travel to different countries. So [my father] would take us on trips as a family for us to see different cultures in action. My mother would always constantly tell us about African culture. I think she was an Afrocentric before I even knew anything about what Afrocentrism was. She was not a fanatic, but she was very proud of being who she was.
Josephine, a self-defined Chicana woman, shares a similar experience of learning positive things about race from her family:

_Growing up in W** W**, I remember my father was going to community college, and he would bring friends from all different cultures. And he made me realize there was different types of food, there's different ways of speaking, there are different colors of people. And it was just acceptance and open to differences, I think he did that with cultures really well. And my dad always wanted me to be very proud that I was Chicana. And he would say things to encourage me to be proud of my skin color, like 'look at you, you already have a beautiful tan. Look at those people out there, they're wasting the whole afternoon trying to get browner, and you're already tan! Isn't that wonderful?' Or 'you come from the blood of Aztecs. You come from the blood of great civilizations. Your ancestors discovered this and this, *and* you came from the blood of the Spaniards.' He wanted us to be proud of those things._

Josephine's case demonstrates the ways in which people of color can begin to construct their racial identities in positive ways, and without negating any other races or cultures. Having this type of positive home influence can aid students of color as they begin to negotiate racial issues in school and in other aspects of their lives.

Raquel is an African American woman who was born in the south and grew to adolescence in a predominantly Black context. However, unlike some of her African American peers, a Black middle class suburban background allowed her to see
African American culture in a wider and deeper range. Her exposure to the Black community ran the gamut from poor to rich: she saw Black men and women in all kinds of professions and walks of life. For example, she always had a Black doctor and dentist; she was exposed to African American professionals and businesspeople just the same as she was exposed to Black garbage men and bus drivers. She was unique in this study, in that she didn’t have the problems that many others have had in regards to lacking positive role models of comparable ethnicity. Interestingly, she never had an issue with Blackness standing out in a negative way until she moved into an all White context as an adolescent girl, where she and her family members became the representation of all things Black, a fact that was more apparent when she was in school. In Raquel’s opinion, her parents took race for granted when living in predominantly Black contexts, something they could no longer do upon moving into a community where people of color, particularly Black people, were in the minority. Raquel related a situation in which one of her Black teachers became concerned about her young student’s racial self-perception, after which they began to teach Raquel more explicitly about race. She states:

*Growing up [in the South], being a light-skinned Black person, I don’t know that my parents aggressively taught me anything about race. It was put forth to me in the environment all the time that there’s a difference between White and Black, even though it wasn’t really apparent to me in my everyday life. We had very few White people in our school, so it wasn’t just an outright issue for me, but I can recall as far back as pre-school I had a Muslim*
preschool teacher who wanted to teach us about race. When the teacher had us go wash our hands for lunch, she put out brown and White paper towels. And she says ‘okay go, when you wash your hands, use the paper towel that corresponds to your skin color.’ So here I come out, after washing my hands, and my hands are still wet. She’s like ‘why didn’t you dry your hands?’ I said ‘I didn’t see my color there. I’m gold.’ And from there, she was concerned about that, and she talked to my parents. I think that’s kind-of where the ball started rolling-the messages about race.

Starting early teaching Raquel about race allowed her to confront the ignorance she often encountered later at the hands of her uninformed White peers. Although this incident started her parents teaching Raquel about race in a more definitive way, the racial incident she describes may have more to do with how kids begin the process of identifying themselves racially. That is, more in terms of looking at actual skin colors, rather than conceptualizing it in terms of racial categories. Currently, Raquel considers herself to be someone who is ‘in love’ with being Black and feels proud to be so, even amidst adversity.

**Understanding the Polarities of Race**

As has been stated, race was constructed largely in Black and White for respondents involved in this study. And while this is not a new phenomenon, it is telling that even the non-Black students involved in the study have come to see race in those same terms, and therefore many of those same students had trouble finding a place for themselves along the Black/White continuum. In most cases, that meant
identifying with White dominant culture for lack of an appropriate model of their particular ethnic background. At the same time, after having gone through the encounter stage (Cross, 1995), many were left wondering where they did in fact belong if they were too ‘different’ to fully fit into White mainstream culture. These conflicting feelings of duality are what DuBois (1994) calls “double consciousness,” which he describes as “a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (p. 5). This experience in essence means that by nature of being, and being seen as a person of color, one is a rightful citizen in a country that sometimes fails to acknowledge his/her worth. For example, Lindsay felt her dual nationality as both Japanese and American when she went to Japanese school. She found herself living on the border of each: not quite Japanese enough for fellow Japanese students, and not quite American enough to be accepted as such by mainstream culture.

According to Lindsay,

My parents did send us to Japanese language school to help us retain language, the values, and culture. But I found that very difficult. I didn’t fit in there either, because it was kids from Japan, who didn’t really see me as Japanese because I was Japanese American, and I didn’t speak their language. They were kind of learning Japanese the way Americans learn English.

The experiences described above were only part of the identity construction process for Lindsay. As a result of spending time as an outsider in these very different worlds, Lindsay felt compelled to mold herself into a category that was more
acceptable to her, and as a result, spent a significant amount of time in an 'I don't want to be Japanese' state of mind. She wanted to fit in with her peers, as most adolescents desire to do. However, in her case, as in the case of many respondents, those peers were predominantly White. Consequently, Lindsay grew up with a negative idea of what it meant to not be White:

Well my high school was almost entirely White, so I didn't have a whole lot of other contact with Asian Americans. There were maybe two others in the school, a handful of African Americans, and a handful of Latinos; [there were] no Native Americans that I'm aware of.

Lack of contact with Asian Americans and other people of color meant that when Lindsay came to have conflicting feelings about herself as a Japanese American, she had no models to show her that she could be proud of her background rather than ashamed or resentful of it. In addition, she was faced with the racism that sometimes follows members of historically marginalized groups. Lindsay describes the ways in which she and her family dealt with issues around race:

I think my dad tried not to talk about it 'til we were older, and I think it was only when incidents came up at school, of race, that then we would talk about it at home. So, in terms of like, these ideas of race, it really wasn't an issue until somebody called me a 'Jap' or a 'Nip.' And I didn't know what it meant and I came home and so I would talk to him about it. And my mom kind of stayed out of it.
Lindsay’s struggle against her ethnic identity began after a particularly traumatic experience with a European American boy at her school. It was at that time, as she recalls in her interview, that she decided that it would be better not to be Japanese if being so meant that she would be subject to such experiences:

*But then to make it worse, I think I went into a little tirade about how I didn’t want to be Japanese then, because I didn’t want to deal with this and that I’d rather be White, that I’d change my appearance. And [dad] was trying to explain that that doesn’t do it. ‘You can dye your hair, but you’re still Japanese American. And some people have feelings about different people, but it’s just their problem not yours.’ But then when I said ‘well then forget it’ and I actually said I’m gonna dye my hair blonde, and I’m gonna change my name, and nobody’s gonna know I’m Japanese. And he said again, ‘it won’t matter, you’ll still be Japanese, it won’t change what you are.’*

Although her father was saddened and disappointed by Lindsay’s newly vocalized feelings about being Japanese American, he unfortunately had not given her the tools to confront the racism and self hate she experienced at the hands of society. Having such tools may have allowed her to bounce back from such an incident with her ethnic pride remaining intact. Skylar, also an Asian American woman, had similar experiences, which she shared in her interview:

*I remember standing next to my mother, tongue-tied, when someone would rudely tell us to go back to our own country. I couldn’t understand why they were telling us to go back to our own country when my family had been here*
for four generations. I suppose that my parents’ lack of reaction taught me to
just ignore those people, but it didn’t teach me how to deal with my hurt or
anger.

Skylar’s parents, like Lindsay’s, lacked the tools they needed to pass on to their
daughters that would help them deal with racial intolerance. As a result, Skylar grew
up with conflicting feelings about race, some of which she carried into her adult life,
as demonstrated in the following excerpt, taken from her final evaluation:

I often see people of other races all getting together and identifying with each
other because of their shared racial identity. But sometimes I don’t feel like I
am a part of the Asian race. I don’t have a lot of the same kinds of
experiences as others of my race since I grew up with Caucasians and also
because I’m half-Japanese and half-Filipino. But the interesting thing about
race is that it’s this tag that is placed on you by the outside world. And
because it’s placed on you by the outside world you can explain it away all
you want, but you’re stuck with it. So sometimes I find myself playing the
race card to my advantage (such as using it to help me get into college) and
other times I find myself fighting to break out of the box.

The experiences that many respondents described in regard to race often led them to
construct their identities in a way that was juxtaposed to whiteness. When left to
construct their understandings according to notions of difference, racial and ethnic
identity can become oppositional, because whiteness is the primary barometer or
means they have of comparing themselves. hooks (1994b) reminds us that
Our identities are so constructed that you hit a brick wall if you attempt to say what [you] ‘are,’ because we can always think of exceptions. All constructed identities such as ‘Black’ or ‘Chicano’ are sort of negative identities against the world of White WASP ‘ideals.’ For many... what bonds us is what is against us” (p. 217).

Having to construct their identities in this oppositional way usually meant that respondents in the study felt inferior to their White peers and classmates. Most, if not all of the students who grew up around Whites expressed this feeling. Given this, it seems necessary to help students develop a positive sense of racial or ethnic self that does not come as a result of ‘not’ being something else, but instead one that allows them to see themselves and their culture as equally valuable to the White culture they have been taught to value over their own. A program like Opening Doors can be instrumental in that process as demonstrated throughout this study. Students in culturally diverse groups were able to see representation beyond whiteness. Many of their discussions and research topics focused on people of color. At the same time, they had access to perspectives other than their own, or those of Whites. A Latino student, for example, could discuss Asian female identity with another group member, and an Asian student could overcome the fear and stereotypes she once held against African Americans. By opening spaces for dialogue among students of various ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, etc., students were precluded from reifying negative images of themselves or others. Even if each participant is in difference places or stages in their identity development, having a
place that is open to dialogue allowed conversations to take place across contexts that may not have otherwise been accessible. In this particular program, because both staff members and each participant has traditionally been a person of color, there were natural occasions to discuss the social context of education in relation to the research interests of the students, which usually revolved around issues within the ethnic communities of which they are a part.

Unlike Malcolm and Josephine, whose parental influence was discussed in the previous section, Lindsay did not have the support or encouragement of family members as she progressed through the stages of racial identity development. Lindsay recalls never really thinking or talking much as a child about either being Asian or the significance of that Asian-ness in society, therefore race had not been very salient throughout her life. In addition, she says she rejected the values of her culture until older in life, because being one of few Asians in her community she stood out among her peers, something she did not want to do. She saw her ethnicity as a burden: a tag she wanted to wish away. Even as she matured, Lindsay never saw a need to affiliate with others of her race, or more specifically, to join organizations that were racially or culturally based, until coming to Heartland State University, where she was confronted with what she felt was “unsafe psychological space” for people of color. For example, as an undergraduate on a large urban campus on the West Coast, Lindsay was in an environment that had a large Asian community. Her ethnicity was no longer in the minority, allowing her to let her guard down. She saw her tenure there as being meaningful for that reason, and that
it was also "no big deal" to be there because there were others there like herself. This was no longer the case when she moved to a smaller, more racially homogenous city in the Midwest for graduate school.

Unfortunately for some students of color there are times as in Malcolm’s case, when even having messages of racial pride instilled by a parent to counter the negativity that Lindsay describes, does not preclude encountering a phase, however brief, of wanting to be White or of denying the value of one's own culture. Malcolm’s mother, whom he refers to as "pro Black," was a very strong influence on his development. Even given that influence, he interestingly still went through a stage of not wanting to be Black. However, unlike his fellow participants, Malcolm felt more of a class separation, being the military child of a non-commissioned officer. In those contexts, racially motivated incidents were sometimes clouded by military status rankings, and could be easily be disguised as such. Growing up in a military, and therefore international environment, Malcolm began to consider both race and class as significant factors in motivating him to succeed, in spite of the labels and stipulations falsely attributed to him. By the end of his high school career, he had already emerged as someone with a positive sense of his racial identity, as informed by understandings of class distinctions in the United States. In the following excerpt, Malcolm describes an incident that marked the moment in which he began to see himself as part of a Black collective, in terms of a/the Black community:
And I do remember one time, when I was in high school, I was about a sophomore or a junior or something. I was with a bunch of my so-called White friends at the time. I had told my brother that he was ‘acting too Black.’ [My mother] basically gave me like the worst lecture that I could ever get. And so she was constantly trying to instill in us to be proud of who we are. I remember watching Roots when I was really young, and she would explain stuff to us about Roots, and she was proud to see something like that. But she was forever talking about being Black, and fighting-standing up for your rights.

He continues with this analysis:

I started being a little more considerate of my own culture, and understanding my own people, and not being so quick to judge them, even if they might be trifling or raggedy. But they’re still my folks. That could be my cousin; that could be my brother.

Malcolm, like others who lived similar circumstances, was taught about race explicitly, sharing both the positive and negatives of race. Learning as adolescents that race should be neither rejected, nor embraced without questioning, helped many respondents to develop a cogent sense of racial self.

In the cases of those participants of Latino or Asian ancestry, the idea of race as it is constructed in this country was sometimes difficult to understand or accept, and was most times also a bitter pill to swallow. For example Skylar, described earlier, had a hard time placing herself into pre-constructed racial categories, and
therefore didn’t always readily identify with those classifications. She lived for a long time within the pre-encounter identity stage, in which race played an insignificant role in her life. She grew up in White middle class communities, and considered herself ‘just like them.’ Although now she states of her friends that “the only thing that’s really changed for me since high school is the race variable. Now I have almost exclusively ethnic minorities, mostly Asian, in my peer group.” Because she identified herself with White culture throughout adolescence, Skylar saw minorities as ‘other than’ herself. By identifying herself in this way, she experienced conflicting feelings in her quest for self-discovery that caused her to assimilate into the White community of which she was physically a part. On one hand, she expressed a desire to identify with other people of color, yet she experienced the conflict of needing to conform to her White peer group. As illustrated by the following data excerpts, she denied herself as someone who was different, which may have produced unresolved feelings of self hate-feelings that may be experienced by other people of color for many of the same reasons. Skylar describes her identity development with the following statement:

For the most part I felt like I was part of the White majority (in spite of my genetics) and that I had little or nothing in common with other racial minorities except having to deal with prejudice. White American culture is made the norm in this country by the media. Since I grew up among them, I had little or no other cultural images, which really skewed my sense of what was acceptable or valuable. It made me want to disown my racial identity at
times to become part of the mainstream. It was difficult for me to see the
value in racial and cultural differences, especially those that manifested
themselves in me.

hooks (1994b) states that for students like Skylar, identifying with her White peers
was a kind of “defense mechanism,” or a “camouflage,” because “to the degree that
you become them, you imagine you are safe. (Or rather, to the degree that you
become the way they say you should be, you imagine you are safe.)” (p. 215).
Unfortunately, as hooks (1994b) further states, and as demonstrated in Skylar’s
comments about being rudely mistaken for a foreigner,

the fact is: the person may imagine that by adopting that [assimilationist]
behavior they’re safer, they’re more part of the group... when in fact we know
that they’re not necessarily safer, and that their safety might actually come
from bonding with the other person of color (p. 215).

In relating specific experiences that led to her desire to assimilate into her White peer
group, Skylar had this to say:

When I was younger, being the different one all the time made me want to
downplay race. All I knew was that I wanted to fit in and have friends so any
difference that threatened that was to be downplayed. Whenever people
asked me where I was from I soon learned that what they really wanted to
know was my ethnicity. Sometimes I wouldn’t even tell them my ethnicity
when asked the question. I would say ‘I’m American like you.’ To which
they would usually reply “No, you know what I mean. Where are you from?”
I became annoyed with the assumption that just because I wasn’t White or Black that I had to be a foreigner.

For those whose ethnic or racial identity fell outside of the polarities of Black and White, racial identity has had a totally different meaning for the African Americans involved in the study. Skylar, Lindsay, and Josephine had experiences with race that threw a wrench into the usual Black-White constructions. Skylar for example, as she mentions above, was at times treated as a foreigner because of her Asian background. She also dealt with the assumption that all Asians have the same cultural background. In her experience, any person of Asian background was collapsed into the category of Chinese. Like Lindsay, she saw her ethnicity as a tag that “you’re stuck with.” At that time in life, she didn’t see being Asian American as a source of pride, but as an external force placed upon her that made her vulnerable to the prejudices of others. By her own admission, Lindsay is just beginning to, “tease out” what it means to be Asian. She now feels that she has commonalities with other Asians, whereas she did not feel that way in the past. She mentions having had more non-Asian friends throughout her life than Asian, be they White, as was the case in her adolescent years, or African American, as was the case in later years. For some students, neutral or negative racial experiences caused a fissure from their racial selves. Contrarily, there have also been students for whom having negative interactions caused them to cling more vehemently to their racial identity. At the same time, that particular sentiment sometimes produces a sense of
paranoia wherein people of color may sometimes be unsure of where to draw the line between racial awareness and hypersensitivity. For example, Janet explains:

_Sometimes I’ll see everything through a Black and White lens. And people say ‘everything is not Black and White,’ and I know that it’s not, so I don’t want to overdo that. But my eye is always open for the Black angle, and ‘is there bias in this,’ and ‘am I being treated this way because I’m Black?’ But racial identity is ever present for me._

Raquel, on the other hand, feels that education and exposure to various types of people has made her more able to reason situations beyond race. In other words, she is not so quick to think that any given incident is racially motivated, but looks instead at what other causes there may be. She mentions having had questionable behavior exhibited toward her in predominately Black or culturally reflective contexts, in which case she’s had to extract other, non-racial explanations. In her words, she doesn’t pull the “race card” unless that is the final card.

**Racial Identity Development in Schooling Contexts**

A recurrent theme among participants in dealing with race had to do with their schooling experiences. While participants in the study described a variety of experiences in regards to their ‘encounters’ with Whites, almost all of them had at least one event or experience happen within the context of school. These racial experiences happened in subtle ways in the classroom, either with teachers or fellow students, as well as in the community, as in comments from neighbors or other classmates and school associates. Some experienced specific acts of racism, while
others noticed the workings of structural/institutional racism in their lives at an early age. Each individual interviewed in the study actively noticed an inadequate amount of representation of themselves as people of color in their schooling experiences, from texts, to teachers, to other students.

**Elementary and Secondary Experiences**

None of the respondents in the study felt that they were educated in ways that were indicative or appreciative of their cultural values, and felt in many cases that Opening Doors provided a preliminary opportunity to openly value themselves as people of color in the classroom. Many respondents in the study excelled in school, yet it was not always because their teachers, who were often White, persuaded or encouraged them to do so. Instead, students felt that neither their White teachers nor their White peers necessarily expected them to be smart. Upon finding that they were indeed intelligent, they were met with either blank stares or no response at all, as if they were anomalies. For example, Janet, an African American woman who relocated at a young age from a predominantly Black community to a predominantly White community, shared this recollection and opinion of her schooling experiences in her interview:

*I was excelling academically and the teachers didn't know what to do with that. They weren't used to pushing a Black child to succeed, so my mother had to stay on them; and I was the only one in the class who could read at a certain level. Instead of the first grade teacher saying 'you know she really does well in reading, she's excelling,' as they would for a White student, she*
said 'well, she just goes and goes!' It's like it hurt her to say something positive about a Black child.

In another case, Raquel, who also moved from a predominantly Black community to a predominantly White community at a young age, had a similar experience:

*It was when we moved to the state of W, where it's kind of a total flip of that; the race questions were more just out there in my face: just down to even people on the playground asking me how do I comb my hair, or being surprised that my sister and I were as intelligent as we were. You know, “oh, you placed in this class?” Or just things like that, just the sheer ignorance.*

*That is when I really, really was confronted with the whole issue of race.*

All of the students interviewed for the study, regardless of gender or specific ethnic or class background, had experienced being treated as academically inferior to White students, an experience that many continued to have even into post-secondary education.

Respondents in the study also found that there was a lack of cultural connection in their schooling process. In other words, because many of them were schooled in contexts containing few if any people of color, they found that the information they gained in school also reflected little if any of their cultural histories or values. In addition, there was lack of positive cultural images with which to identify themselves in school, i.e. teachers, students, textbooks, and school activities. As previously discussed, most had only the White mainstream against which to model their identity, and in some cases nothing else that would offset the negative
effects of that modeling. The road to racial awareness was rockier for those who had no balancing influences, as was illustrated by both Skylar and Lindsay. The following comments reflect Skylar’s experience with the ‘food, fun, festival’ model of multicultural education. She asserts that although it was problematic to only receive information about non-White cultures during designated times of the year, it was even worse to get a superficial, patronizing version of what those cultures were like:

During those growing up years I saw minorities as the ‘other’ since I didn’t have many other racial minorities to identify with. This notion of the “other” was reinforced in school by what I call the “tourist” model of multicultural education (if you were lucky enough to get it at all). You’d sample inauthentic versions of different national cuisine, most of them European, and then you might get a chance to look at a few pictures of the country itself. It turned all other cultures besides White American culture into little foreign countries that you visited briefly, but never learned about in a meaningful way. No connections were made between the cultures of the students and the cultures we were studying.

As demonstrated by Skylar’s final evaluation comments, diversity and multicultural education needed to be defined with more care and specificity than it was in her schooling experiences for her to learn and appreciate her own culture and others. Like Skylar, many students in the study learned to equate diversity and multicultural education with the addition of ethnic minorities to an already established curriculum.
that focused on White culture. Multicultural education defined in this way pollutes the spirit in which it was developed, because it does not imply an/the addition of faces of color in a sea of whiteness, but a transformation of schools, curricula, and pedagogy. Unfortunately, this was Skylar’s reality, and did little to help her understand herself as anything more than tangential to American culture. Because of its concern with developing the talents of future teachers and faculty members, the pedagogical standpoint of the Opening Doors program sought to discontinue such one-dimensional attitudes about diversity and people of color, particularly in educational contexts. Being concerned with diversity issues or with multicultural education means that a variety of perspectives and approaches are represented, respected, and incorporated, on both the curricular and instructional levels, rather than merely added on top of the existing oppressive, traditional framework.

**Undergraduate Experiences**

As undergraduates, many respondents found themselves again lacking cultural reflection in their classroom experiences. Fortunately for many respondents, college proved to be a time to take a certain amount of initiative in learning about race and their specific cultural histories, and for aligning themselves with others of parallel backgrounds. For many if not all of the research participants, coming to a university campus as an undergraduate was an important step in the developing of a positive racial self. For example, Skylar states of her identity development:

*My racial identity is much more a source of pride to me now that I'm older.*

*Much of this pride was a result of attending [*** University] where, for the*
first time in my life, I was surrounded by a substantial Asian community. While I still didn’t always feel like a part of it at least there were other people that looked like me. I wasn’t the one standing out as different. I was finally able to take classes about Japanese history and go to Filipino Cultural Night. In depth knowledge of my ancestors’ cultures was available to me there. I did find that there were some common cultural characteristics between myself and other Asian American students I came in contact with. It was refreshing to be able to come together with them over that.

Skylar’s immersion in an Asian student community was a direct contradiction to the experiences she had been subjected to in the past. Within a newly found context where she could be among the majority rather than in the minority as she was accustomed, she was able to learn about herself at the personal level, but also learn about her culture on a more comprehensive level. As reflected in the above excerpt from her interview, Skylar found a new source of pride, indicating that previous feelings toward her culture identity included shame and ignorance. While Skylar did find her undergraduate campus to be a place to reinforce herself as an ethnic being, she had a problem with race-based organizations on campus. Instead, she felt that ethnic-based organizations further served to divide the campus community. In contrast, for African American students such as Malcolm and Raquel, ethnic-based student groups like Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO’s) provided a means to gain access into the campus’ Black community and social circles. Malcolm and Raquel found that most members of the African American undergraduate community
belonged to one student organization or another, being acquainted with members of BGLO's allowed them to meet nearly all of the African American students and faculty on campus. In other words, membership in these groups provided a passport of sorts, into the African American student community.

Kelvin, an African American male who participated in the program in 1997, reveals how entrance into the Black community is not always as easy as the experience described by Raquel and Malcolm. His is a unique case among most of the participants, because unlike any other respondent in the study, he spent one year at a Historically Black College (HBC/U) in the south before transferring to a large Predominantly White Institution (PWI). He didn't find the HBC/U experience to be as supportive of his racial identity development as he had hoped. Instead, he saw it more as a place where students come who already have a strong sense of self, and that it was expected that students would enter already possessing a certain amount of cultural knowledge. As Kelvin explains, he had to come to a PWI in order to find a sense of himself as a Black man:

*I think at an HBC/U sometimes—at least at S** [University], it was a given that you were just supposed to know certain things, or it was just given that you know your culture. That institution didn't really—unlike some institutions—it didn't really emphasize or put a real emphasis on the Black culture in my opinion.*
Kelvin goes on to relay his experiences after enrolling at Pacific State University:

I didn't come to that understanding [of self as a Black man] until I got to Pacific State. I hooked up with some people, got involved in the Black community; explored some stuff. I was kind of on the fringes of it prior to coming to Pacific State; I had done some reading and had interacted with the Black community at the community college, but I would say at Pacific State that's when I really got involved. I was like a radical there for a point in time, reading a lot of books, asking a lot of questions, seeking out elders, talking to people.

In his own estimation, Kelvin didn't begin to understand himself in the context of a Black community until becoming involved in the Black community at a predominantly White institution, because those influences were not necessarily readily available to him at the small historically Black institution he first attended. The data presented in this text indicate the multiplicity and complexities that can be found within characterizations and understandings of race as a construct, individual racial identity constructions, and of the social issues and problems associated with societal constructions of race. The following section examines some of the ways in which respondents in the study gained clarity on these issues while participating in the Opening Doors program.
Enter The Opening Doors Program:

Dispelling Myths & Envisioning New Possibilities

The feelings each participant possessed about him or herself as a cultural or racial being greatly affected the ways in which they were or were not able to congeal in a group such as Opening Doors. For those of unexamined racial identity, or for those who did not recognize the salience of race in their lives, it was difficult to relate to a sometimes vocal or judgmental group of culturally acknowledged peers. Both Raquel and Skylar, for example, related stories of group members who did not have research interests that were culturally related, or of peers who saw themselves as ‘minority’ in name only. The students to whom Raquel and Skylar make reference, while isolating themselves to some degree, were also ostracized by other members of their group, and were left to either negotiate race in their own ways, or to ignore it altogether. In any case, for each of the students interviewed in the study, particularly those from more diverse cohorts, the ways in which they constructed themselves racially was intricately connected to how they related to one another.

The summer spent in the Opening Doors program had many life changing effects for the respondents in the study, particularly in regards to racial identity development. That is to say that one particular effect the program had on students was that it changed their perceptions of race in some way. In some cases, it changed their perceptions of their own racial/ethnic positioning, as in helping them to see their racial identity as assets to their lives. In other cases, it changed their perceptions of other cultural groups, as in helping them to understand, accept, and
learn from the racial histories and cultural experiences of those unlike themselves. In many cases, it changed both. Overall, for those of African heritage, there was less of an epiphany about their positions in society as raced individuals, because race in Black and White is something that they have grown up with. There was a mixture of feelings for most of the African American participants, but in many cases, these students felt that their moments of insight came more in regards to other cultural groups, as far as learning both about other groups and about themselves specifically in relation to those groups.

*Theme 1: Opening Doors as a Model for Building Cultural Relationships*

Because of the way that the Opening Doors program was structured, students seemed to have little choice but to depend on one another for academic and cultural support. Members of each of the Opening Doors cohorts lived together in close quarters, and because each year they were increasingly from out of state, they were not necessarily acquainted before arriving to the program. In order to help them feel comfortable and become more familiar with one another, they were given many group assignments and encouraged to work together according to research interest. However, although these specific factors were in place, there was still no guarantee that during any given summer, students would form lasting bonds or even get along. Rather, there are other factors that must also be in place that cannot be controlled by programming, curriculum, or instruction. Data in the study illustrate that in order for these students to build relationships that allowed them to begin breaking down the real and perceived barriers between them and to more deeply reflect on themselves,
there had to be some sense of diversity among them, yet they had to be able to see a reflection of themselves in one another and to be mutually respectful of one another's ideas, and of one another as individuals. In addition, the personal location of each group member was salient to the ways in which they found connections with one another, or in some cases personal location hindered their abilities to bond with the group. Finally, there had to be a sense of reciprocity: they had to bring their whole selves to the group context and feel that others were doing the same in order to find common ground that would allow them to bond and develop a willingness to support one another. While I attempt here to subdivide the responses according to these categories for convenience sake, many times these sentiments were inextricably bound to one another. That is to say, that each individual's experience in this program somehow affected the growth of another individual, and each of their experiences informed other aspects of their own lives.

The Role of Diversity

Because for most of us, the simplest and easiest thing to do is to find yourself grouped with others who are a reflection of yourself, either racially, culturally, or by class, gender, sexual orientation, or political views, it was interesting to see what relationships developed among groups that were as diverse in nature as some of these. While at first it may seem that too much diversity may contribute to the breakdown of group interactions more than strengthening them, this proved not to be the case for the students involved in the study. Rather, the more diversity within the group, whether it was cultural, ethnic, or otherwise, the more opportunities students
had to bond, which aided in the process of adding to each student’s knowledge of the world and to extending their perceptions about themselves and their peers. These bonding experiences were critical in helping students break down many of the perceived barriers between them. At the same time, when there was less diversity, less receptiveness, or less of a willingness to share with others the cultural capital each student brought to the program, group dynamics became strained and community-building was hindered. For example, Malcolm, a member of the pioneer group of Opening Doors in 1992, found that there were some students in his cohort who bonded across cultures. However, he felt that there was more of a need for individuals to find themselves within the context of their own cultural groups, rather than defining themselves in the context of an overall community of people of color. For the students in his cohort, although they were ethnically and culturally diverse, they could not necessarily see past their own cultural spaces in order to find the commonalities between themselves and other group members. So in that context, ethnically diverse students utilized the program not as a way to learn about people of other cultures, but as a way to delve into their own cultural and personal histories in a way they may not have in the past. In the following excerpts, taken from Malcolm’s interview, he explains this phenomenon:

*People were really interested in one another. People were working together, so you did see solidarity, but I’m just saying at the heart of it, when we’re really trying to make change, the heart isn’t about one’s color, although that is significant. But the heart of it is solidarity. There were more efforts in*
building cultural unity among one's own heritage, because like I said, people are still trying to find it out, versus the multicultural solidarity. And I think that the only thing that can be done is to see how people work with it [cross-cultural situations].

He goes on to state:

*I think in terms of programmatic issues, the significance that [the program] had was watching people fight. People started to form cliques. And I think that was very significant to me in a sense, to think that these folks are people of color, trying to become scholars, if not already. In a field that will impact the lives of our children. And as I look back on that, and I think about the difficulties so many people have with dealing with issues of race, racism, identity development, cultural identity, and just struggling with who they are and the tensions that came out of that. They were petty, but real.*

In contrast, there were students from this same cohort such as Josephine, who grew up with positive cultural identity influences, and with the knowledge of their history and culture. Therefore, unlike many of the students Malcolm mentioned, Josephine did not find herself in the situation of needing reinforcement in her own culture, rather than being able to learn about others. And while she, like most, had particular people with whom she was closer than others, she remained open and congenial at the prospect of getting to know all of the incoming Opening Doors participants, rather than merely those with her same cultural background. Josephine states of the cultural reinforcement in her personal background that helped her bond with others:
I really feel like I knew who I was growing up with my dad. He was very active in the Chicano/Latino community. He was always fundraising and creating events and we were always a part of that. So I always felt empowered and part of that. I really feel like I knew who I was.

Her background and personality, as demonstrated in the following statement, allowed her to freely share her cultural capital as someone who was a student at Pacific State University at that time, and as someone trained to help new students on campus. She goes on to comment on her rapport with her cohort:

*I think I easily floated from group to group, to the different little groups that we had. I think I flowed pretty easily in between them. And since I was here at PSU, I felt like “Welcome to my campus! Let me show you around, let’s go swimming. I’ll help you out.” And I felt like since I had been an orientation counselor at PSU I still kind of felt like that was part of me, to be the hostess.*

Ironically, a lack of racial diversity was sometimes a contributing factor to the collapse in communication among some of the groups. Students participating in the latter groups of the program did not have the same opportunities to build relationships across ethnic cultures, because there were fewer ethnic groups represented among program participants in later years. However, even among the predominantly African American groups of later years, there remained the need for students to look beyond their racial backgrounds in order to find commonalities. In some cases students found that racial sameness masked other commonalities, while
others found that racial homogeneity could not necessarily produce other commonalities. For example, although Kelvin did not see a problem with being in a predominantly African American group, there were clearly problems that may not have existed, or that would have existed in a different fashion given a more ethnically or culturally diverse group.

To his own surprise, Kelvin turned out to be closest with a woman who was Asian American; he stated in his interview that she was one of the few from his group with whom that he has kept in contact: "There are a couple I keep in touch with. Carla, we keep in touch frequently, either email or we call each other every now and then." Kelvin later expressed his frustrations as to the problem with their group: "I think the worst part was that there were too many people from the same institution; there were not enough men; there were too many local people. We didn't go no where, we didn't do nothing [sic] as a group." So although he did not specifically target a lack of ethnic and cultural diversity as problematic within his group, his statement clearly points to the idea of ‘sameness’ among them as something that stagnated the group rather than helping them to bond. Likewise Consuela, his cohort-mate mentions in this excerpt that the group may have been able to bond more solidly had there been more demographic diversity among them:

There were just too many people from one area in our group. And those people tended very quickly to hang around each other and didn't want to join with everybody else, and I think that hindered things a little bit. Because if those people may have been from somewhere else, maybe we all could have
come together a little better. Also, I think there should be more people from
ces other than Black there. Cuz there were two Asians in our group, and
all Black, that I remember. I think that they should pull as many from other
cultures as possible.

While Kelvin did not explicitly point to racial homogeneity as the primary hindrance,
he noted that there were quite a few people who came from the same institutions,
which happened to be either HBC/U's, or Heartland State University, the program's
home institution. Gender dynamics also posed a problem in this group, as outlined
by Kelvin, in that there were only four males to sixteen females. His statement
demonstrates his belief that a lack of gender and cultural diversity greatly
contributed to the break down of interpersonal relations within his group. By that
same token, Skylar, who attended the second group of Opening Doors, stated
specifically that having a host of people from different states and academic
institutions all in a new state and living new circumstances, took away from the
diversions that may have hindered her group from congealing.

Fortunately, race is not the only diversity characteristic that can be present in
a successful grouping of students. Even if the group is racially homogenous, as with
the previously described group, there still remains a possibility for positive
interactions if the group is diverse along other lines such as interests, background, or
life experience. As mentioned previously, having a racially homogenous group of
students is never a guarantee that they will get along: it can never be assumed that
students will connect just by nature of their shared racial characteristics. At the same
time, students who have a variety of backgrounds can still mirror one another based on other factors, and learn about themselves and one another based on whatever diverse characteristics they bring to the context. Imani, whose 1998 group was primarily African American, describes her experiences in the following excerpt. She resolves that she was able to grow academically by having peers who could provide intellectual stimulation, feedback, and academic assistance when needed. At the same time, because members of her group were similar in age and had mostly also not decided on their next steps academically and professionally, Imani did not feel isolated as she moved to the next phase of her own life:

I had a good experience in OD. I think a lot of the people that were there were really good company, really good academically. We could bounce ideas off of each other, and get really good feedback. The most significant thing for me was the fact that I wasn't alone, because I had just graduated, and I had no idea what I was doing next, and it was nice to know I wasn't the only one in that boat. So that made me feel good.

At the same time Vanessa, who by her own admission was not a strong or confident student, found that spending significant time with students who were mostly African American like herself, but who had a wide range of personal and academic experiences, provided the type of challenge that helped her grow personally and intellectually. As Vanessa states:

I met friends for life. I had a good experience. It just felt good to be around a totally different group of people, people that were about something, people
that were smart, and just trying to better themselves and do good things. I just had a really good experience.

The above accounts, taken from the 1998 group interview, demonstrate the ways in which a multidimensional notion of diversity can produce a group of students who may have a similar ethnic make-up, but also have enough cultural differences that they can increase their own knowledge base while visualizing a variety of realities for themselves, because they can see those realities mirrored in their peers.

While various aspects of cultural diversity seemed to be beneficial for students regardless of racial demographics, there were some types of diversity that seemed to be counter-productive for the students interviewed in this study. For example, Raquel posits that age was a major factor in the ways in which her group related to one another. While the age differences were a factor for various students in many of the cohorts, the initial Opening Doors group, who had an array of ethnic diversity, also had the most age diversity among students. As Raquel stated, during her interview, “there definitely was splintering along age lines. And it could have even been geographic-wise now that I think about it.” Raquel did not think that people purposely separated according to age or ethnicity; instead she blamed the ways in which those demographics dispersed. For example, there was similar age and ethnicity grouping among those who came from the same school, one of which was a college for non-traditional students. These particular students were mostly the same race, gender, and age group. In her opinion, “for the most part everybody did kind of get along, and we’d all probably do whatever. Nobody was necessarily
opposed [to one another], but you just kind of reach out first to your peer group.” In other words, although they may have participated in out of classroom activities together, they also splintered into subgroups according to their primary peer relationships, which in the case of Raquel’s cohort, also meant that those subgroups were mostly homogenous in terms of age and race:

I can see where it kind of fell out ethnic, but not because it was ethnicity.

Like, obviously Malcolm and I were both in the program, we were boyfriend and girlfriend; we spent a lot of time together. We happened to be the same age, we both happen to be Black, we both happened to be going to the same school...

The above data excerpts demonstrate the ways in which, even if inadvertently, the combination of various factors can serve to work against community building within groups. If those factors can be recognized or understood to be problematic by group members, then it is possible that a concerted effort can be made to allay those factors if developing relationships within the group is a priority for its members.

The Role of Personal Location

As demonstrated by Raquel’s comments in the previous section, each student’s personal location had a lot to do with how they fared both in the program, and as a member of the collective. In other words, because each student brought a specific set of lived experiences to the program, there was naturally a need to be cognizant of those factors in order for them to build relationships with one another. Noddings (1984) states that caring relationships do not have fixed rules, nor are they
mediated by prescriptions. Instead, she contends that the act of caring “is conditioned not by a host of narrow and rigidly defined principles but by a broad and loosely defined ethic that molds itself in situations and has a proper regard for human affections, weaknesses, and anxieties” (p. 25). This regard for the paradoxes involved in being human is part of what makes a program such as Opening Doors successful. Each student enters the program with his or her own subjectivities and realities. Given this, part of accomplishing the goal of building relationships among them had to do with respecting the realities with which each student comes to the context of the program while attempting to build community among them. As Jordan, a 1998 Opening Doors participant pointed out in the group interview, individuals in a group experience, regardless of the specifics, represent a microcosm of society in various ways. As such, it is natural that there will be points of conversion as well as points of diversion among them. The key, however, is to realize that reality, but to remain agreeable to work to make the group functional and perhaps even build rapport within the group:

*I think the group was symbolic of society as we know it. Honestly, because there were cliques. Not the negative cliques, but if you notice, everybody did hang with their certain couple of people. But at the same time, we could all get together and not really clash.*

Jordan’s statement implies that there was a willingness on the part of students to work beyond whatever differences they may have had, and to develop an interest in one another at a level that allowed them to operate as a collective. However, there
are other factors or differences that may prohibit members from investing in the
group, producing a lack of cohesiveness among group members. For example,
having been involved even before the onset of the program, Raquel and Malcolm
have since married. Raquel stated that neither she nor Malcolm bonded as well with
the group as they could have, because they spent most of their time either together,
or with other friends who also attended the home institution, but who were not
involved in the program. In addition, Raquel’s major at the time was
Communications, while Malcolm’s was Biology. Neither was necessarily headed
toward education before attending Opening Doors. Because of these factors, Raquel
recalls feeling out of place:

*Even Malcolm was looking at science education, and I was just straight up
[Communications], which also could have been part of why I didn’t really gel
that much with the group either, because of my interests-I was just the odd ball in so many ways.*

Raquel states that her cohort mates may have felt that she was “all high-falootin’,”
because “she wouldn’t even associate with the group; she was always gone.” This
was not her intention, but as Kelvin mentioned about the 1997 cohort, it may have
had an effect on those in the group who did not have the privilege of being familiar
with the life and culture of the home institution. Says Raquel, “I remember hanging
out with Sh** a lot, which being from Collegetown, not from, but that is where I was
living, and a lot of people weren’t. So, that was another separating factor. I had a
place to go, other people didn’t.” Likewise, Malcolm stated:
Overall, I felt like I got along well with everybody. I really wasn’t too interested in trying to form strong bonds, because there were people there that I knew because we all went to school together already, like me, D**, Raquel and a couple of other people. There were people there that we knew, so it made it easier already because we already had like a little group. And plus I was going with Raquel and she was in it. So we were together, and that’s all I really needed.

Raquel’s perception of herself as somehow outside of the group because of her academic interests and her relationship with Malcolm may have contributed to her feeling detached from the group. At the same time, like Malcolm, having associates outside of the group also meant having less of a feeling of accountability to the group. While it may be unavoidable, this phenomenon is a possible side effect of having local participants in an experience where the element of anonymity is key to group dynamics. For example Consuela, who was in the 1997 cohort with Kelvin, was one of the ‘locals’ he mentioned. She was born and raised in Capital City, the town in which Heartland State University is located, and attended that institution for both undergraduate and graduate study. While her group may not have had as much diversity in regards to race, gender, and academic institution, there was one factor that she did feel was for the most part present in her group, and that is a mutual respect for one another as individuals and as scholars. Typical conflicts notwithstanding, Consuela who felt that her cohort members were good and
intelligent people, had a more positive perception of her cohort, and much more positive things to say about the dynamics of the group than did Kelvin:

*I think we got along okay. I mean we had some drama, but for the most it was fun. I think that's gonna happen regardless. Even when you start teaching, you got your faculty that kind of come together and those that go off in their own world. And that's kind of what happened. We had people all over the place, but for the most it was a good group of people. I will say that: very intelligent, and we came through in the end.*

As was the case across the data, Consuela mentioned that there were several groups of people who tended to socialize together, or form 'cliques,' and that she too had a few key people with whom she was close, although for the most part, she felt that the group got along well. However, the difference in perception between Consuela and Kelvin of the group’s dynamics show that although certain factors may be in place that would attribute to community building within the group, students extract meaning from a group situation according to their individual experiences and realities. For Kelvin, group demographics was a salient factor in his inability to bond with the group while Consuela, who also agreed that lack of diversity among them may have been an obstacle within the group overall, needed to respect and feel respected by group members in order to form bonds as an individual within the group.
The Role of Reciprocity

One of the most relevant factors that emerged from the theme around building cross-cultural relationships was that of reciprocity: that is, giving one’s whole self and expecting parallel effort from others in order to build relationships that are not unilateral or competitive, but that help to create environments of cooperation and care. Among the students involved in the study, those who felt that they made a whole-hearted effort to get to know one another and to reveal themselves to one another beyond superficial or exterior characteristics gained the most long-lasting overall benefits from the program experience. For example, Lindsay expressed these sentiments:

*I think we lucked out, and I know several of us have talked about it, but I felt we had a really good group. I found them very accepting, for the most part. I think there was a great acceptance of where everybody was, personally and academically. And really there’s just a lot of love, I think, between all of us. I mean certainly, though I’ve lost track of people, there is still a picture on my desk of these folks. And I keep thinking, you know, I want to send a group e-mail and just let these people know. These people changed so much for me, like how I felt about my abilities and in terms of what I had to be. So I think it was one of the few places where I’ve been able in my whole life to let down my guard and be me. That was a great thing. I don’t know what happened—I don’t know what luck happened—but I really, really loved the group of people we had.*
The act of letting one’s ‘guard down’ as expressed by Lindsay, produces a certain amount of vulnerability, but at the same time, Lindsay felt that the context of this program was a safe space in which to do that. Michaela, an African American woman from the 1998 cohort, expressed similar sentiments. For her, the experience of revealing herself to others also allowed her to reveal herself more deeply to herself, which contributed to her emotional growth. She shared this Opening Doors experience during the group interview:

*It did a whole lot for me individually, as well as how I operate in a group now. I was really able to see myself. I guess that sounds kind of odd, but it was the way the program was orchestrated. You were able to go deep to find yourself, as well as I realized how other people saw you. And after the program there were certain people I keep in contact with, but that’s not to play down anybody else, but we just grew. We grew together, and grew up, a lot of us. From each activity or each experience we got something different.*

By the same token, other students expressed notions about reciprocity that were more academic and intellectual than emotional. In both cases, feeling that there were those among the group willing to extend themselves to one another, be that for personal or academic purposes, produced a level of trust among them that allowed them to create meaningful relationships. The following statement expressed by Nia and taken from the group interview, is demonstrative of the appreciation students felt at realizing that even amidst personality differences or variations in personal interests, they were able to come together around particular issues and recognize their commonalties:
It's good to have someone who believes in you. And to be in a group where we all felt the same way, and it's like we might have had moments where everybody had their little issues or we went out and we didn't see folks. But when it got down to the paper, everybody was on the same plane; we were all in the lab: 'Help me out with this.' A lot of people brought their personal lives into it, and it was good to see everybody, where their head was. I just think we had a really good time, we really did. We kicked it! We have memories forever, whether you were there or not. There were times when we were all together, and it was great.

The idea of reciprocity was important in helping students form lasting relationships with one another. In situations where students felt that they were receiving the same amount of energy and care that they extended, the bonds were more intimate. At the same time, students who, for whatever reason, were not willing or able to invest in the group in that same way, may have enjoyed their Opening Doors experience, and gained valuable skills and benefits, but they did not develop relationships at the same level of intimacy.

**Positive Inter/Cross Cultural Relationships In Action**

As demonstrated by the research data, the previous section discussed factors that may help students form bonds needed to succeed in programs such as Opening Doors. However, it is also important to examine how these bonds are important to the success of both the program itself and the myriad students who have been influenced by their participation in the program. In the groups that were most
ethnically representative and culturally heterogeneous, students not only formed inclusive smaller groups that could easily overlap and interconnect, they were also able to form bonds across boundaries of culture, age, class, etc. The ability to form bonds that resisted the binary of ‘self/other’ helped students get to know one another not merely as racialized individuals, but as human beings. Skylar makes the following assertion during her interview:

I got along well with all but two members of the group and made some lasting friendships. I was closest to two other Asian women and the African-American women that were my age. I imagine I was closest to them because they were the most friendly and because we shared the most in common when it came to background and goals. I was the least close to two particular Latinas that chose to separate themselves from the rest of the people in the program.

She goes on to disclose:

The best thing about the Opening Doors program was how close most of our group became. I still keep in touch with some of the people and remember the rest fondly. I don’t know if this occurred with other groups from other sessions. I think we were really lucky to have assembled such an outgoing, fun, supportive group of people to share in that experience with. The worst thing was leaving at the end of the session. I cried because I knew that I was going to miss all my friends so much. I wish it could have gone the whole summer.
Skylar's cohort-mates Omar and Lindsay expressed similar feelings regarding the effect of the group’s dynamics in their lives and on their outlook regarding students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. For example, Omar mentioned having established a personal and lasting bond with many of the students from his cohort, which seemed especially true overall of his particular summer in the program. Other cohorts did not express the same sentiments shared by these particular students, although respondents noted that each cohort shared a unique experience, with both positives and negatives, and which is not soon forgotten. Omar says of the relationships formed in his cohort:

I still feed off of the relationships that I developed with Opening Doors. I know it’s been going on for 6 or 7 years now, but each year is different.

But that '93 group, you know, there’s always a connection with that group of people-some more than others-that you always have. It’s an experience that only you and those 22 other people or whatever, went through, and can’t nobody ever alter or change that. So I mean it’s real special, it’s real special. You look back at pictures and things like that, and you look back at when you started your career in higher ed., or moving to an advanced degree, and you start there. That was the defining moment. And we kicked it!

Omar comments that these relationships have had an enduring effect in his life, and states the value of these relationships is that they continue to change and grow and continue to provide nourishment on various levels.
Students from each cohort interviewed noted that each year there were at least one or two people who isolated themselves from the rest of the general body for whatever reason. In the earlier years, that isolation was based mainly on factors such as age or ethnicity. Members of both the first and second cohorts mentioned that they had peers who were, in their opinions, either confused about their ethnic identity, or who weren’t closely tied to their ethnic background. These students provided opportunities for others to do a closer examination of their own views on the salience of race and ethnicity in their lives, while challenging the students of unacknowledged racial identity to perform the same critical examinations. For each of the students involved in the study, being in communion with other people of color facilitated their understandings of themselves and each other as individuals, but also as members of collectives—be those based on ethnicity, gender, class, sexual preference, etc. Even in situations where other members of the group were isolated from the collective, they were able to use these situations as topics of discussion and reflection. This understanding of self-in relation to a larger whole was a significant accomplishment.

*Theme II: Opening Doors as a Model of ‘Becoming’*

One contribution that the Opening Doors program gave to the students involved in the study was to provide new ways of conceptualizing mentorship and role modeling. While the Opening Doors program had a structured mentoring component, those pre-assigned mentoring relationships were not always the ones that benefited students the most. Instead, it was the informal, uncontrived mentoring
relationships that helped students begin to visualize themselves in new ways. The significance of mentoring and role modeling as demonstrated by the Opening Doors program and its administrative staff emerged from the data in three elemental categories. The first element was that the program provided a model for participants to envision themselves as graduate students. The second element was that it also provided a model for scholarship for young people of color. For instance, by seeing other students of color thriving as capable, intelligent individuals, students were able to see themselves as such, and to set and meet higher standards for themselves. The final element of significance was that the program provided a model of the professional of color: by treating them as professionals who could contribute to a body of knowledge in academia, and by modeling certain teacher behaviors, the director/facilitator and staff of the Opening Doors program allowed students to see themselves in those roles.

_Becoming Graduate Students: The Importance of Exemplars_

Omar, by being a student athlete, had the privilege of being admitted into many situations and social circles to which he may not otherwise have had access. By his own admission he was neither a strong nor serious student; therefore athletics also provided him a way to get into and remain in academic circles. At the same time, upon admittance into those academic circles, he had to earn the right to remain there. After undergraduate study, he wanted to be considered a 'real' student-as in taken seriously as a scholar. He saw Opening Doors as a means of facing graduate school with a substantial project under his belt. For Omar, being accepted into and
succeeding in the Opening Doors program, was a ‘make or break’ situation, and his accomplishments in the program proved for him that he had ‘made it.’

I knew it was an opportunity for me to prove myself as a viable candidate for a higher degree—a Master's degree. And that's what I was told—that this program will make or break me, as far as getting into graduate school at PSU. So I had to come in and really kind of prove that I was worthy of being a graduate student. So I came in like I always go into situations, very optimistic, or you know like I'm going to learn something.

For Omar, Opening Doors held a host of benefits. As previously mentioned, he developed, or awakened, a confidence within himself that allowed him to see himself as a ‘scholar,’ which was an important realization for most, if not all, of the students interviewed in the study. Coming from the experience of not being a ‘serious’ student to the experience of proving himself as someone who is both worthy of and ready for, graduate level scholarship was particularly important to him:

I knew I was a good student if I applied myself, but what Opening Doors did was it made me aware of my potential and abilities to actually perform academically, and write and research. I also discovered a love of reading and learning about Black children, and about Black people, because my research was around Black children. So, I developed the confidence of a scholar. The ‘I can’ part of it really began to surface in my whole psyche.

And I was able to say ‘okay, I’m gonna get this. I’m gonna make the best of this. I’m gonna show people that I’m able to perform on a level which would
make me a scholar.' I think that experience kind of propelled me into where I am now, working on my Ph.D.

One salient factor in Omar’s decision to apply to Opening Doors had to do with distinguishing himself as a scholar, an idea that, for most of the respondents in the study, was tied to perceptions of graduate school. Although not explicitly stated by all of the participants, the idea of needing to and/or being able to prove themselves as scholars involved wondering if they could accept the challenge of graduate school. Like Omar, they wondered if it would be too difficult; that is to say, that despite having received acceptable, even outstanding grades as undergraduates, they were insecure and afraid that they were not academically prepared, and on a base level, that they were not smart enough to ‘make it’ in graduate school. Omar felt that his experience in Opening Doors was not only beneficial academically, but also on a very personal level. Not unlike the others, his experience in the program exemplifies both spectrums of the Opening Doors experience: the academic and the personal. While he reaped the benefits of learning to conduct research and sharpening his writing and presentation skills, he also deeply valued the emotional connection he was able to make with others in that short amount of time.

Each respondent in the study had various expectations of both what the program would entail and of what might possibly be learned or gained as a result of participating. One of the primary concerns/expectations students possessed had to do with the ways graduate school is perceived: many had misconceptions of what graduate study would be like. For those students, having a model of graduate school
was important, while for others having a model of an actual graduate student was more important. For example, Nia, who describes here how seeing me, the researcher, who also assisted in the maintenance of her Opening Doors group, working on an advanced degree enabled her to see herself as a potential graduate student as well. Nia shares this insight from her group interview:

*I liked the program because I met so many different types of people, but I think the most influential person... the fact that [the researcher] was going to get her Doctorate. She was just really on-point, and very relaxed about the whole thing. I was like ‘okay, if I can just get to a point where I’m relaxed about something that’s just heavy duty and very crucial, then I’m on point.’ Because throughout the whole time, I never saw her stressed about anything. Every time we saw her, she was like ‘I’m here, if you need me, just call me.’ It was just the fact that she’s going—and I never really saw any brothers and sisters on the Ph.D. level, actually going through with it. I never saw anybody go to class. I heard everybody say ‘yeah, I got my Doctorate.’ But you never really see the process. And seeing [her] was very influential.*

Without a model of what graduate school could be like, students like those described in the study, may see it as something that only ‘other people’ do. In the case of students of color, they may see it as an accomplishment that only White students have the ability or finances to achieve. Attending Opening Doors changed these misconceptions of graduate school. By seeing another African American woman *inside* the process of obtaining a post-Baccalaureate degree, rather than at the
beginning or the end of the process was an important step for Nia in seeing how the process itself can be done. She mentions perceiving me as never being under stress, which is the only image students may have of what the process looks like if that is all they have seen or imagined. By working with a Doctoral student all summer, she was able to see that graduate school does not have to be a harmful or unpleasant process.

Before coming into the program, many if not all of the respondents in the study understood graduate school to be something out of their reach, either financially or academically. Most had minimal to no exposure to the process of conducting research; a factor many thought would hinder their success in graduate school. Fortunately, even given the fears that came along with their lack of exposure to the process of graduate study, many progressed to the rigors of actual graduate study and succeeded. In the following excerpt, taken from the group interview, Imani shares how the Opening Doors experience gave her the push needed to successfully propel her into a Master’s program as well as having prepared her for the academic coursework she is currently taking:

istration prepare me for what I’m going through now in some respect, as far as the academic work. I’m not intimidated; before I probably would have been. But now I know ‘hey this is what grad school is about: a lot of reading.’ It was a really good experience; it opened a lot of doors. It made me come out of my comfort zone in a lot of ways, and in the end I know that it will be better for me.
Imani’s experience in Opening Doors prepared her for the academic expectations of graduate school: by being accustomed to the reading and writing load that graduate students carry, she was able to do well in her courses without feeling overwhelmed, overloaded, or intimidated by the amount of work expected of a graduate student. Kelvin, who since his days as an Opening Doors student has enrolled in a Ph.D. program in education, saw Opening Doors as not just a way to prove himself academically to others, but as a way to prove to himself that graduate school was not beyond his reach. In his interview he stated:

*I really didn’t know what to expect coming in. I think many times we have these images for whatever reason in our mind, and I guess that’s society’s doing. I thought graduate school was this big, hard entity in which only smart people got into. Not saying that I was a dummy, but it was very challenging.*

Omar and Kelvin’s comments illustrate the types of fears students arrived to the program with: self-doubt, fear, etc. These comments also indicate the ways in which students perceived themselves going into the program: either as scholars with potential that would be manifested, or as individuals whose inadequacies would be illuminated. In either case, the Opening Doors program would provide a platform in which to ascertain these notions, although each respondent in the study found that their experience illustrated the former rather than the latter. Opening Doors became a place to validate themselves as scholars and to provide the type of trial-run needed for their future graduate school experiences.
Lindsay, on the other hand, had previously been a strong student academically, yet like Kelvin, the question of legitimacy and validity of scholarship by people of color always caused self-doubt to loom in the back of her mind. Lindsay offers this insight, taken from her final evaluation:

*Even though I went to Sun Valley, and I knew that supposedly I was smart cuz I got in there, I think I always had that feeling of getting 'found out.' Of like, every time I turned a paper in, of being afraid I'd get it back and that the professor would say 'I don't know who told you that you were a good writer, but you're not' or 'this is shoddy work.' It never happened, but I think I always had that fear, and when I was in OD, when we went through it at the end, I knew I could do good work.*

The Opening Doors program provided a space for Lindsay to recognize that she could be proud of her academic accomplishments without feeling like a fraud. Receiving the needed validation from the program did not necessarily increase her level of scholarship, but made her more confident in the scholarship she was already able to produce. The implicit reasons for Lindsay’s newly gained confidence may be found in the following excerpts by Raquel. Raquel indicates that having someone who she respected in the field be proud of her, helped her see that she was not being applauded because she was a student of color, or because someone was letting her ‘get by.’ Instead, she knew that it was because she could do good work. Raquel, who completed a Master of Arts Degree in education, expressed the notion of seeing graduate school as something that was not only within her reach, but something that
was not as mystical or horrifying as she thought before her summer in Opening Doors. She states:

The day I gave my presentation, I remember how felt such a sense of accomplishment. I felt like I had done this bomb piece of work, and I felt that Dr. B was so proud of me, and that just meant so much to me. She had always assured me, 'don't be nervous. You're talking about your work. Nobody knows your work better than you do.' I just remember her saying that. I just felt like, you know, this is alright. I can do this. This shouldn't intimidate me. And really that lesson has carried over in other things in life too, not just my graduate school experience. It just made grad school not so scary.

Raquel reiterates the fears that many students had upon entering the program, as well as the overwhelming sense of accomplishment they felt at the end of the program. This feeling of having completed a major research project provided segue into graduate study that students needed to feel prepared for graduate school. Consuela, who had this to say, posits that the skills learned in the program have given her an advantage as a graduate student:

[OD] really turned out to be an excellent experience for me, because I did have to do a lot of research and what not once I got into grad school. I think that background-I was even able to use the paper again. So, that was really good to fall back on.
Consuela, who has received a Master of Education degree and currently teaches at the high school level, transferred the Opening Doors learning experience directly into her graduate school experiences. By having the pre-graduate school experience of Opening Doors, students like Consuela could enter graduate school having already conducted research on a topic of interest to them. Because the level of scholarship expected in Opening Doors was as high or higher than that of actual graduate school programs, Consuela could recognize her Opening Doors research as commensurate with what would be expected of her in graduate school. Josephine, a Chicana student who attended Opening Doors in its initial year, also graduated with a Bachelor’s degree from the program’s home institution, as had Raquel and Malcolm. Along with Malcolm, Josephine’s reasons for coming to Opening Doors was a culmination of the feelings previously expressed by Lindsay, Omar, Raquel and Kelvin. She shares these anxieties:

My grades during college at that time were not really high. Although I felt I could do higher, I was working two to three jobs at one time usually, and so I feel like I could be a four-point student. But there was some other economic things not letting me do that. So, Opening Doors—it really felt like it gave me a chance to really prove that. And to actually just be a student and not have a part-time job, that felt really neat. That was a neat opportunity for me. I think I did really well. I was very proud of my Opening Doors work, and so I think it gave me a chance to prove myself.

Malcolm, who is now in a Doctoral program, expressed similar feelings:
I felt like it was exciting because it was graduate research—that was the draw—you would be preparing for graduate school, and that scared me. I was like ‘I know I’m not gonna make it to grad school,’ because I felt like had mediocre grades, because of my science. I was struggling and I was nervous and all of that. Opening Doors did give me, which I really liked, was it gave me a glimpse of what graduate school was going to be like. The way that Dr. B had it set up it was like preparing for graduate school with heart, and somebody who cared enough to give her heart.

In both cases, the issue of learning the research process, conducting one’s own research project, and being pushed academically helped these students overcome feelings of fear and doubt and to prove that they could go to graduate school and succeed. In addition to being able to prove their scholarship, both Josephine and Malcolm were excited for the opportunity to be students again. Like other Opening Doors participants, they already had some form of K-12 teaching experience under their belts, either pre-service or in-service, and were ready to be students again. Josephine offers this analysis:

*I was so excited, because that year [teaching] in Colombia I missed education. I missed taking classes and learning. I mean I was learning, but I felt this inner drive to move on and to go forward, but I didn’t know how to go forward. I never had a real role model. So, Opening Doors gave me that opportunity. I felt that gave me an advantage I never would have had before.*
Josephine's explication of the benefit of Opening Doors also addresses the notion of having a model of graduate school. More importantly, after having been out of the loop of academia while completing studies abroad, participating in this program allowed her to get back into the practice of being a student before deciding to move on to an actual graduate studies program.

**Becoming Researchers and Scholars: The Role of High Expectations**

As noted in the previous section, each respondent expressed various sentiments around developing their scholarly potential, including having been well prepared by the program for graduate school, and feeling a sense of accomplishment at the end of the six weeks. Some students felt over prepared for graduate study, as expressed by Kelvin in his final evaluation: "I think OD has really prepared me. I think it has over prepared me, because I know I sit in some of these classes like 'I did this two summers ago, I don't want to do this, it's a waste of time.'" Aside from feeling the academic accomplishment they associated with being viable graduate school candidates, they also noted the sense of pride and fulfillment at being able to see themselves as scholars-as people who were smart and capable in general. For example, Raquel noted that learning the process of conducting research was a skill that has continued to benefit her nearly ten years after her stay in the program:

> It really did build my confidence, to let me know that I was capable of doing it, that someone that I highly respected in the field of research and writing felt like my work was alright. It helped prepare me to learn the different steps of doing research, which is so important in grad school.
Professionally, I’m not doing the same thing I was doing in OD necessarily, but I still know it’s important to evaluate things, and have evidence to back this up, and here is where I might find my information that I need, and here is how I can present it. Those skills, I’ve just used and carried out in a lot of different ways that maybe I didn’t foresee when was doing OD.

Raquel’s comments, which are appropriate for other lessons the program provided, are also important in that she was able to transfer the skills she learned and the confidence she gained from the Opening Doors program to other contexts. The program provided her with a way to gain critical skills and to see herself in a different way. Raquel learned that she could carry these lessons and that confidence over into other academic and non-academic situations, knowing that those lessons started as a result of participating in the Opening Doors program. Skylar, who went on to complete a Master of Education degree, expressed these emotions related to the research process and graduate study:

I got a feeling for what it would be like to write a thesis if I were to go on to do graduate study. I’d always thought that it was something that was out of my reach, but after doing work to make our colloquium presentations I felt like it was something that I could achieve.

Helping students to recognize their ability to do graduate level work was an important aspect for the respondents in the study. Unlike classes where students may not have been treated at the same caliber as graduate students, or where they may never have even conducted a full-scale research project, Opening Doors allowed
students to see that conducting research was not beyond their capabilities. Participating in the Opening Doors program provided a model of graduate level scholarship that was affirming, yet demanding.

While being challenged by nature of participating in the program, other students were stimulated and motivated more by the models provided by other Opening Doors students. Because students came to the program from various institutions, they were able to share things with one another that may have been different according to the structure of their individual undergraduate programs. For example, Jordan, who made the following comment during the group interview noted the benefit of peer feedback.

*Socially and academically, I think it helped me grow. Academically, what stood out was just like sitting in class when we were supposed to be taking notes-I was taking notes, I promise! Anyway, I was just like listening to everybody, and there is just like so much you can gain from just listening, and focusing on what the next person is saying. I mean, just the ideas coming from the young kids and the old ones too. It’s tremendous!*

Students didn’t just see themselves as brilliant within this context, but one another as well. Oftentimes, because of how classrooms may be constructed, students may not always have an opportunity to really listen and hear what one another has to say on various topics of interest. Many times the insights and wisdom they are able to share with one another is just as beneficial, if not more so, than what the classroom instructor may have to offer. Another example of this is Vanessa, who was
positively affected by feedback from her fellow classmates, as illustrated in this comment from the group interview:

*I think the journal was a really good icebreaker. The once a week type thing that we had to do, and getting everybody else’s feedback on it. Nia, I love you to death! Because she’s just so confident, you know? I remember one time I wrote my journal and I got you to write back, and you were like ‘girl lift up, pick up, think the best of yourself’ or whatever. It is that type of motivation that you need from other people in your class: to tell you that everything is going to work out for you or whatever.*

For Vanessa, it was not just the words of wisdom, but the encouragement students gave one another, in ways that were sincere and reflective, that helped her to gain confidence in herself as a scholar and as a person. Kelvin felt similarly about the role of emotional support in pushing him forward academically:

*I know Dr. B remarked on my paper several times, you know you’re a good writer. I think sometimes you don’t believe it yourself until somebody tells you or shows you. But I definitely wouldn’t be at Heartland State University if it weren’t for Opening Doors. I know that for sure. I probably wouldn’t be in grad school.*

While it may or may not be true that he would not be at the university if it weren’t for Opening Doors, Kelvin does recognize the influence of the program in helping him arrive at the point of being a full time graduate student. Kelvin’s statement is demonstrative of the added benefit of Opening Doors. The academic aspects of
Opening Doors are beneficial in the ways described, i.e., showing students the research process. At the same time, students received emotional support from the program's director/facilitator and from one another, which helped them build the academic confidence needed to be successful graduate students. Josephine's comment, taken from an interview, corroborates this notion:

*I think it prepared me emotionally. It empowered me; it made me feel like I've got what it takes. I don't have any less education-in fact it made me feel like I had a little edge. It's like 'well I've already written a mini research paper, and I can do it again.' It feels good.*

Finally, Kiara and Michaela share similar comments, illustrating their need to see someone who looks like them doing positive things. States Kiara:

*It was good to interact with positive brothers and sisters, seeing them do things and seeing them achieve their goals, I really enjoyed that.*

Michaela's comment is taken from the same interview discussion:

*It's always good, or comforting to see other Black people. It's always comforting to see Black people actually doing it. Doing what you want to do. So as well as the Black people who don't speak here, I also see that they are doing IT, and there are some very good Black people on campus who are trying to help others. Not necessarily Blacks, but particularly Blacks, to accomplish their dreams as well.*

Each of the above comments addresses the ways in which students used one another as models of scholarship and support. Many respondents found that their colleagues
provided models of good scholarship, while for others, the very act of watching one another in these roles allowed them to see themselves and one another as capable individuals. At the same time, many of the African American students in the study commented that they felt a responsibility to succeed in graduate school in order to pioneer opportunities and provide models for other people of color, specifically African Americans. As Kelvin remarked in his final evaluation, "I have an obligation to attain as much education as I can, not just for me, but for my people. I always want to learn, as well as give back at the same time." So while the program provided various models for respondents in the study, it also caused them to rethink their roles as models for other students. Both explicitly and implicitly, these students seemed to provide one another with the type of mentoring and modeling they needed to move them along on their personal and academic journeys, and to help them move others along as well.

**Becoming Educators: The Importance of Pedagogy in Professional Development**

For many research respondents, Opening Doors was "the defining moment," as Omar explains. As in, it was the experience that helped them discover their potential as future professionals. Engaging with one another in the experience of Opening Doors, as detailed through previous sections, along with seeing a variety of cultures, histories, and opinions represented in their cohorts, allowed students to envision themselves as people who belong in academia, and whose presence and work is valued in that arena. As demonstrated in the data, the Opening Doors program provided models that helped to create future professionals. Programs such
as these can be instrumental in adding to the pool of teachers and other professionals of color by grooming students to see themselves in those roles and others, rather than being convinced either by outsiders or through their own self doubt, that they are not suited or not needed in such roles.

The Opening Doors experience provided a model in and of itself, but the added component of faculty mentoring and individual contact and interaction with professors, allowed students to see college professors as human beings. Building collaborative working relationships with professional mentors provided the guidance students needed to increase their confidence in the scholarship they could produce as well as the topics about which they could produce scholarship. Being able to ask questions of their mentors regarding the profession of education and the road taken towards that goal, helped students visualize an archetype of what an educator looks like at various levels, from K-12 to higher education. This information is part of the code of cultural transferring discussed by Delpit (1995) in helping students of color have an advantage in entering the work world beyond a working class level (Anyon, 1980).

Some may say that each individual or experience can provide a model: either of what to do, or of what not to do. In the case of this program, students remarked that Opening Doors, specifically Dr. B’s teaching style, provided a model of what to do, regarding ways of conducting their own classes as teachers and future professors. For other students, particularly some of those not initially interested in education, Opening Doors helped to provide some degree of clarity on future career goals.
Aside from proving themselves as scholars, learning how to conduct research and feeling comfortable with the research skills they acquired in order to take them into other contexts, their experiences in the program illuminated, or in some cases refined, the career path upon which they would embark. The first student, Consuela, who attended the program during its later years, spoke of both the academic and personal benefits of the program. However, aside from those, she emphasizes the ways in which the pedagogical philosophy of the program’s facilitator affected her own growth as a future teacher:

*Another thing was just the connection you can make with a group of young people, if you just take that extra step to care. Like with Dr. B, I think the way that she approached things and did things made it a personal, family kind of connection. It wasn’t like she was the head and the instructor, and this is what you do: do it and turn it in. It was like she was more of a nurturing kind, and I think that’s how you should be as a teacher, as an educator.*

Josephine, whose comment emerges from her interview, expresses a similar sentiment:

*I think that whole atmosphere of being in rows is saying something different, and so having us at tables was exactly how I wanted my classroom, so that made me feel good. I think she also caters towards different types of learning styles: visual learners, kinesthetic learners, audio learners, she had all of that. I think she’s modeling what we need as multicultural teachers, being*
able to reach out to students with different abilities and different areas that they're strong in.

These two future teachers saw the structure and pedagogy of the Opening Doors program as exemplary of the type of curriculum, instruction, and pedagogical philosophies that they would like to exhibit in their own classrooms. By feeling as students that they were cared for as individuals and that their learning environment was culturally responsive and representative, these women were able to transfer those feeling into what they would like to see as teachers. As indicated in these comments and other parts of the interview data, this type of intimate student/teacher relationship had not necessarily been modeled to them in the past. Janet’s explanation of her experience in the program is corroborative, in that by being treated in particular ways by her own facilitator in Opening Doors, she was able to see a positive model of how she could be once in a similar position:

Just the practice of [presenting] in front of colleagues and professors and getting feedback and things like that; those were the things that I’ll take into graduate school and feel more confident. I wasn’t expected to already be a scholar, and already be accomplished and writing dissertations and all that stuff. And I was taken where I was and worked with at that level. So that’s what I appreciated about OD, and that is the kind of teacher want to be.

Kelvin, whose interests revolve around higher education issues, characterizes his experiences at the personal level:
I got a lot out of it, I learned a lot about myself and the whole process of graduate study and doing research. It was fun; it was interesting. It was something that really shaped what I wanted to do with my life. It definitely had a profound impact on my career decision.

Kelvin, like various other students interviewed in the program, had originally begun his academic life in another career field. He saw the Opening Doors experience as an opportunity to redefine his career goals. After being exposed to the life and career possibilities available in the field of education (i.e., educational research, teaching and various academic levels), he began to see possibilities for himself in the field, and has since entered the field of higher education administration. Finally, Lindsay adds the element of trust built among peers and colleagues as something that helped her think about her role in academia as a future professor:

Maybe because of the trust, I felt like these people wouldn’t lie to me and say ‘your work is good’ if it wasn’t good. And partly maybe Dr. B too, I felt like she would call us on it if our stuff was sloppy, cuz she had an investment in us, so to speak, because we were gonna go out and kinda be carrying some stuff on. I think it changed the way I saw my role in academia, maybe that’s part of why I came into education—of really coming through with the idea that it’s not enough to go through myself, but I’ve got to hold the door open for someone else. And I kind of began to think about my ideas of like teaching not being about pouring knowledge in but getting people to think, and I think that started there.
Dr. B’s teaching style provided a model of the type of critical pedagogue that Lindsay hopes to be one day: one who has high expectations for her students, who is honest with her students, who has a concern for communities of color, and who urges students to think for themselves and to reflect on their lives. Finally, Malcolm, who taught secondary science between pursuing a Master’s Degree and entering his current Ph.D. program, discussed the overall value of the program, in terms of both the pedagogy and the academic experience. He describes Dr. B’s pedagogical style in similar terms as those characterizing culturally relevant pedagogy.

[Dr. B] gave her heart to us, she always would call us good people, and she showed us with love what it would be like. So when we did work, she expected a lot out of us. I learned that this is what graduate school is going to be like. I learned something about doing research with a professor and presenting, you know doing an oral presentation. Not just like an oral presentation in a class, but like a colloquium, where everybody’s presenting, and you have folks from the university who come and watch and participate and ask questions. That whole idea was fascinating.

As a classroom facilitator in a program that was unattached to the College of Education curriculum, Dr. B could structure the classroom experience without the limitations that may ordinarily be enacted upon regular courses or traditional classrooms. That being the case, she could provide a pedagogical model for students in education who would like to conduct their classrooms in ways that are counter to classroom experiences they may have had themselves.
At the same time, as pre-professionals in the field of education, and as people of color interested in issues and topics dealing with those communities, students also needed to see that those interests were valid. In Kelvin’s words, dealing with racial issues in the context of Opening Doors helped him to understand that “there is a place for my interest in all this academia.” For the most part, students found that they were fortified by the fact that they could do research on and in their own cultural communities and find validation in doing so. Josephine shares her opinions on what the program did to help her conceptions of race as they relate to educational research:

*I think it really put it in a pedagogical perspective, and let me look at race pedagogically, in a classroom and the dynamics of it, and helped me look at the research that was out there, and helped me find out what was missing in research. I think that’s how it helped me. I felt like I had something I could contribute-personal experiences-and I felt like I could listen well to the other experiences that were shared. And it made me realize that there are a lot of stories out there that haven’t been told that need to be told.*

Janet’s testimonial substantiates this notion:

*Opening Doors let me know that there was a place within academia, within higher education particularly, for the voice of a student of color. You can know that, but not see it acted out, not see examples of it, not see people of color doing dissertations and see people going through the process. But when you come and you get exposure to it and you get a little taste of how to*
do the process yourself, it reaffirms that 'I can do this' not just in theory, but I can tangibly act this out. Like a Ph.D. can actually be mine. Not just to cover the same subjects that the mainstream covers, but with a Black voice, but to delve into subjects that are totally ignored in the mainstream of academia. Things that pertain to students of color, things that pertain to communities of color, and that it's okay not to want to focus on mainstream subjects.

Feeling as if they had something important to contribute to educational research was important; however, feeling as if their research topics, particularly those regarding people of color were legitimate topics for scholarly work was critical in changing the ways in which they saw themselves as professionals and educational researchers.

Theme III: Opening Doors as a Pedagogical Model

For programs like Opening Doors to be successful in helping students develop critical thinking skills and begin/continue to examine their identities as people of color in academia while transferring its intended content, there has to be a very specific pedagogical philosophy attached to the program. These philosophies, and their effects on respondents in the study, are further examined in this section. Findings arising from the data that were directly related to the actual curriculum and instruction of the program are as follows. The first finding had to do with breaking down the teacher/student binary in order to create a dialogic learning environment. That is, students felt that their views and knowledge were as important a contribution to the learning context as those of the director/facilitator. At the same time, students
felt comfortable to express themselves freely knowing that their opinions may be challenged at times, corroborated at other times, but they would be respected at all times. The second finding was that the pedagogical approach of its facilitator opened spaces for students to begin the process of critical self-reflection. In other words, having honest discussions about various topics of personal interest to them, both in a large and smaller group milieu, as well as the process of completing many of their assigned projects, helped them to conduct a deeper examination of themselves, to discover their strengths, and to work on whatever they found to be weaknesses. The third finding was that, as a result of embarking on this critical, reflective journey, students were able to move from object to subject and to begin seeing one another as such as well. In other words, as a result of becoming more intimately involved with the educational process and with one another, they could more easily see one another’s humanity. Each of these three aspects of the program’s pedagogy intertwined to build a spirit of cooperation and collaboration among program participants.

Breaking Down the Teacher/Student Binary: Constructing a Learning Community

A critical aspect of breaking down the teacher/student binary had to do with students seeing themselves as important contributors to the knowledge-building process. In the schooling experience of these students, both in K-12 and undergraduate, classroom instruction created a paradox in the ways they viewed the teaching and learning process. That is to say, they experienced the binary, hierarchical relationship between teacher and student that is common in traditional
education. As Freire (1994) suggests, “education must begin with the solution of the
teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that
both are simultaneously teachers and students” (p. 53). Freire’s conception of
liberatory education, which explodes the teacher-student duality, makes students
critical, active participants in the process of their education and removes the teacher
as the only authority in the classroom. This idea is fundamental to the structure of
the Opening Doors program, which visualizes education in a way that subverts
traditional methods. The pedagogical approaches students were used to during their
elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education were dis-empowering to them,
in that knowledge was a fixed object transmitted from teacher to student. In the
context of the Opening Doors program, students found instead that the facilitator
participated in a dialogue with the students, allowing them to bring their personal
and cultural knowledge to those discussions, and to facilitate classroom discussions.
For example, Nia, who participated in the group interview, had this to say about the
program:

\[I \text{ think there was a lot of structure in it-and that's not a bad thing. [Dr. B]}\]
\[\text{really makes you be the facilitator, and a lot of times as teachers you don't}
\[\text{do that. You kind of just 'this is my way, and this is how you're gonna do it.'}
\[\text{And you don't really give the students a way to be creative about how to do}
\[\text{things.}\]

At the same time, Jordan points out the importance of being in dialogue with
students, rather than treating them as objects or as though they are ignorant:
It actually helps you focus because you’re more inclined to listen. What she’s saying is important, but it comes across so calm and nonchalant to a certain extent that you listen to it, not somebody standing up there ‘well this is blah blah blah.’ I know personally, I tend to fall asleep when people talk to me like that. Like talking down to you or talking at you.

Jordan’s comment is an important indication of student motivation and engagement. For students like Jordan, being talked ‘at’ rather than talked ‘to’ can be patronizing and can leave students feeling devalued as people and as critical thinkers. His reference to Dr. B’s style as “calm and nonchalant” runs counter to the strict, formal lecturing style students may be used to, while transmitting the same information. For Jordan, the manner in which information is transmitted is just as important as the information itself, perhaps more so.

For the respondents in the study, part of perceiving the Opening Doors learning environment as beneficial had to do with seeing their facilitator as a human being rather than as the all-powerful authority figure, which how they had been accustomed to viewing their teachers and instructors. While perceiving her as such an authority figure may not have adversely affected student progress in the program, seeing her as an explicit contradiction to that seemed to promote their engagement in the learning process. As future teachers, they felt it important to see their facilitator as a human being while understanding that she still has a certain amount of power by nature of being their instructor. In the following excerpt, Michaela reveals why she feels it was important to see Dr. B in this manner:
I can say that Dr. B seems like she's concerned with us: the total student in the classroom. When you're talk about getting personal with the journals and that kind of stuff, she strikes me as the type of person that goes beyond the classroom. She brings in all of those experiences she has. That's how we know as much as we do about her, because she brought all that stuff in and let us in on that. So it seems like she's concerned with the total you.

Michaela equates Dr. B's willingness to reveal herself to them as a sign of her concern with them as whole individuals rather than as academic containers detached from human needs and emotions. By sharing pieces of her life through autobiography, journals and conversations, Dr. B demonstrated a level of trust in the students that they were able to mirror back to her and to each other. This act of care also enabled her to build a relationship with them, which as illustrated through interviews, final evaluations and informal conversations, was an important component of the Opening Doors program. Dr. B discusses why she enjoys the opportunity to both challenge and be challenged by her students, as exemplified through sharing journals with her students:

As I write a journal, it gives them a chance to see what kinds of things are roaming around in my head. As a human being first, and as a teacher second. And I think that too for students is a very rare opportunity. You don't get to ever find out what's happening in your professor's head, although they ask you to pour out everything: head, heart, everything for them. I think that's unfair.
Dr. B’s desire to let students see ‘what was happening in her head’ was important both for her and for the students involved in the program. As a pedagogical philosophy, this attitude helps to break down the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students whereby teachers are unapproachable experts in the classroom. Imani, who participated in the group interview, corroborated Dr. B’s comments on the importance of seeing one’s teacher/facilitator as a human being:

*Dr. B was really relaxed, and she kind of opened up herself, and most professors don’t really do that. You don’t get to hear about them or their personal lives, but she was willing to open up that door, and that was nice.*

Imani’s comment that it was ‘nice’ to see Dr. B in this manner seemed to illustrate that she could have been as successful in the program had Dr. B not opened herself up to the class in this manner, but by doing that, Dr. B increased the level of intimacy among the students, which seemed to beneficial in helping them get to know her, one another, and themselves better.

Scholars have recognized that only through dialogue, critical reflection and critical interrogation, as described by the respondents in the study, can legitimate knowledge claims be made, because every human being is connected to a community in some sense. While providing public, classroom contexts in which to express their ‘selves’ and opinions was an important aspect of the program, it was also important to provide alternative approaches for those students whose learning styles were contrary to that approach. For that reason, students also have a written context in which to express themselves and talk through various topics and issues that they may
not have been ready to share in a public forum. Through journals, students develop skills in critical reflection while being able to address issues they may not feel comfortable discussing in a group setting. As Dr. B stated in her interview:

"[Journals are a] written form for those who for whatever reason may not be able to really fully embrace the thing of getting out in public and doing stuff. The journal lets you sort of hide a little bit. It also lets you tell stories that you simply can't tell in public, and it also allows other folks to react in more intimate ways with you in writing. I think we all can say things in writing, or the Internet, or anything else that we can't say maybe face to face. And that gives folks an out, it gives them a chance to talk to each other; [it] gives me a chance to talk to them."

While she allowed and encouraged either written or verbal input from students, both were ultimately required. Those who were better at one than the other were able to push themselves and move beyond their levels of comfort. As Kiara stated in the group interview, "For me, it helped me to hone up on my skills, get over my fears of public speaking. I still have a little bit of fear, but... it did help me get over my fear of public speaking." Others had similar experiences, in they became more comfortable with their writing skills after being required to do so on a continual basis throughout the six weeks of the program. Likewise, Josephine’s comment illustrates the ways in which the teaching style of the director/facilitator was consistent with her cultural values as a person of color:
I love the energy she gives back... you feel like this person is really listening to you. You feel like she sees your growth, and monitoring that. I like how it's hands on and cooperative learning. That's the best way for me, as a Latina, and I know that about myself. I like to help people; I don't want to compete. I would rather help someone than hide the information from them. I think her environment is conducive to that. I remember the tables, when we went and sat down, they were circular; that was important to me.

Because the program's philosophy was one based on support and cooperation rather than competition, students like Josephine could feel comfortable in a rigorous academic setting without feeling as if they must compete with their cohort members for resources or rewards. Removing that element allowed them to work together in a manner that is more conducive to the learning styles of many students, particularly students of color. At the same time, the pedagogical approach of the program's staff was such that actual classroom instruction was conducted in a non-linear, nonhierarchical fashion. For Jordan, as stated in the group interview, this was especially important:

Her [Dr. B's] teaching style is great. It's informal, but it's formal enough. It makes you relax so you want to take in information; it's not like a stressful environment that you would get from a 'regular' class. Like you all were talking about 40-70 people in your class or whatever. I guess by being a smaller group, that helped too, but at the same time it wasn't that constant
tension you get from actually being in a lecture. It was more like a family situation, where there’s just somebody up here talking to you.

Finally, Dr. B places the idea of journaling as pedagogy into a teacher/researcher context:

*It gives me great stories to be able to place back into the context if everybody, or a number of students are writing about the fear they have of this thing called research, let’s just say broadly. That then is a signal to me as a teacher, ‘you know there’s something else going on here.’ If I had not intended to deal with that fear in an explicit way and 19 out of the 20 students talked about fear in their journals, then we better figure out something to do pedagogically to address that. So that’s part of it. It is also an instructional tool for me to be able to know what kinds of things students are dealing with and what I need to insert back into the context in a very Freirian way.*

Dr. B’s statement reflects the pedagogical purpose of assigning her students weekly journals. She uses them as a pedagogical tool to address the topics and concerns that students generate during the course of the program, since students may not have always used the classroom to take up those issues, or there may be issues or concerns that continue surface that students can discuss in greater detail and confidentiality through the journaling process.
Opening Spaces For Self Reflection: Identifying Our Lives As Works In Progress

As detailed in previous chapters, the Opening Doors program had multiple goals and intended outcomes on a structural level. However, on a more practical, even spiritual level, there are personal goals that Dr. B hoped the students will reach as a result of participating in the program. She shares these goals in this excerpt from her interview:

I think [Opening Doors has] a two-fold mission. I think they are in priority order. The first mission is ... to help students of color understand how brilliant they are. Fundamentally, that's it. The second mission is then to help them understand that brilliance relative to doing research-graduate level research. So I guess the first one might be amended to say, not only how brilliant they are, but how brilliant are the histories from which they arise: the historical traditions and cultural traditions, so they can bring those things to bear when they do the research.

So while teaching students the process of conducting research is a goal of the program, and indeed the overall purpose the program, Dr. B's comments illustrate the importance of other skills and lessons which may be gained as a result of attending a program as culturally and student-focused as Opening Doors. Part of the process of helping students gain these other skills (i.e., recognizing their own brilliance, their cultural histories, and arriving at the understanding that the knowledge they bring to the classroom is valuable), is by assigning collaborative and
self-reflective activities, which are in addition to the research-based tasks and activities that are also assigned.

Dr. B describes doing creative autobiography as a process that both she and her students must undergo for many reasons (Dillard, 1996a, 1996b), the least of which is to build community and an air of safety and support among the group. Because the creative autobiography requires a great deal of critical reflection, Dr. B sees this as an opportunity to use these reflections in developing an informed stance as researchers. She also performed her autobiography each summer. Each summer’s autobiography was different: she used different media, symbols, and representations of herself, in order to present something fresh to each new group. Dr. B says of both the process of reflection as research and that of sharing in this process with her students:

I have students do creative autobiographies because I think for most of us, there’s a lot of stuff that we’ve never uncovered, or thought about or reflected on, that gets in the way of our being able to see ourselves as really smart and capable. It’s something that comes in schooling, the way that we’re schooled. Some of it comes in our own homes, some of it comes in our communities whatever, but I think there’s a lot of stuff there. And if my work is to help folks live an examined life, then I can’t begin to talk about research-until folks search the first time. So if we’re gonna talk about research: the process of looking outward, looking at something else, looking even at one’s self more deeply, one has to first do some sort of
search. For most of us we’ve rarely sat down to think about who we are and why it matters, because usually we’ve been invisible through our whole education. So we don’t really matter, so I guess I’m trying to re-center folks-help folks re-center themselves.

On a more personal level, Dr. B has this to say about the role of autobiography:

I also think it has a certain sort of function in bonding the group together.

Everybody is rendered vulnerable, including me. There’s a certain sort of safety: ‘I’ve told you stories about me, and you’ve told stories, and we’ve got to protect those stories and hold those stories dear.’

Although all of the students interviewed in the study found the autobiography and journaling assignments valuable, and Dr. B’s pedagogical style beneficial, it seems to be uncommon in the previous experiences of each of these students. Because education has been so driven by quantitative indicators of intelligence, students can sometimes become fixated on earning grades and giving the teacher what s/he wants, all without showing one another who we actually are as human beings. Lindsay was one of those who did not know how to navigate this new teaching style, which forced her to critically reflect on her life, values, and beliefs:

When I was younger, I would have thought her way was crazy, like as an undergrad I would have flipped out if somebody made me do an autobiography. I would have been like ‘what the hell does that have to do with anything?’ I would have been very resistant. But because I had come through a period of my life where I had hit bottom and come back up, I was
more open to 'okay, whatever. It seems interesting.' So I think for me personally, it was a style that worked: the connecting it to yourself, and figuring out where you are in the whole process of being educated and being an educator. But I think as a 22 year old I would have thought it was hooey. And like this is crazy.

The Opening Doors experience was for many, as indicated by Lindsay’s statement, a first examination of self beyond the surface level. Many had never taken the time to think closely and critically about the events and processes that produced the ‘identities’ they have come to live within. Jordan’s comment, taken from the group interview, illustrates this newly discovered process of self-reflection, which came about during various phases of the program:

It was one of those things where how many people take the time to think about yourself. I mean how many of us stop to do it before it’s too late, or before you’ve driven yourself batty thinking about whatever to get your life in order. I looked at it as a way to open up to everybody in the class, but at the same time you had to think about yourself. And for me that was one of the first times I actually stopped and did it. It was like wow, this is neat. And you can look back at that until this day and be like okay, I still have my autobiography, and I use that as a reminder. Sometimes you just have to start all over.
As Jordan articulated, just as students had not had the prior experience of expressing themselves creatively and critically, they also had never had the experience of reflecting on who they are and why. Likewise, Michaela had a similar experience:

*The autobiography was the first thing we did as a group. In doing that I had to think about myself, which was one of the first things—the first type of activity that made me ‘go there,’ and that means really reflect on me. And of course before the summer was over I was like ‘is this who I am?’*

Lindsay had a slightly different take on the autobiography, in that while it helped her ‘go there’ as Michaela states, it also helped her to take more risks in her personal life. By feeling that members of her group did not judge her by the information she chose to share with them, she felt more open to sharing that information:

*I think the great thing for me was that I had decided, I’m gonna put myself out there, and people are either gonna make judgment about me, or they’re gonna think I’m alright. And so, I decided to just put it out there, and I think that’s what made my experience so great, I didn’t feel judged. Nobody said ‘oh my God, you’ve done this or that’ or whatever. So I felt right away that I was safe to put it there. The other thing is, when you have to put an autobiography together for ten minutes, you figure out what matters or what shaped you, or what relationships kind of tweaked you.*

Lindsay felt that her cohort members were accepting of her, beyond the surface information usually shared within the classroom context. Feeling that she could be
herself within this context helped her begin the process of self-examination without feeling as if she had to withhold parts of herself within the group.

Moving From Object To Subject: Seeing Others As We See Ourselves

In constructing identities within and across race/culture, much as in building cross-cultural relationships, the natural tendency towards imposing binaries of self and other must somehow be resisted, if students are to begin to see one another as more than just members of monolithic or objectified categories. The only way participants in the study could begin to build relationships with one another was to begin by empathizing with one another’s experiences. Noddings (1984) states “caring involves stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference into the others’” (p. 24). As was demonstrated in this study, students could not begin to see one another as both different from and similar to themselves until they stepped out of the personal space they inhabited up to that point. The structure of the program allowed them multiple opportunities to be involved in one another’s lives, making it easier for them to break down barriers they had constructed in relation to perceived ‘others.’ For example, Omar grew up in both predominantly Black and White environments. For him, the Opening Doors experience provided exposure to cultural groups outside of that previous experience. At the same time, he was able to develop a stronger sense of his racial self within the context of other people of color sharing the struggles of their lives and the histories of their cultures:

I think what [the Opening Doors experience] did is help me gain a better appreciation for my race and other people’s races. It helped me gain an
appreciation because my research was on Black children, and you can't research Black children without researching the Black community, and understanding the history of being Black. It helped me develop a stronger identity of who I am, from a historical, and also a philosophical level. I also gained a pretty good understanding, because we had people from all over and listening to them, and spending time with them. We were able to actually live and experience some of the same things that they were experiencing. We had the opportunity to do these creative autobiographies, which was enlightening as to how some of these people grew up, and some of the stresses of their lives. So I think that gave me a better appreciation for other cultures, and people from various backgrounds.

Malcolm had a similar realization, in that he was able to learn what people other than Blacks and Whites have to say about race and culture, which for him added a necessary perspective to an old conversation. Malcolm articulates in his interview that hearing the views of people unlike himself extended his own thinking, and allowed him to challenge himself:

I would say Opening Doors gave me an opportunity to see how other people of color think about issues of culture. In our group, we had Latinos. We had Native Americans. We had a whole range. To see how other people talked about their own cultural identity, and use research to examine that, in terms of trying to educate people or trying reach people. So, I thought that was very powerful about Opening Doors.
Skylar, a woman of Filipino and Japanese background, had little exposure to African Americans throughout her life, and Opening Doors allowed her an opportunity to form bonds that she previously had no occasion to form. The following quote illustrates the personal growth Skylar experienced as a result of being in this context. At the same time, she was able to see how multifaceted each individual’s identity truly is, and how these layers intersect with similar identity layers of those outside of a given cultural group.

*Being involved with Opening Doors gave me the opportunity to form close friendships with Black women. I’d never had this opportunity before. I can be honest in saying that up until that point I had intimidating stereotypes about them. But because we were all in the same boat for two months we built friendships and came to rely on each other for support and encouragement.*

Likewise Nia, an African American woman whose Opening Doors roommates included an Asian American woman, had this to say of her learning experience:

*It was good to see how she sees Black people through her eyes. We’ve had very heated conversations about Black people, and why we do certain things. And her culture is incredible, and they’re very focused about school and it was amazing to see her.*

Finally Kiara, also an African American woman from Nia’s cohort whose roommate was a Latina woman, makes the following statement, extracted from the group interview:
I enjoyed hanging around with C**, because she was from another part of the country, and just learning about her culture. That was a good experience for me. Just not having the same, okay, these are my brothers and sisters, yeah, but to have somebody else there that was totally different from your culture. I really enjoyed that.

Being African American women who grew up in Black communities and attended HBC/U’s, Nia and Kiara had mostly been exposed to only Whites or other Blacks. Having to interact on a constant basis with roommates of a different cultural background helped them to move out of the Black/White binary thinking that can sometimes result from being exposed to little else outside of those two groups. Living in close proximity to women of cultures different from their own also helped them to learn things about those cultures at an intimate, rather than at a disassociated or merely academic level. This was particularly true for Nia, who was also able to learn more about how her race is perceived from the standpoint of someone outside of that experience. This was a new experience for Nia, and forced her to look at her own race in different ways, based on the outside perspective of another person of color. Likewise, Skylar’s experience with Black women allowed her to break down previous stereotypes she may have held about African Americans, and perhaps opened her up to seek out cross-cultural friendships in the future. Skylar offers this comment from her interview on the tendency to create monolithic images of other cultural groups:
It changed my perception that people of the same racial group all possess the same racial identity that instantly binds them together. It also showed me how a shared goal or experience can bond people together in a way that transcends differences in racial identity.

Skylar's revelation is an important commentary to the Opening Doors program, because even in groups that were predominantly one ethnic group, as was the case in some cohorts, it is still important for students to realize that not everyone of the same racial background share a common identity or the exact same cultural knowledge, history, or background. At the same time, they realized that racial differences do not have to be a deterrent in forming bonds across groups. Instead, these differences may even be an asset when forming bonds on the basis of something other than race. Being in a mixture of individuals, regardless of racial background, aided students in the program in understanding the nuances of racial identity, which can differ within racial groups, and which includes but is not confined to the cultural knowledge, history or background previously described. Finally, Skylar shares the wisdom she has gained as a result of participating in the program:

People think culture is just about racial or ethnic background, but it is much more than that. People think that culture is something exotic or foreign, but it is not that either. I learned that we are all multicultural. A person's culture is the sum of their experiences as a human being. I learned that even though there are similarities we might share coming from the same racial or
ethnic background, there are other subcultures that we might share that can bring us together as well.

Being in a group consisting exclusively of people of color allowed students to examine many issues related to their own cultural history and knowledge. At the same time, they were able to make necessary connections with those that they ordinarily may not have taken the chance to befriend. Each person who took a risk to move outside of the comfort zone of his/her own culture was able to learn things about themselves and one another beyond what they would have ever thought possible.

For the students involved in the study, being able to see themselves as whole human beings was important to them, and as a result of participating in various reflective activities, they grew emotionally. At the same time, as each grew and helped one another grow through peer feedback and dialogue, they were able to see one another as subjects as well. For example, among the primary activities used to both break the ice and build community among students is sharing creative autobiographies, which consist of a 5-10 minute non-prosaic, creative presentation of one’s life, and can be presented in any form or fashion. Creative autobiographies are made by everyone involved in the program, from the program participants themselves all the way up to the facilitators and any other staff member engaged with the students, which helps move students toward that process of seeing themselves as subjects. In explaining why the autobiographies are done creatively, versus in a traditional prosaic form, Dr. B had this to say:
We do the autobiographies in creative ways, because we are creative people. It’s a human thing; I think human beings are creative people. Also I think that it renders folks unable to hide as easily. And one of the things that we do in academia and in higher ed, particularly is that we hide a lot. It’s part of what the structure of the institution is about. You’re hiding your foibles and just letting the good stuff shine through, the success stuff and again, [given] the idea of an examined life, you can’t do that. Especially when you’re gonna go start looking at other people’s lives [as researchers]. Research is a process of looking outward at the lives of other people, and if you haven’t done that sort of [inward] search yourself, there are ethical problems in my mind with that. So that’s why we do them.

For many of the students, creative autobiographies provided their first experience being told to express themselves through their writing and interests in an academic context. So while the program was structured, and created with a specific agenda, students were not expected to regurgitate information, but to think for themselves and to express themselves and reveal themselves to one another. Unfortunately, students do not always know how to respond to what could be a newly found academic creative freedom. For some of the students, negotiating that freedom was a challenge. Jordan offers this analysis in the group interview:

*It’s a good thing, but I don’t think we’re used to that. It’s just good because it’s teaching us that independence that we need as we grow, but not being*
used to it is where you’re thrown off. Because we’re used to getting a format or syllabus that says this is how everything is supposed to be done.

As Jordan states, not having a recipe for how to proceed on certain assignments meant that students had to focus on their individual interests and academic needs, rather than on what the teacher/facilitator wanted. At the same time, students learned that even if their regular classrooms were not open to the creativity they were able to utilize during Opening Doors, they could still be subversive within the confines of a traditional classroom. Nia, who will soon be graduating from a Master’s program in Education, provides an example from her own classroom experience:

*You know you’re always scared you’re gonna hand in a paper in the wrong form or something. She never really did that. She was like whatever you give me, then I’ll look at it, and I’ll tell you what I think. So I thought that was nice, but when I got to HSU, of course it was not like that. So then I was back to ‘okay, so how do you want the paper?’ But because she did that, I learned how to be creative, but also keep it in the same form that they want. I can whip it on them, but it’s still like one-inch in and all that crap.*

Nia’s comments indicate both prior and current experiences of being stifled in her academic expression, but at the same time, her comments indicate a newfound desire to be a critical thinker, whereby she can be creative and original rather than conforming to the world-views of particular professors.

The creative autobiographies that students develop perform a series of roles. Among those are establishing a tone of personal risk-taking on the part of each
participant, that "leads to a sense of personal empowerment" (Dillard, 1996b; p. 35).
In addition, autobiographies encourage students to reflect on their lived experiences
and cultural histories, in addition to influencing the teaching and learning process
and helping to create an environment of critical questioning, support and care among
both students and teacher. One of the "lessons" taught by creative autobiography as
defined by Dillard (1996b) is that they create important relationships between the
tellers of the story, allowing students to move beyond stereotypical images of one
another. Skilar, who has already shared her experience of finding solidarity across
cultures, specifically points to the pedagogical approach of the program as
instrumental in helping her to break down the barriers she had previously
encountered in her relationships with other people of color:

The most significant experience for me was when we all shared our
autobiographies during one of our first meetings. That broke down a lot of
walls for me. It made almost all the people in the group approachable in a
way that they weren't before. It made almost everyone more human because
you could see their senses of humor coming out, their creativity, and their
personal histories. Some people really opened up and shared very personal,
sometimes painful things with our group and I could not help but feel closer
to them as a result.

Skilar's feeling of growing closer to her group members as a result of participating
in certain group ice-breakers was not the only process that fostered community
among students. For example, Malcolm thought it very important that his peers and
colleagues could help to challenge him in his work and in his thinking through various activities, particularly journal sharing. Malcolm explains his appreciation of this process:

_We had seminars, where you wrote. We critiqued each other; you had other people write responses to your own journal entries. Which was good, because they weren’t just saying ‘this is nice,’ but they were actually responding to you._

The process of peer debriefing fostered a spirit of collaboration among the groups, given that they were able to engage with one another’s ideas on a level that required them to be critical in order to provide valuable feedback to one another. This type of activity may serve to develop critical skills in both the peer responder and the student to whom the feedback is provided.

For some students, the process of peer debriefing, participating in open dialogue, and providing support for one another allowed them to see themselves on a more profound level than they had previously experienced. As a result of watching one another in that process, students were able to see and understand one another on a more profound level as well. For example, Michaela, who shared the following reflection during the group interview was able to see her cohort members as not just program participants, but as other individuals who, like herself, have hopes, dreams and diverse lived experiences:

_It did a whole lot for me individually, as well as how I operate in a group now. I was really able to see myself. I guess that sounds kind of odd, but it_
was the way the program was orchestrated. You were able to go deep to find yourself, as well as I realized how other people saw you. But in doing the autobiographies I was able to see other people as well. It was kind of neat the way we all came in with all of these...perceptions of the program, but we were still people. And I needed to see that we were still people, we were not just subjects, so to speak. But we were still people, and with the autobiographies I was able to see that. So it made me ‘go there’ individually, and collectively as a group.

Michaela’s comments indicate that as a result of looking at the experiences and events that have shaped her life, she was able to learn things about herself that helped her grow, yet at the same time she was able to see herself through the eyes of her peers, as well as seeing them on a more human level.

By sharing creative autobiographies and weekly journals, both the students and the facilitator were able to see one another as more than strangers or ‘others.’ They were able to see and relate to one another’s fears, dreams, goals, and roadblocks, allowing them to know and be known on more than just a cognitive level. Noddings (1984) maintains that to present oneself in a caring relationship as a teacher demands a move beyond what is considered rational or cognitive. She states that otherwise “we fail to share with each other the feelings, the conflicts, the hopes and ideas that influence our eventual choices. We share only the justification for our acts and not what motivates and touches us” (p. 8). For teachers and facilitators specifically, this means participating in the educational process as both teacher and
learner: as someone who is not only present physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well.

Noddings (1984) asserts “the one-caring as teacher, then, has two major tasks: to stretch the students’ world by presenting an effective selection of that world with which she is in contact, and to work cooperatively with the student in his struggle toward competence in that world” (p. 178). In this case, Opening Doors students were stretched by being taught the process of research, as in learning about various research methods, conducting literature searchers, writing research proposals, conducting data collection and analysis, and completing the final researcher paper. These crucial aspects of research were foreign to the students in the study prior to participating in the program. Students demonstrated their competency by submitting the final research paper and presenting the findings during the research colloquium.

Current Perceptions of Identity and Relationship:

Continuing the Cross Model

The respondents participating in this study have been described at various stages of their racial identity development. However, at this moment, both as a result of previous experiences, which include those before, during and after the Opening Doors program, there are students who currently work within what Cross (1995) determines to be the final stages of racial identity development: internalization and internalization-commitment. For example, many of the African American students held more of the following attitude, as demonstrated by Omar’s comment, taken
from his follow-up interview: "I love being Black and I know I'm Black, but I'm not tripping off the race thing." Malcolm and Omar's attitudes take it a step further, in that they know who they are well enough to maintain positive identities and a love of their race while continuing to learn about others. Malcolm explains how he currently perceives his racial identity:

Currently I feel like I'm in the stage where the ultimate is to be able to go beyond your own culture and really examine others and still validate yours. That's what I'm moving towards. I'm still highly in love with Black culture, and wanting to find out as much as I can, and wanting to teach Black children about it, wanting to teach other people about African American culture, because it's so immense, it's not one facet. So I would say I'm looking to explore my own heritage, but at the same time, I feel myself.

Omar, whose identity seems to have developed to the same stage as Malcolm, makes this statement:

For as long as I can remember, there's always been somebody who's been White, Italian, Asian, whatever, who has been kind of in my corner. You know, from grade school all the way until now. There's someone out there from a different ethnic background or racial group that's right there giving the support: a mentor, friend, whatever. That just kind of balanced those negative experiences I have had in my life. It balanced things out. So, I'm not tripping on the race thing–although I recognize it as a part of life and society that continues to stymie our progress as African Americans.
especially when you talk about children. But personally no, because I have experienced both sides of the spectrum. I am able to navigate through life without too many issues, because am aware of what society and what the system presents.

Consuela had a clear-cut sense of racial self throughout high school, having both a cadre of White and a cadre of Black friends. However, she didn’t have the conflict of trying to negotiate opposing worlds of Black and White. She explains in her students interview:

    I love the fact that I’m Black. I’ve never thought of it as a shortcoming, or a problem. Of course, when I was a little girl I would watch TV, you know had the blonde Barbie dolls with the blue eyes. I wanted to look like that, you know, all the models on TV have the straight hair. I wanted all that. But I think when you get older and you start to look at yourself and if you have people around you helping you to appreciate yourself, and who you are, then you learn to accept and appreciate who you are. And I’ve had that type of nurturing coming up. And I love being Black, I love who I am, love the culture, and I wouldn’t change it for anything.

Consuela explains the process of her development from stages of identifying with White culture, to establishing pride in her own culture. Consuela, who has grown up in integrated communities all of her life, has a boyfriend who is not Black, but is a person of color. Because her father married a White woman, she states that she grew up “intermixing with Whites.” She currently feels that she is more easily adaptable
to different racial situations, especially after having attended Heartland State University, where she states “you are reminded constantly of your place” as a person of color. Consuela seems to have progressed to Cross’ internalization stage, in which she can identify with and appreciate her racial identity without expressing ill will toward Whites or other non-Blacks. Similarly, Janet discusses her current perceptions of her racial identity, which she felt was further solidified as a result of participating in Opening Doors. However, she adds a spiritual twist to her identity construction:

Growing up around a lot of White people was good for me in that I am able to deal with a lot of different people, but it is important to me that I am a Black woman, and I don’t think it’s by accident. You know a lot of people say that color doesn’t matter-I don’t think that’s true. Even in the spiritual sense, people say ‘well God doesn’t see color.’ I believe that He does. If my fingerprints are different than everybody’s on the planet, and the hairs on my head are numbered and my DNA is different from every single person on the planet, surely I was designed African American by choice. So that’s important, and I don’t appreciate when people try to downplay it. I don’t want you to see me only as Black because there are different dimensions to me; I’m a human being, and there are some things that transcend race, but being a Black woman is important to my identity.

Janet’s perceptions of race also point out the distinctions each individual has by nature of being human, distinctions that may inform race, but do not rely on race and
are not based on race. Janet's comment is not unlike comments made by other students in the study, who came to understand the notion of diversity and unity as tied to characteristics other than race. Finally, Raquel offers this statement, taken from a follow-up interview:

*I feel like I view life through the lens of a Black woman. Race is very significant to me. I find that I feel pretty comfortable in different cultural situations. I adapt pretty well, but at the same time, I always subconsciously perhaps, have my own racial line that certain people can't cross. I have my professional friends, you know, and that's a multiracial group. But certain friends I feel like I can never get as close to as the others because they're White. I think it all goes back to not always wanting to feel like I have to explain myself. Sometimes I don't get what it's like to be White. It's part my ignorance of what it's like to be that, and I don't know that I want to know what it's like to be that. I'm happy being a Black woman; whatever I have experienced in the past has not made me feel at all remorseful, or regret who I am. It's made me more proud to be who I am, and even more driven to uplift my race because our culture is so rich. And I feel like, because of that, you can't get wit us! You know what I mean? I don't know how to describe it, but it is very significant.*

While only a few examples are presented here, each of the respondents in the study found that participation in the program helped them move beyond their initial perceptions of themselves and of one another as raced individuals, to seeing one
another as human beings who have unique cultural histories, and who are also scholars and models for one another. During this process of being an Opening Doors participant, they each also learned the value of relationship in changing the negative perceptions they initially held regarding one another’s cultures. Upon discovering their academic potential, each of the respondents in the study have also either received graduate degrees and are currently working in the field of education, are currently enrolled in graduate studies at the Master’s or Doctoral levels, or are completing the necessary steps to enter graduate school during the ensuing academic years.

Chapter Summary

The variety of lived experiences each respondent has had around issues of race, ethnicity and culture before entering the Opening Doors program helped to shape the person they were when they arrived on the university’s campus for their six week summer sojourn. While each Opening Doors participant described the ways in which the program aided in their academic, professional, or personal growth, the impact of the racial dynamics provided as large a lesson. Aiding students in their racial identity development was not an explicit goal of the program, yet because each group consisted specifically of students of color, living in close quarters, conducting research on issues that were often times related to race or culture, they had no choice but to confront issues around racial and cultural identity.

Chapter four discussed the ways in which the Opening Doors program was instrumental in helping students begin to tease out conceptions and understandings in
regards to race, identity, and community. Firstly, the Opening Doors environment while focused on educational research, was supportive of and in many cases even facilitated, discussions around race, ethnicity, and culture—particularly as they related to education. Respondents in the study found that before coming to the Opening Doors program, they had rarely had an opportunity to discuss the value and meaning of racial or cultural difference in their lives, although they were faced with their racial or ethnic differences on a daily basis. Secondly, the Opening Doors program provided students with open, collaborative, reflective, and dialogic outlets for discussing these issues, and in the process, students built meaningful, culturally and academically supportive relationships with one another that were based on care and reciprocity rather than on stereotypes. Finally, by engaging in dialogue with the students and participating with them in reflective assignments such as journals and creative autobiography, the program’s director/facilitator helped students to see themselves as stakeholders in their learning process, rather than seeing her as the sole classroom authority. This pedagogical strategy served two purposes for Opening Doors participants: It provided a pedagogical model for students to not only begin to see their own potential as scholars, but to conceptualize the ways they would like to be in the world as educators.

While most, if not all of the respondents noticed a marked difference in their understanding of race or culture while participating in Opening Doors, this study cannot make generalizations as to the attainment of an “achieved” sense of racial identity for these students. A limit to the Cross model, which has been extended by
other scholars (Phinney, 1990; Tatum, 1997), is that none of these students could be considered as having "completed" their racial identity development, but may instead work within or between stages, dependent upon specific events or experiences. Given the data provided by respondents in the study, this seemed particularly true of the initial stages, as was demonstrated by Skylar, and in the final stages, as shown by Malcolm and Raquel.

The final chapter of the study discusses the conclusions drawn from the data found in this study, and the implications those conclusions have for various constituencies. The study ends with suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

By way of review, the original intent of this research study was to examine the experiences of students of color involved in a six-week summer research program. Within the process of learning to conduct educational research over the course of a summer, these students confronted many issues related to their intellectual, professional, and personal development, particularly around race, culture, and identity. In order to understand the implications of confronting those issues for both these students and generally for the field of education, the following research questions were used to guide the study. The first question guiding the study was: how are racial/ethnic/cultural identities and differences re-constructed within culturally/racially diverse groups of students of color? Specifically, I wondered how being involved in a group consisting exclusively of people of color would affect the negotiations of identity among these very diverse groups students. Secondly, the study considered: how does developing and nurturing relationships, both intra culturally and cross culturally, help students of color come to define themselves as people of color, both within and against socially constructed dichotomies of self and other? Finally, given the findings related to the aforementioned questions,
the third and final question this study sought to answer was: what pedagogical strategies or conditions help the maintenance of a positive racial/ethnic/cultural identity for students of color as they negotiate cultural and racial issues within various contexts? Specifically, the study sought to understand how the structure of the Opening Doors program might have been useful in creating spaces for these negotiations to occur, and in helping students learn to then negotiate those spaces for themselves external to the program. In this, the final chapter of the study, I review the major findings rendered from the research data. In addition, various conclusions emerging from patterns within the findings are discussed. The chapter closes by offering recommendations and implications for future educational research and practice.

Summary of Findings

Themes from the study revolved around the personal and educational experiences of collegiate students of color and the role of retention programs in meeting their unique educational needs in ways that are not only academically supportive, but also culturally relevant and personally rewarding. In particular, these themes categorized the experiences of students of color participating in the Opening Doors program, and the benefits of that program to the lives of the students it served. At the same time, emerging themes in the study revolved around the racial and personal identity development of students in the program as informed by both community building with other students of color and by the program itself. Specifically, these themes alluded to the possibilities of specific pedagogical
standpoints for classroom learning, particularly those based within a framework of critical multicultural pedagogy. The three primary organizing categories for analysis of themes in the study were: 1) Student understanding of self in a racialized context before participating in the Opening Doors program; 2) Shifts in racial and cultural understandings during the program; and 3) New understandings of self as racialized beings in relationship both with and to other people of color.

Within those categories, specific themes as outlined in chapter four were as follows. Firstly, the Opening Doors program served as a catalyst for shifting students' views on racial constructions, which they applied to their own lives and to their understanding of the lives and histories of their peers. The program also provided a model by which students could reconstruct their views on race, relationship and identity. Specifically, student found that through their participation in the Opening Doors program, they were able to see the roles of diversity, personal location and reciprocity in creating meaningful relationships both within and across cultural ‘boundaries.’ At the same time, the program allowed a space for students to dispel the myths they had previously accepted about their inability to perform graduate level research and scholarship. Instead, they began seeing themselves as graduate students, scholars, and educators, which they had mostly not imagined prior to participating in the program. Finally, the pedagogy of the program helped students to subvert the traditional teacher/student hierarchy in order to construct a learning community that was collaborative and self defined. Within that newly created space, students began the work of critical self-reflection, which they
conducted on both the personal and academic levels. By engaging in this reflective process, they were able to identify the places where they wanted or needed to grow and learn, while using their individual strengths to aid in one another’s growth processes. Through these processes, they began seeing the benefits of recognizing and utilizing both their commonalities and their differences in providing one another with cultural and academic support.

The data suggest that the Opening Doors program had many benefits for students around the themes described above. In particular, the program provided a space where students felt comfortable sharing their lives and personal narratives with one another at a deeper level than they had done in the past in any classroom context. In addition, students used those opportunities to critique themselves and one another at not only the academic level, but the personal level as well, which helped them to become closer to one another. As a result of being willing to engage with one another beyond the superficial, students began to see one another as people, rather than as racial representations. Further, by exploring the cultural implications of various educational issues together, they could avoid the trap of seeing one another as ‘exceptions’ to racial rules. Instead, they were able to negotiate these issues at a broader level, and in the process gain valuable perspectives from their peers.

Conclusions and Implications

Data findings in this study have implications for theory and practice across the educational spectrum. They have implications for teachers, teacher education, ethnicity-based programming, as well for students of color themselves. The
following conclusions, which are derived directly from research data on the Opening Doors program, as explicitly detailed in the previous chapter, may also have implications more broadly for teacher education classrooms and for programs specifically designed for students of color. The first overarching conclusion is that

- *Both teachers and students come to each teaching and learning situation with specific and varied experiences, expectations, and degrees of knowledge, which must be taken into consideration for cultural understandings and culturally relevant teaching to occur.*

While this may seem basic in some respects, respondents in the study by in large, expressed a need to understand that they each had different racial experiences, schooling experiences, and home/developmental experiences. That being the case, each entered the Opening Doors program as a ‘concoction’ of those experiences, and each embodied different measurements and ingredients. That is to say, that any two individuals, regardless of race or gender, may have varying degrees of racial identity understanding, cultural knowledge, or interest in issues affecting certain communities. Both teachers and students must be cognizant of this possibility, so as not to assume that each student begins in the same place or will arrive at the same end. Instead, each student should be given the flexibility to move within his/her own parameters of understanding. Given this deduction, the conclusions that ensue are related to outcomes based on the actual process of being within the Opening Doors context. Research data indicate that an ethnicity-based program such as Opening Doors may aid students of color in visualizing themselves as graduate students,
scholars, professionals, and collectively situated individuals within particular socio-historical contexts that come as a result of being people of color living in a racialized society. This may be done by accepting the following challenges:

- *Provide an environment for intellectual development, knowledge construction and self-reflection that is open, dialogic, and culturally relevant.*

In order to achieve the goal of helping students become critical thinking, multicultural human beings, educators must be willing to engage in dialogue with their students in a way that addresses some of the critical issues presented throughout this text. In other words, they must be willing to create contexts where “persons attend to one another with interest, regard, and care... a place for the appearance of freedom, [and] the achievement of freedom by people in search of themselves” (Greene; 1988, p. xi). The curriculum and instruction of the Opening Doors program was grounded in notions of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy. The director/facilitator participated in the teaching and learning process with the students, and designed assignments that allowed them to be both teachers and learners in this process as well. This conclusion has implications for classroom teachers at all educational levels. As has been elucidated by Banks (1995, 1994, 1993), Freire (1989) hooks (1994a), and Ladson-Billings (1996, 1994), teachers must facilitate students in the process of becoming critical thinkers who can make connections across various aspects of their lives and situate those multiple variables within a global context. In other words they must be able to see how their
knowledge connects to that of another, and how those connections can be explored in order to create new knowledge as informed by the perspectives of others.

- *Support students in a critical examination of the multi-layered aspects of identity.*

Because many of the students involved in the study arrived to the program with various levels of misconception about other groups of color, it was necessary to help them to break down these preconceived barriers. The process of sharing creative autobiographies and regularly engaging with one another through formal and informal activities, students were able to connect with one another on a more intimate level, for the purposes of providing academic and personal support, sharing cultural histories and co-constructing knowledge. This particular conclusion has implications for any educator or administrator interested in diversity or multicultural education. Without these critical spaces being opened, students may have departed from the program having gained no better understanding of one another as individuals, or of ethnic groups other than their own. Likewise, they may also not have learned how to place those understandings within larger contexts.

For the students in the study, a large part of grappling with issues of identity, particularly racial and ethnic identity, had to do with participating in open discussions about race and racism as an organizing principle and an institution, respectively. In order to have fruitful discussions about race and racism in academic settings, the classroom space could not be automatically assumed to be a ‘neutral’ or ‘safe’ space. Building community among the students was critical to creating an
environment that would encourage these conversations. The director/facilitator took the opportunity to set a tone in which each student, particularly those involved in the study, was a participant in the learning process. They took risks and made a commitment not to judge another’s ideas, but instead to help one another conduct what hooks (1993) calls a “critical interrogation” of their beliefs and ideas (p. 92). Any classroom or facilitated group context can then become a site of transformation for students of all backgrounds, where all participants take responsibility for adding constructive discussion, rather than a place where racist beliefs are asserted or essentialist claims are made. Discussing race in an academic environment that is respectful of all opinions provides students with experience in having hard conversations and confronting feelings that they may not always understand, which may also help them to build bridges across cultures. Because classroom settings also allow the interaction of ideas, students are able to share their views and interpretations of race related issues and experiences, which helps to increase knowledge and understanding for all. However, these discussions cannot be forced or contrived. As was discussed by various respondents, for example within the cohorts in which Malcolm (1992) and Skyler (1993) were involved, when discussions around race were forced upon students who were not ready to begin the reflection process, the opportunities for dialogue often abruptly came to a standstill, which may have compromised future opportunities for honest discussion.
• Assist students in developing meaningful relationships within and across cultures by empowering them to make meaningful connections between their own lived experiences and those of other students of color, both in and out of formal classroom contexts.

Similar to the previous conclusion, this one has implications for the future of programming specifically designed for people of color. Apart from any particular educational or content focus, programs that seek to aid in recruiting and retaining people of color must help students, regardless of race, to build meaningful relationships with one another, particularly across lines of ethnicity and race.

Bearing in mind the various statistics on the benefits of support systems in retaining students of color in higher education (Astone & Wormack, 1990; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1999), being able to make connections with other students of color seems critical. A program like Opening Doors, which specifically seeks to facilitate these relationships, provides a model of the ways in which these relationships were formed and nurtured, and ways teachers and facilitators can foster these relationships in ways that are not forced or contrived, and that allow students to make connections in whatever ways they are willing and able to do so.

• Help students of color to disrupt stereotyped conceptions of “other” in order to begin developing their racial/ethnic identity in alliance with other people of color.

As demonstrated particularly by the relationships formed between students of different backgrounds involved in the study, rather than accepting notions of
difference as a dividing factor, these students critiqued the meaning of difference, deconstructing the ways in which difference can be used to cause fissures in the bridges that may possibly be built across cultural groups. They were able to focus away from the ways in which their physical make-up differed to focus on their shared struggles and their common adversary, which is oppression, not other people of color or White people.

- *Facilitate students of color in developing a greater understanding of themselves as racialized individuals within a larger collective of people of color.*

Various scholars have focused on the ways in which notions of race inform various aspects of our lives (Asante, 1988; West, 1994; Woodson, 1933). However, there will remain those who do not wish to, or do not know how to begin the process of critical examination around issues of race and identity. Depending on their design, programs that focus specifically on the needs of students of color can provide a context that may not necessarily be related to the classroom, but that nevertheless serves as a space to begin these reflections. As mentioned, programmers and educators must be aware of the need for students to begin the process from their specific positionalities, rather than forcing them to be in the same stage/phase as other students. At the same time, they cannot let students ‘off the hook.’ Students of color have to discover the value of this journey for themselves, but must also be accountable for giving an effort toward the process in order for education to become a catalyst for critical consciousness and liberation.
Provide a model of the ways that they, as future educators, may improve their understandings of the role of race and pedagogy in facilitating their own students’ understanding of themselves and others.

Banks (1994) reminds us that “an effective transformative and empowerment curriculum must be implemented by teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to help students understand the ways in which knowledge is constructed and used to support power group relationships in society” (p. 159). The majority of the students involved in the study are currently in the field of education, either as teachers or graduate students. The Opening Doors program provided them with necessary skills that would help them conduct similar identity examinations among students in their own classrooms, regardless of the level of education they teach. A program in which the facilitator was interested in their development as teachers, researchers and individuals, provided a model for pedagogy and practice that students could take into their own classrooms. The idea of teaching to the ‘whole’ student, as was specified by more than one respondent, was a valuable demonstration that students may not always see, much less find ways to emulate. Teacher education programs could be greatly informed by the pedagogical models provided by this program, particularly as the cry for diversity in the teaching pipeline seems to often fall upon deaf ears.

Continuing Questions

As previously stated, themes that emerged from the data in the study indicate that there are several factors that have great possibilities for promoting a system of
support for students of color in graduate programs through which they can examine the critical spaces they occupy, including those regarding the intersections and overlappings of race, class and gender. Data in this study also indicate that this work, and the work that has begun by others in regard to the relationship between schooling and racial identity development (Fordham, 1996; Tatum, 1997, 1992) must continue to be under study. That is to say, there remain continuing questions that are beyond the parameters of this study, but which are still relevant to the conversation of student racial identity development in schools. These continuing questions are outlined in accordance with the original research questions, which were re-presented in this chapter.

Re-evaluating Racial Identity

The first question to consider is: how can students of color learn to construct their identities in ways that do not rely on reified or stereotyped notions of race, ethnicity, and culture? Data from this study suggest that, even for those students who grew up in environments where a positive sense of self and racial/ethnic identity was affirmed, there were still periods where students felt themselves to be inadequate, particularly in academic contexts, solely based on their marginalized ethnicity. For the majority of these and other students in the study, a lack of cultural representation in schools was a contributing factor to this sense of inadequacy. Is there a way for teachers of all colors to assist students of all colors in offsetting this type of oppositional and often negative sense of identity? This rather large task can clearly not be a responsibility only teachers must bear. Are there ways that we can
all "chip in" for both ourselves and for one another to help students of color foster
positive identity constructions?

Resisting Binaries in Building Relationships

The second set of considerations that call for further research is that
regarding the role of relationship and community building in breaking down
stereotypes. In constructing identities within and across race/culture, and in building
cross-cultural relationships, how can teachers help students resist the natural
tendency towards imposing binaries of self and other? Many times, even when
dealing with other marginalized groups, whether along the axes of race, class, gender
or sexual orientation, there may be a tendency to construct notions of self and other
that put those not like us on the outside of our experiences. Freire (1994) frames
critical education in terms of oppressed/oppressor, and in that addresses issues of
colonization. Looking at these issues as directly related to people of color and the
dichotomy of self/other, are societal influences and socialization so strong that they
would cause students of color to replicate the oppressed/oppressor relationship, even
when there is not the socially constructed ‘other’ of whiteness by which to compare?
When given the opportunity, do people of color reproduce colonized definitions of
themselves and one another, or might they find new ways to view these
constructions, given a specific kind of learning environment? Are there ways, as was
begun in this program, to help students continue to move beyond the tendency to
‘other,’ in order to conduct critical interrogations (hooks, 1993) of the issues that
effect teachers and learners of all ages, colors, nationalities and orientations?
Transforming Programming, Pedagogy and Practice

The third set of questions open for exploration, revolve around pedagogy and practice and their implications for programming. Specifically, how can the curriculum, instruction and design of the Opening Doors program be translated to the everyday context of the classroom, particularly at the graduate level? In other words, how can similar strategies be applied in classrooms that would help students-particularly students of color-progress in their racial identity development? Specifically, what other strategies might be useful in helping students develop and maintain a positive sense of self that is interminable, and that they can carry into any context? It is possible, as was reported from various respondents in the study, that even at the graduate level, there may be students who are either in early stages of identity development or who are resistant to examining those critical personal spaces. The student who is resistant to identity examination is as important as those who are willing or who are already in the process of examining their racial identity, because they are the students who may be most affected as a result of such a program as this. For example, most of the respondents in the study fit the mold of ‘preaching to the choir,’ as in they were willing to engage in the learning process, and had in many cases begun the self-reflection that is also part and parcel to the program. Conversely, what of the students who have not, or are just beginning to critically examine these issues and need an appropriate environment in which to do so? If the pedagogy and practice of this program and others like it is able to reach these students in some small way, even if just by exposure, that is sometimes the best we
can hope for as educators, yet that hope must remain within us. Bearing those issues in mind, in what ways can educators negotiate the classroom context in a way that would help each student move forward from whatever their starting position, without alienating other students in the classroom, to developing/maintaining a more positive sense of self that they could then transport into any context? Finally, what might students be able to learn from one another, both academically and otherwise, given a more ethnically diverse learning environment?

In terms of programming, what can institutions of higher education do to more fully prepare undergraduate students for graduate study? Respondents in the study frequently mentioned that they were not made aware of the process of applying to graduate school, or about the process of conducting research prior to participating in the Opening Doors program. Given the proper exposure to similar programs, what might students of color be able to accomplish in their lives? How can the curriculum, instruction, and design of the Opening Doors program be translated to other programmatic contexts? That is, how can programs for students of color be more effectively designed to assist students at all states of personal and academic development? Can the Opening Doors program be replicated at other institutions? If so, what elements must be in place to make it successful? Based on the outcomes of the study, there remained the question: how can recruitment and retention efforts be re-evaluated to include components that allow for new ways for looking at student mentorship, specifically the mentorship and support that students can provide for one another? While the Opening Doors program provided faculty mentors for students,
respondents in the study proved that they also had valuable knowledge to give one another. At the same time, how can programs for students of color provide opportunities for prolonged engagement with the university, its faculty and resources, such that students can have a more rounded, multi-dimensional view of a university campus before attending, thereby possibly reducing the risk of ‘culture shock,’ dissatisfaction upon entering an academic program, or any other factor that may lead to student attrition?

Moving Toward Liberation

Finally, a primary tenet of the critical theories and epistemologies used to guide the study and the culmination of these continuing questions have to do with taking action and enacting change (Freire, 1994) given what we have learned in the study. One of the areas that this project briefly encounters is that of the possibilities provided by identity development, relationship-building and critical multicultural pedagogy in helping students recognize oppression and racism as ‘the problem,’ rather than perceiving one another as such. Deeper still, how can we help students move beyond merely recognizing oppression to actually being proactive in changing it? In other words, once students are able to break down the real and perceived boundaries between them, given the information they have learned about themselves and one another, how can they move forward toward the work of critiquing and changing the nature of oppressive realities? These and other related questions may serve as a point of departure for other researchers interested in these issues.
Epilogue: Final Thoughts on the Study

The above continuing questions, while briefly addressed during the course of this study, beg further investigation, particularly as these multi-layered issues of identity, race, relationship building, and schooling have implications for one another. The conclusions and implications outlined in this chapter cannot be said to be ‘generalizable,’ in the sense of providing sweeping universal statements that have no regard for the specific standpoints, positionalities and lived experiences that each individual brings to any given situation. Instead, this study offers but one layer of perspectives and experiences, and but one researcher’s analysis of such. It is hoped that this study adds to the body of knowledge on culturally relevant pedagogy and programming for students of color, and that as a result, teachers, researchers, and other educators and allies will also begin and continue to take these issues up in academic contexts, programmatic contexts, and research contexts.
APPENDIX A: Research Solicitation Letter
May 31, 2000

Dear Former Opening Doors Participant:

My name is Dionne Blue, and I am a doctoral candidate in the school of Integrated Teaching and Learning in the College of Education at The Ohio State University. I write you this letter because I am embarking on my dissertation research project this summer, entitled *When "they" are also "us": The role of pedagogy in helping students of color (re) negotiate race and identity.* I would like to focus on the Opening Doors program, and I would like your participation in this study as a former “OD’er.” I will be conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Cynthia Dillard, the principal investigator in the study, and the Office of Diversity and Outreach. Dr. Dillard, as you know, is the director and facilitator of the Opening Doors program, and is a member of the teaching faculty at The Ohio State University.

The purpose of this study is to examine both the experiences of participants in the program and the tools used to foster positive identity development among them. The second purpose is to understand, given those experiences, how teacher
education programs can help teachers foster those same identities in classrooms with their students. My desire is to examine the structure of the program, observe videotaped presentations, review related written documents, and interview various participants.

Becoming a part of this research project will entail agreeing to participate in one 30-minute, audio taped interview, with a possibility of one follow-up interview. If you become a part of the focus group interview, (Opening Doors class of 1998) you will also be videotaped. Be assured that both audio and videotapes will be stored in a secure location, and only I, as the researcher, will have access to them. Should you agree to participate in the study, you are also agreeing to allow the examination of whatever written materials you produced during your Opening Doors experience. You may also be contacted during the ensuing months for clarification of information you have provided, and/or for your feedback on the research project itself. The timeline for this project will be July to October of 1999, during which time you will be contacted to schedule an interview, should you choose to participate. It is important to note that you may withdraw from participation in this project at anytime without penalty or consequence.

All interviews will take place in a private location. In other words, where possible, in a classroom or private conference/meeting room on the campus. In cases where that is not possible, interviews will be conducted at a private, agreed upon location. Interviews will consist of specific questions regarding your Opening Doors experiences, as well as other academic/educational experiences. In addition,
you will be asked a series of questions regarding your perception/understanding of racial identity, both within yourself and in general. If you would like to review materials related to the goals and process of the research, they will be provided for you.

I will be happy to answer any additional questions you may have about any aspect of the project. If you would like to contact me at any time during the next several months, I can be reached at (614) 840-0214, or through Dr. Dillard’s office (614) 292-1936. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you in this capacity.

Sincerely,

Cynthia B. Dillard, Ph.D.            Dionne A. Blue, M.A.
Principal Investigator             Co-Investigator
APPENDIX B: Facilitator Interview Protocol
Director/Facilitator Interview Protocol

1. What is your personal and educational background?

2. Talk about your own racial identity and how it has developed. (How did you learn about race?)

3. What sort of communities did you grow up in, and how did they affect your perceptions of race?

4. Describe the most significant racial event that has happened in your life. What did that teach you about the role of race in America?

5. What was your educational experience as an undergraduate and graduate at PWI's? How did that experience shape your perceptions of race?

6. What motivated you to create a program like OD? How did the program come about?

7. What do you see as the greatest benefit(s) of OD?

8. What is the biggest drawback of OD from your perspective?

9. What vision do you have for the future of Opening Doors?

10. How do you recruit students to OD-from what schools and on what basis?

11. What is the philosophy behind the Opening Doors program?

12. Some students have stated that the cultural/social aspects were the most important, while others have said that those aspects are secondary to the
13. research/educational benefits of OD. In your opinion, which is the primary focus of OD?

14. Which was your favorite OD group, and why?

15. What was your most significant experience during OD?

16. What is the most important thing you have learned about yourself as a teacher, a person, and a student of life, as a result of facilitating Opening Doors for the past seven years?

17. Why is OD an important program? What would you tell a student contemplating OD to look forward to or be aware of?

18. Do you think that the environment created in OD is unrealistic, in terms of it being such a supportive environment consisting solely of people of color? How/not?

19. What made you enter the field of education?

20. Who are your mentors? How did you choose them, and how have they helped you?

21. What is your philosophy of education?

22. What do you think makes a good teacher?

23. Why do you have the students do creative autobiographies and journals? Why do you do them with the students? From where does your teaching style evolve, and how do you foresee it evolving further?
APPENDIX C: Student Interview Protocol
Student Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me about yourself. (Personal/educational background, interests)

2. Describe your current peer group culturally, including race, class, and gender. How have those cultural variables changed since you were in high school?

3. What values did your parents teach you about race, particularly your own in relation to others? How did their behavior demonstrate those values?

4. Describe the community or neighborhood you grew up in, racially/ethnically/culturally. How did that affect your choice of friends and perceptions of race?

5. Describe the most significant racial event that has happened in your life. What did you learn from that experience about the role of race in this society?

6. How do you describe yourself racially/ethnically, and what role does racial awareness play in your life? What situations or events led to your understanding of race?

7. Are you currently (working/studying) in the field of education? If so, what made you want to go into education?

8. If not presently in the field of education, what influenced you to enter your current field? How does your racial identity manifest itself in the workplace?

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9. Tell me about your experience in the Opening Doors Program. For example, why did you apply, what did you expect to gain? How did you get along with other members of the group? Who were you the closest/least close to?

10. How did participating in Opening Doors influence your perceptions of race? How did your perceptions of race influence your level of participation in OD?

11. What did you learn in/gain from Opening Doors that may have helped you personally, educationally, or professionally? (What did you learn about race/ethnicity/culture as a result of participating in Opening Doors?)

12. What was your most significant experience during OD (positive or negative)? What did you learn from that experience?

13. What did you find to be the greatest benefit of the Opening Doors program? What was least beneficial? (best/worst parts of OD)

14. If talking to a student contemplating OD, what would you tell them to be aware of or to look forward to?

15. Do you think Opening Doors is an important program? Why/why not?

16. What is your opinion of the teaching style of the program’s facilitator? What did you like/dislike about it?

17. Describe your educational experience as an undergraduate. What event(s) most helped to shape/change/reinforce your perceptions of your racial self? What could your parents have done differently to prepare you for those events?
18. Do you have a philosophy of education? If so, what is it?

19. What do you think makes a "good teacher"?

20. Is there anything else you would like to add, either about yourself, race, or education?
REFERENCES


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