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What’s Race Got to Do With It? Critical Race Theory’s Conflicts With and Connections to Qualitative Research Methodology and Epistemology

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This article will provide the theoretical and conceptual grounding for forthcoming discussions regarding how critical race theory (CRT), as a discourse of liberation, can be used as a methodological and epistemological tool to expose the ways race and racism affect the education and lives of racial minorities in the United States. To that extent, the goal is threefold. First, the authors seek to adequately define CRT by situating it within a specific socio-historical context. Second, they seek to present an argument for why there is a need for CRT in educational and qualitative research. In doing so, they discuss the ways concerns regarding race and racism have or have not been addressed previously in educational research. Finally, they speculate about what lies ahead. In doing so, they fully assess the possible points of agreement and conflicts between CRT and qualitative research in education.

In this special issue titled “Critical Race Theory and Qualitative Research,” we not only reflect on the role and status of qualitative research in the lives of people of color but also examine the ways critical race theory (CRT)—a legal theory of race and racism designed to uncover how race and racism operate in the law and in society—can be used as a tool through which to define, expose, and address educational problems. The goal here is to look specifically at how such issues can be addressed through the use of the qualitative research paradigm. Each of the articles contributes toward the goal of completing this important task in different ways. They do this specifically by arguing for the nexus of CRT and qualitative research methodologies to address the particular historical, legal, and contemporary social context of persons of color while discussing how the work informs criticisms of Whiteness and White privilege. This article will provide the theoretical and conceptual grounding for forthcoming discussions regarding the specific ways CRT, as a discourse of liberation, can be used as a methodological tool as well as a greater ontologi-
cal and epistemological understanding of how race and racism affect the education and lives of the racially disenfranchised. More specifically, we hope to be able to perform three important functions. First, we seek to flesh out, in some detail, the contours of the legal concept of CRT by situating it within a specific socio-historical context and defining some of its broader elements. Second, we seek to present an argument for why there is a need for CRT in educational research and in qualitative inquiry. In doing so, we hope to point out the ways concerns regarding race and racism have or have not been addressed previously in educational research. Finally, we seek to speculate about what lies ahead. As the subsequent articles will more fully illustrate, we will assess the possible points of agreement and conflicts between CRT and qualitative research in education.

RECENTERING RACE AND RACISM: DEFINING AND HISTORICIZING CRT’S SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA

“Just what is [CRT] and what is it doing in a nice field like education,” asked Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) in an article that addressed the ways CRT can be used as a tool to address long-standing educational problems, particularly those experienced by students of color. Although the discussion began a few years ago when Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) published the first known article to address that very question, the questions still remain: Just what is CRT, and more important, where did it come from? In this section, we hope to provide a brief historical examination of the concept and then talk in more detail about how it has come to be defined.

Where Did CRT Come From?

With roots in African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American critical social thought, CRT was necessarily borne out of a need for people of color to begin to move discussions of race and racism from the realm of the experiential to the realm of the ideological (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Tate, 1997). Whereas African Americans and other people of color have always thought in theoretical terms about their conditions of social, political, and economic subordination in a White supremacist society, racism has not been given full explanatory power in the academy (Feagin, 2000). In other words, because racism has heretofore been understood as a willful act of aggression against a person based on their skin color and other phenotypic characteristics, discussions of race and racism rarely addressed the ways race and racism are deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Omi & Winant, 1994). Because of that, it was difficult to talk about racism as a system of oppression.
CRT pioneers such as Derrick Bell (1988) and Richard Delgado (1989) argued that racism should not be viewed as acts of individual prejudice that can simply be eradicated. Rather, it is an endemic part of American life, deeply ingrained through historical consciousness and ideological choices about race, which in turn has directly shaped the U.S. legal system and the ways people think about the law, racial categories, and privilege (C. Harris, 1993). In particular, critical race scholars began publishing extensive critiques of critical legal studies (CLS)—a movement within the law of mostly White Marxist and postmodernist legal scholars who were attempting to uncover the ideological underpinnings of American jurisprudence (Crenshaw, 1988; Matsuda, 1987; Williams, 1987, 1991). Critical race theorists argued that the obsession with deconstructing the nature, role, form, and function of ideology in American society left little room for a discussion about unalienable human rights, which, as Williams (1987) argues, has always been of utmost concern for African Americans. Furthermore, critical legal scholars of color argued that what was left out of CLS critiques of the law was an honest discussion of race and racial oppression (Crenshaw, 1988).

Critical race theorists claimed that CLS scholars not only failed to address issues of racial inequality directly but also overlooked and underplayed the role that race and racism played in the very construction of the legal foundations upon which our society rests (Crenshaw, 1988; A. P. Harris, 1994). CRT also focused a good deal of attention on the limitations of liberal ideology in the law (Bell, 1992). Enshrouded in a liberal integrationist ideal, the former stewards of racial justice proposed legal remedies that operated under the presumption that racial integration on White America’s terms, as long as they were accompanied by slow and protracted reforms to the legal system, would ultimately improve social conditions for people of color. CRT scholars, many of whom had been strongly influenced by civil rights law and CLS law, began to take up seriously the question of race and racism in the law by calling for a complete reinterpretation of civil rights law with regard to its ineffectiveness in addressing racial injustices, particularly institutional racism and structural racism in the political economy (Guinier, 1991, 1994). To that extent, CRT also engages in an “undressing” of the objective nature of the law and legal doctrine. Concepts such as color-blind interpretations of the law or meritocracy are “unmasked” by critical race theorists to be precursors for White, European American hegemonic control of the social and structural arrangements in U.S. society. In this regard, the critical race theorists have developed a body of legal scholarship and alternative and intersecting paradigms based on the perspectives of “outsider” groups who experience racism and sexism in multiple ways.

As a result, CRT has garnered increasing attention from various academic circles and disciplines as an emerging perspective in jurisprudence scholarship that centralizes and foregrounds race and racism (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Symposium, 1994). CRT is
a discourse generated by legal scholars of color devoted to uncovering the
often hidden subtext of race in society (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado &
Stefancic, 2000; Matsuda, 1987). CRT seeks to expose the historical, ideologi-
cal, psychological, and social contexts in which racism has been declared vir-
tually eradicated while racially subordinated peoples have been chastised for
relying too much on racial “victimology” (McWhorter, 2000). The CRT posi-
tion challenged the dominant racial ideology through law (and other political
and social forces) and initially sought to use the power of the courts to “fur-
thor the goal of eradicating the effects of racial oppression” (Crenshaw, 1988,
p. 134). In that sense, CRT has three main goals: (a) to present storytelling and
narratives as valid approaches through which to examine race and racism in
the law and in society; (b) to argue for the eradication of racial subjugation
while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct; and (c) to
draw important relationships between race and other axes of domination.

Narratives and Storytelling

CRT evolved not only through alternative interpretations of traditional
legal doctrine (A. P. Harris, 1994) but also through the legitimating of narra-
tive and storytelling that present a different interpretation of how the law has
been used to justify an ideology of racism against persons of color (Delgado,
1989). The theory serves an important role because the storytelling constitutes
an integral part of historical and current legal evidence gathering and find-
ings of fact in racial discrimination litigation. The federal courts and the
White European American majority should be interested in these “stories”
because, as Delgado asserts, only through listening can the conviction of see-
ing the world one way be challenged and “one can acquire the ability to see
the world through others’ eyes” (p. 2439). Matsuda (1987) argued for the legiti-
mization of stories about discrimination from the perspective of people of
color because too often, the law has not “looked to the needs of the bottom
which recognizes economic as well as racial injustice and views reparations
awards as a step forward in the long journey toward substantive equality”
(p. 397). Matsuda used the example of Japanese American internment camps
and reparations for World War II confinement: Those who argued against
reparations for groups such as Japanese Americans asserted that legal facts
cannot be specifically traced to victims of groups and that their voices lack
sufficient connection between past wrong and present assertions of discrimi-
nation. However, Matsuda argued that the stories of victims were useful
under CRT because these experiences were real and that connections from the
past have to be understood to see how the hierarchical relationships of power
protect the legal interest of White European Americans over persons of color.
Some critical race theorists, such as Williams (1991) in The Alchemy of Race and
Rights, have examined the possibility of racial justice by exposing White European Americans to racism through personal narratives and have theorized that perceptions about race and the law can be transformed by these narratives to truly achieve justice.

CRT narratives and storytelling provide readers with a challenging account of preconceived notions of race, and the stories are sometimes integral to developing cases that consist of legal narratives of racial discrimination. The thick descriptions and interviews, characteristic of case study research, not only serve illuminative purposes but also can be used to document institutional as well as overt racism. The interviewing process can be pulled together to create narratives that can be used to build a case against racially biased officials or discriminatory practices. For example, CRT was used as a lens to see and act on discriminatory educational policy practices (e.g., tracking, operating virtually dual school systems based on race, and not providing bilingual services) of administrators and White Mormon community leaders in southern Utah in the Navajo’s civil rights case against the district (Deyhle, 1995; Meyers v. the Board of Education of San Juan County, 1995; Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999). The use of narrative in CRT added a different dimension to the purpose of educational research by taking on a different potential dimension as an integral part of legal testimony. In this case, expert witness testimony and personal narratives of discrimination played a key role in proving the school district’s intent to discriminate and neglect the legal rights of Navajo children with respect to equal educational opportunity through an inequitable distribution of educational services. Deyhle (Villenas et al., 1999) connected this testimony to social justice validity, a term used by Deyhle and Swisher (1997) in their review of research on Native American tribal nations and education. Social justice validity posits a research validity that is seriously grounded in social justice and commitment on tribal nation terms and long-term involvement in challenging White supremacy over tribal nation affairs.

The Social Construction of Race

Critical race theorists have also called for a reexamination of the concept of race, recognizing that it is not a fixed term. Rather, race has fluid, decentered social meanings that are continually shaped by political pressures (Calmore, 1992). Hayman (1995) has also posited that CRT has postmodern threads in that both reject traditional legal realist and conceptualist epistemologies and rely instead on the importance of perspective and context in assessing truth claims. He saw similarities in that both the postmodernists and critical race theorists reject the assertion that established doctrine and texts have objective truth and universal meanings. Instead, race goes through “relentless, decons-
struction and reconstruction” (Hayman, 1995, p. 70), and race, like other aspects of identity, is indeed a sociopolitical construction. However, CRT deviates from postmodern legal critique in the insistence that justice cannot be merely theoretical. Furthermore, it must be informed by and realized in lived experiences, and while the struggle for racial justice may offer no prospects for immediate or ultimate success, the struggle has to be continuous. (Hayman, 1995, p. 70)

**CRT and Intersectionality**

A third emerging expansion of CRT is in the area of key intersections of other areas of difference, such as feminism. Crenshaw et al. (1995) have sought to combine feminist legal theory with CRT to uncover the patterns of disempowerment on gender and racial lines in the areas of law as well as popular discourse. Crenshaw et al.’s work specifically seeks to (a) expose the concept of Whiteness to legal critique and for its association with unspoken acceptance of power and authority in U.S. society; (b) bring issues that affect women, such as domestic violence, gender role socialization, child care, and so forth, into the public discourse to expose how these issues are excluded from public debate because they are seen as private issues or family issues; and (c) address the marginalization of African American women in public discourse and the law and eventually seek ways in which connections can be made with other women on common issues. According to Crenshaw (1988), “The experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism . . . Because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color, . . . women of color are marginalized” along the lines of gender and race at the same time. Although race and gender epistemologies have attempted to bifurcate and thereby essentialize identity into frozen fixed frames, an intersectional analysis forces us to see the relationship between sexism and racism as symbiotic. In other words, racism sustains and rearticulates sexism. Moreover, in the case of Black women, race does not exist outside of gender and gender does not exist outside of race.

In sum, CRT has emerged from the legal arena to uncover the deep patterns of racial exclusion. As illustrated, there are many emerging strands from which CRT borrows to expand itself to include other critical epistemologies and to seek intersections and conjunctions with other areas of difference to push a social justice agenda into the legal and public discourse on race and gender. The critical race theorists seek to break the dominance of storytelling about success of merit, equality, the market, and objectivity that is so deeply entrenched and accepted unquestioningly by larger society through the legitimating of legal narratives of racial discrimination and the power of the law used against persons of color. Thus, CRT has important implications for qualitative research, particularly in education and youth culture.
EXPLORING THE UTILITY OF CRT IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Traditionally, educational research has (a) ignored historically marginalized groups by simply not addressing their concerns, (b) relied heavily on genetic or biological determinist perspectives to explain away complex social educational problems, or (c) epiphenomenized or de-emphasized race by arguing that the problems minority students experience in schools can be understood via class or gender analyses that do not fully take race, culture, language, and immigrant status into account (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). This is even more important because research that has attempted to call attention to the concerns of disenfranchised groups has relied heavily on antediluvian and sometimes culturally inappropriate methods of investigation and exploration (Stanfield, 1999). Moreover, questions regarding methodology—what approaches we take to help us understand specific populations—and epistemology—what counts as knowledge about a particular group—have often remained unaddressed or become shrouded in a language that fails to address important questions regarding the origins, uses, and abuses of social scientific inquiry and the importance of minority representation in this enterprise. For example, after conducting a review of educational research that focuses on Chicano students, Pizarro (1998) found that by and large, educational research has tended to undervalue the voices of Chicano students by focusing too much attention on Chicano school failure without exploring how these students make sense of their own lived realities. Stanfield (1999) and Foster (1994) have noted how qualitative research used to describe various aspects of Black life and the African American community was typically fraught with problems of participant exploitation by White European American researchers who failed to honestly address the power struggles between researchers and their participants of color. Some of these issues have been addressed in more recently published studies—many of them published in this very journal—that examine the intersection of race and qualitative research.

Race as Discussed in Recent Qualitative Research

Lincoln’s (1995) discussion of criteria for quality in interpretive research revealed major questions for qualitative researchers and now CRT legal scholars to address as they use qualitative research methods and methodologies. For example, Lincoln discusses the importance of the positionality or standpoint judgment of the researcher as well as the community as judge of the research study’s ability to meet validity standards. Other central questions surrounding voice(s) and who speaks for whom are critical issues that

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have already been discussed in qualitative research and will become even more critical to explore through CRT in qualitative research circles.

For example, Ellis (1995), in *Qualitative Inquiry*, described the role of her own position and storytelling as she recalled her past relationship with an African American young man in a small southern town in the 1960s. She discussed how the narrative structure allowed her to tell the story to readers while also giving freedom and responsibility to others to peel off the layers of complexity in everyday life. This resulted in critical questions regarding Ellis’s self-critique of her White privilege and her appearance as the authority on issues of race as opposed to the others in her narrative. Nebeker (1998) also took this a step further by linking but still questioning CRT in relation to her positionality as a White female writing in a racialized space to challenge White “colorblindness.” The positionality and privilege of Whiteness in terms of who gets to tell the critical race story has also been discussed in the legal area: in particular, the assumed notion of Whiteness as property, which has been recognized in the law as upholding the rights and legal narratives of White European Americans over persons of color regarding property rights, land treaties, slavery, reverse discrimination in university admissions, and denial of equal protection of the laws (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; C. Harris, 1993). In a *Qualitative Inquiry* article by Wong (1998), the author discussed the dangers of researcher closeness to African American and Latina welfare mothers and how this leads to problematic relationships in terms of who the research is for, what purpose it serves, and why the research is even being conducted. Wong’s own narrative regarding these respondents was insightful in its attempt to trace and critique, for social justice purposes, the impact of new conservative restrictions in welfare policy and what it has done to the women’s lives in terms of race, gender, and social class discrimination. Wong was hoping for more of a social justice critique from these mothers, but instead, what she got through her interviews was more narratives based on personal concerns about family life and relationships as well as a concern for money and the paid interview process. Wong warns about expecting too much from narratives in terms of interviewer expectations for critical perspectives and insights. This may be a question for future exploration in CRT as it is more widely used as a framework of analysis for narratives, as some have already questioned the use of CRT as another theory to “box in” the voices of native-indigenous people and what they want from education. Hermes (1998) spoke to this by partially using CRT as a way to analyze the legal tribal history with the Ojinwe reservations and Whites, revealing how CRT was not useful as an interview interpretive framework for what the tribe wanted for education in their communities. Therefore, community standards for qualitative research become crucial for purposes of social justice validity. It should also come as no surprise that, for example, African American evaluators who have used qualitative inquiry methodologies have made this same social justice validity point for quite some time now, yet it has been ignored by
Whites in the academy until recently when other current African American scholars have seen it as important scholarship in the evaluation arena (Hood, 1998; personal communication, Stafford Hood, Arizona State University, March 7, 2001; Stanfield, 1999).

The issue of subjectivity has also been widely discussed in *Qualitative Inquiry*, and we seek to build on this discussion with the set of articles in this special issue. Geertz (1983), Peshkin (1988), Guba (1990), Denzin (2000), Schwandt (2000), and a host of others have discussed subjectivity in qualitative research through myriad informed perspectives, ranging from narrow definitions of personal interest and values as a nemesis of scientific validity, to more nuanced definitions of the overt and covert thoughts and emotions of the individual and their worldviews, to a critique of the pretense of distancing the informants from the interviewer. Bloom (1996) pulls these criticisms together by focusing on nonunitary subjectivity, how it is produced, and how we can interpret it in narrative self-representations. Bloom used her oral histories and personal narratives with Olivia, who was a second-year assistant professor when she started the interviews. In the process of the interviews, she uncovered Olivia’s story about being in the corporate world, being married and being seen as a wife, and now facing academic and/or faculty expectations. Bloom found that Olivia’s multiple positions in her life led to a fragmented subjectivity, so that even as she (and other women) made choices in her life, the choices are truncated by other more powerful forces that set constraints on these choices based on either chosen or imposed roles. Bloom calls for an understanding of these different subject positions based on situated responses that individuals make relevant to the complexities of specific situations. This is very similar to articles by Solórzano (1998), Gonzalez (1998), Tanaka and Cruz (1998), and others in this issue (for example, Fernandez, 2002 [this issue]). CRT’s evolution in the law review journals and other areas (for example, education) has mirrored the discussions in qualitative research on the positionality and subjectivity of respondents. The emergence of critical race feminism and Latino critical theory (LatCrit) and its emphasis on race, ethnicity, nationality, and language have made an impact in terms of sharpening and simultaneously blurring nonsynchronist positions of where persons of color are at racially and in certain racial situations (McCarthy, 1988; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993). For example, the use of polyphonic text by Tanaka and Cruz (1998) shows the conflicts and societal constraints around race, gender, and homosexuality regarding straight male discomfort in White gay space, silence, and understanding of the positions of African American upper middle-class women versus Asian American male administrators with respect to racial separatism on predominantly White campuses. Similarly, Fernandez (2002) gives us the story of Pablo and his struggle to succeed as a Latino student in a Chicago school system that has statistically structured him and other Latino students to fail. We hear the story of how Pablo has to negotiate the low expectations for students like him and how he rises above them but at the
same time resists completely buying into this form of total acceptance of “Whiteness.” The role of Whiteness and how it plays out in the subjectivity of the respondents in the Duncan article (2002 [this issue]) and the Smith-Mad- dox and Solórzano (2002 [this issue]) article also speak to the complexities of situations when White teacher education candidates and urban education students at both sites in the respective studies engage in reflexive thinking about what it means to be White in a field such as education and its impact on practice (Thompson, 1999; Young & Laible, 2000). To be sure, as Ulichny (1997) and Fine and Weis (1996) have pointed out earlier in *Qualitative Inquiry* that we cannot expect researched accounts to radically transform institutions, particularly around complex issues of race as qualitative researchers conduct urban ethnographies. But as Solórzano and Yosso (2002 [this issue]) argue, critical race methodology, which has epistemological grounding in other fields and disciplines (sociology, Marxism, feminism, cultural studies, gender studies; Torres, Miron, & Inda, 1999; University of California, Los Angeles, Law Review Symposium, 2000; Villalpando, 2000), recognizes the intersections and conflicts that can emerge from data narratives and seeks to place those narratives at the center of legal and political social change and justice. For the critical race qualitative researcher, therefore, it is also important not only to deal with issues of nonunitary subjectivity in narrative representation but also to document how this plays out in various settings such as schools, where expectations of different groups of students based on race can lead to fluid but fixed notions of racial identity and responses by school officials to the achievement or failure of students of color (Mirón, 1996).

We also feature an article on CRT, LatCrit, and Chicana feminist epistemology by Delgado Bernal (2002 [this issue]). She discusses the importance of an epistemology that centers on the Chicana experience and how previous research traditions have either ignored Chicanas or have subsumed them under other forms of analysis (such as feminism). Delgado Bernal (1998) posits that this Chicana feminist epistemology originates from the lived experiences of Chicana women themselves. Furthermore, researchers and interviewees are seen more as conversational partners, and there is a shared understanding of the cultural interview process with Chicanas in particular settings. The article by Delgado Bernal (2002) is similar to previous articles in *Qualitative Inquiry* by Carspecken and Cordeiro (1995), Madriz (1998), and Rodríguez (1998). Carspecken and Cordeiro’s article focuses on interviews with 20 high-achieving Latino/Latina students. In this study, Carspecken and Cordeiro looked at how the patterns of student success through the data also gave insights into cultural systems and cultural text. Rodríguez (1998) examined how anthropology silences the identities of Chicanas and elevates the narrative interpretations of the researchers. In her article, she called for a fundamental inclusion of Chicana voices to disrupt the demands of anthropology as a discipline. Madriz’s (1998) article in *Qualitative Inquiry* also called for a serious undertaking of incorporating Latina interest in the research pro-
cess by focusing on their experiences with crime through the use of focus groups. Madriz found that the focus group served to narrow the gap between the researcher and the Latina women as they discussed the impact of crime on their lives and families and acted as a collective form of testimony, which can also be seen in CRT.

Finally, the use of fiction, artistic expression and/or aesthetics, and narrative story to paint a portrait of racialized life has been featured in *Qualitative Inquiry* articles and is also linked to CRT. Kotarba (1998) and Dimitriadis and McCarthy (2000) showed how Black music and artistic expression contributed to performance ethnography. This performance ethnography relied on a Black aesthetic as a form of political artistic expressions and literary presentations of racial data that challenge the way race is discussed to provide new avenues of conceptualizing race and connecting with cultural rituals. Dimitriadis and McCarthy used the work of James Baldwin in citing the importance of fiction as it connects to youth culture and popular culture. The importance of narrative has also been a part of *Qualitative Inquiry* in recent articles by Diversi (1998), Dunbar (1999), and Pifer (1999). All of these accounts are short story descriptions of race and racial incidents that take place in Illinois and Brazil, and the intent of the narratives is to highlight racial categorizations of individuals and how racism plays out in youth experiences. For example, Dunbar’s article shows how young African American boys in an alternative school setting are supposed to be rehabilitated but are racialized in these school settings as Black predators who live out a self-fulfilling prophesy of crime and Black male incarceration that is partly fueled by White expectations and fears of crime by African American youth. The importance of these stories is to, hopefully, provide the reader with a better understanding of race and racial context. Denzin (2000) spoke to the utility of CRT in combination with alternative forms of textual expressions in qualitative research, which is more affirming of a racial humanity that is grounded in the experiences and expressions of various groups and individuals.

**CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF CRT IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Given the conservative nature of the federal court rulings on questions of race, as exemplified in the bevy of anti–affirmative action decisions and laws that have sprung up around the country in recent years, CRT in education will come under the same attack it is facing in the legal arena. Therefore, the future of CRT and its place in qualitative research will partially depend on the efforts made by researchers and scholars to explore its possible connections to life in schools and communities of color. For example, the emerging broader theoretical framework related to race and the widening of the lens to take into account other perspectives besides the Black-White paradigm would be very
useful in terms of developing a more multilayered research discussion about life in racially diverse schools with different populations of students. Connections can be made in educational research through the use of narrative in CRT, which has already been a part of literature and commentary on racism, and feminist research that uses narrative with regard to women’s lives and activist scholarship, as discussed previously by Casey (1995) and Weis (1995) in their respective reviews of how narrative and life-story research has added depth and complexity to qualitative research, particularly in education.

In this introduction, we have pointed to ways in which qualitative research, action, and CRT can be seen as a way to link theory and understanding about race from critical perspectives to actual practice and actions going on in education for activist social justice and change. One of the limitations expressed about CRT is its lack of connection to the “real world” of practice, law use, and other forces (e.g., media and grass-roots campaigns) used by activist scholars to engage in activism with persons of color (Yamamoto, 1997). We contend that linking CRT to education can indeed foster the connections of theory to practice and activism on issues related to race. The key is (according to Tate, 1999) specifically defining how one is using CRT in qualitative research at the epistemological or methodological levels of analysis and its connection with the law and racism. This special issue will facilitate an understanding of how CRT can be a valuable tool with which to view and analyze issues related to race-based epistemology as well as earlier works on race and racism and/or ethnicity and their intersections and conflicts with social class analysis, gender analysis, and so forth. We will also attempt to show how the legal tools and framework of CRT combined with qualitative research methodology can be helpful in linking practice to ongoing legal struggles for equal educational opportunity and equity. This special issue will hopefully give readers a sense of not only what CRT is but also what and/or how struggles for education equity and social justice can form the basis of critical race praxis, in this way demonstrating what the field of qualitative studies and education has to offer to the field of law and CRT. Employing multidisciplinary frameworks, the articles in this special issue will address a variety of historical, methodological, and epistemological issues as they relate to the scope and trajectory of educational research in the 21st century.

NOTE

1. The e-mail discussion concerned his research exploring the leading African Americans in educational evaluation. One of them, Leander Boykin (Stanford University), was published in the Journal of Educational Research on the importance of qualitative and quantitative measures for evaluation as well as connecting evaluation to African American communities.
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