

Copyright © 2006 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books. For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Constantine, Madonna G.

Addressing racism : facilitating cultural competence in mental health and educational settings / by Madonna G. Constantine, Derald Wing Sue.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-471-77997-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-471-77997-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Minorities—Mental health services. 2. Mental health services. 3. Racism.

I. Sue, Derald Wing. II. Title.

RC451.5.A2C664 2006

362.2089—dc22

2005044694

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Addressing Racism

Facilitating Cultural Competence in
Mental Health and Educational Settings

EDITED BY

MADONNA G. CONSTANTINE ■ DERALD WING SUE



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Rushton, J. P., & Jensen, A. R. (2005). Wanted: More race realism, less moralistic fallacy. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 11, 328–336.
- Sawyer, D. (Interviewer). (1993). *True colors* [Television broadcast]. (Available from CorVision Media, 1359 Barclay Boulevard, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089)
- Shujaa, M. (2003). Education and schooling: You can have one without the other. In A. Mazama (Ed.), *The Afrocentric paradigm* (pp. 245–264). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Snyderman, M., & Rothman, S. (1988). *The IQ controversy: The media and public policy*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape the intellectual identities and performance of women and African Americans. *American Psychologist*, 52, 613–629.
- Steele, C., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 79–811.
- Sue, D. W. (2003). *Overcoming our racism: The journey to liberation*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Sue, S. (1999). Science, ethnicity, and bias: Where have we gone wrong? *American Psychologist*, 54, 1070–1077.
- Thernstrom, A. (2004, January 16). Martin Luther King's unfinished legacy. *Boston Globe*, p. A16.
- Thernstrom, S., & Thernstrom, A. (2003). *No excuses: Closing the racial gap in learning*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Van Laar, C. (2000). The paradox of low academic achievement but high self-esteem in African American students: An attributional account. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12, 33–60.
- Watts, L. (2004). A personal journey toward authenticity: Recognizing and reclaiming origins. In A. Green & L. Scott (Eds.), *Journey to the PhD: How to navigate the process as African Americans*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The miseducation of the Negro*. Nashville, TN: Winston-Derek.

 CHAPTER 9

“Nice Kids,” the N-Word, and Signs of Respect

Culturally Relevant Knowledge of Urban Youth

WENDY LUTTRELL, JAMES C. HOLLAND, AND JANIE WARD

IT IS THE first day back at school and students greet each other after the long summer break. Racial, gender, and sexual epithets—all spoken without apparent malice—punctuate students' dialogue as they hail each other and renew their friendships. One teacher walking down the hall bristles every time she hears the “n-word” but remains silent. Another teacher calls out, “Hey, watch your mouth.” “Sorry, miss,” one student replies while another says, “Come on, that’s just the way we talk.” The two teachers exchange glances, and one says to the other, “You have to pick your battles.” A new high school year has begun.

What anxieties and emotions are tapped as teachers wrestle with their decisions about what battles to pick in their everyday interactions with youth? Why do teachers intervene with some students but not with others? Why do teachers intervene about some issues and not others, in some spaces, such as classrooms, more than in others, such as corridors? How do teachers struggle with issues of ethical responsibility—responsibility to the community, responsibility to the students, and responsibility to themselves?

These questions and concerns were raised by urban high school teachers participating in a 5-year research and curriculum development project called Project ASSERT (Assessing Strengths and Supporting Effective Resistance in Teaching). The primary goal of the project, which started in 2001, is to develop research-based professional growth materials that engage

teachers in dialogue and reflection about hard-to-talk-about issues, including racial, gender, sexual, and class-based disparities. Another goal is to provide teachers with strategies, support, and a forum for addressing the emotions and anxieties that get evoked as part of their role meeting the educational and developmental needs of their students. Such conversations are essential to the well-being of both students and teachers in urban schools, where increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the student population is juxtaposed with faculties that are disproportionately White and female, with little prospect of significant change in the immediate future.

Others have written about the need for teachers in urban schools to adapt culturally relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1997; Irvine, 1990; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The principles and propositions of culturally relevant pedagogy are based on research findings from studies of African American educators who are effective in helping Black children achieve success in schools (Delpit, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). There is an assumption in this literature that for Black students, the culture of school is often quite different from the culture of home and community. The lack of appropriate adaptation to these cultural discontinuities is said to contribute to student underachievement (Foster, 1997). Culturally relevant pedagogy speaks to the learning environment, teachers' instructional styles, curriculum design, and teacher-student interactions. Jacqueline Irvine (1990, p. xix) refers to "cultural synchronization" as the "correlation between teachers and students" in the "unstated rules and subtleties" of their common or unique cultures. Researchers identify specific teacher characteristics, which relate to cultural synchronization or culturally relevant pedagogy such as holding high expectations for Black students, seeing oneself as a surrogate parent ("othermothering"), possessing a willingness to augment the curriculum with content that is specific to the history and contemporary realities of Blacks and other People of Color (Ladson-Billings, 1994). These teachers believe it is their responsibility to advocate on behalf of students and challenge the status quo "by questioning and defying rules and regulations that are not in the best interest of their students" (Irvine, 2003, p. 56). Finally, educators who adopt culturally relevant pedagogies use personal and cultural knowledge and life experiences to inspire, motivate, and teach Black children how to navigate racism, prejudice, and bias.

We take the view that for teachers to adapt culturally relevant pedagogies they need to develop an insider's view of the school and community context, including a fuller awareness of youth cultural practices. Developing an insider's view is difficult and begins with identifying one's own take-for-granted (taken for granted or ingrained or intrinsic) assumptions and anxieties about life in the urban communi-

ties in which teachers teach. Finding a way to tap into these assumptions and anxieties through teacher discourse is what guided our research process.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The Project generated a wide array of teacher talk—drawn from ongoing teacher focus-group discussions, individual interviews with teachers about their career histories, and naturally occurring discourse gathered in classrooms and routine teacher meetings—used to examine the complicated dynamics of teaching across social, and explicitly, racial divides. In the first 2 years of the Project, co-principal investigators Wendy Luttrell and Janie Ward¹ convened a series of after-school focus groups with Boston-area teachers to investigate their perspectives about the pressing issues affecting the learning and development of urban youth. Transcripts from these monthly meetings, sustained over a 2-year period, form the primary basis of the Project's work in developing professional growth materials. We also gathered data from students including focus groups and individual interviews. Teachers from three schools participated in Project ASSERT discussions: two high schools and one public elementary school. At each of the high schools, a group of teachers met monthly for 2 years, and at the elementary school, the entire faculty met monthly for 1 year.

We were not surprised by the wide range of concerns teachers expressed about the influence of youth culture on school climate. The teachers spoke about concerns ranging from inappropriate language use to "improper" styles of dress (such as "do-rags") to some of the "X-rated," sexually provocative mannerisms that characterize male-female interactions at their schools. In offering examples of issues and situations when they did or did not intervene with students concerning language and dress, teachers spoke about their conflicts negotiating relationships in which dimensions of care and authority contend with aspects of racial and gendered identities for teachers and students alike. In some cases, teachers' sense of care and concern prompted interventions intended to build and strengthen relationships with their students, but, in other cases, the exercise of authority raised issues of power and control, and

¹Our cross-racial collaboration (Wendy is White and Janie is African American) has greatly benefited this research and curriculum development project as we have wrestled with our own reactions and assumptions throughout the project. Similarly, the Project ASSERT research team has been racially and ethnically diverse, which has provided continual opportunity for dialogue, disagreement, and, at times, avoidance of racial awareness and conflict.

these issues were especially charged when there were racial and/or gender differences between teachers and their students.

In analyzing our data, we have identified certain topics that serve as exemplars of the conflicts teachers wrestle with and that embody crucial aspects of teachers' exercise of care and authority in ways that may not always benefit their students. We offer two exemplars as starting points that allow us to surface teachers' assumptions and anxieties, and to question what teachers know about aspects of youth culture. These exemplars also focus attention on issues of teachers' ethical responsibilities for creating and maintaining a school community that supports the educational and social development of urban students. In discussing each exemplar, it is not our intention to determine the individual thoughts, understandings, or intentions of any particular teacher or student. Rather, we focus on the ways that certain discourses and patterns of interaction support or thwart a sense of connection and recognition between students and teachers, especially when symbols of youth culture are involved.

CASE VIGNETTE 1: THE "N-WORD"

"The Kids Use It Constantly"

Many teachers in the Project described the n-word as ubiquitous, a "filler word" that students used to "call everybody." As one White female teacher explained, "The kids use it constantly. It's like they almost didn't know each other's names, you know. And as a term of endearment, it's sort of strange because now and then they'd call me, they'd say, 'You're my nigger.'" Another White teacher agreed that use of the n-word is widespread among her students and added, "You know, for me, 'nigger' is not an acceptable word in the [class]room, and the kids use that with each other all the time. And they say to me, 'But you know, that's just how we talk to each other.'"

We saw wide variation in the ways teachers responded to students' use of the n-word. Many teachers, whether White, African American, or Latino, made a distinction between what kinds of language and behavior they tolerate from students in classrooms and what they tolerate in hallways. Both teachers and students acknowledged a difference between classroom culture, which is regulated more actively by teachers and their values, and hallway culture, which they saw as influenced more by students.

In general, the teachers who worked in the smallest school community in which we conducted the research were more likely to intervene in hallway spaces when they heard racial and sexual epithets. As one White female teacher noted, "A lot of teachers say something in the halls. I mean, I don't make a big deal of it, but just let the student know I heard that and I don't like it."

Another White teacher added that, for the most part, students respond well to this strategy: "They look honestly embarrassed, too, if they've said something that's really offensive and they see you there. They'll be like, '[gasp] I said that in front of a teacher?'" In this small high school setting, some teachers viewed the issue as part of

normal adolescent development. As one White teacher reflected, "They're very, very different by the time they're seniors than when they were freshmen. A change does happen. You don't hear that kind of stuff. They become much more gentle with each other." An African American male teacher agreed, but added, "I can see the kids mature, and that is a point that we have to grant . . . but again, we need to reinforce that it is not correct. I mean, 'nigger' is a very insulting word."

There was a different sentiment among teachers who worked in the large, comprehensive high school. These teachers were more reluctant to confront students they didn't know personally. Deciding when to pick their battles depended on their relationships with students and the support they could garner from administration. Explaining that she is more likely to intervene if she knows the student involved, this White female teacher explained: "If I hear an inappropriate swear word or cussing I will always call the student's name. I don't get into a big fight about it. I just say, 'So-and-so . . .' [Then, the student replies,] 'Sorry, Miss.' And then it stops there." Another White female teacher described her experience as follows: "I used to intervene, and then I got so many threats and I got called so many names and I got no backup and I said, 'okay.' . . . And now it is hands off. But if it happens *in my classroom*, it's a little different" (italics added).

"My Classroom Is My Home"

In both high schools, teachers experienced the use of the n-word in their classrooms as problematic; yet interestingly, this was not an issue they had uniform strategies for dealing with nor one they had spoken about as a whole faculty. In reflecting on their practice, teachers often claimed classroom space as their own, associating it in particular with their "home," a place in which their position and authority were more secure. This association especially occurred when teachers justified their enforcement of classroom rules regarding the n-word. One White teacher explained her approach as follows: "[I tell my students,] 'I don't use that word, so I don't want it used here, okay? . . . Hey, you don't go to your grandma's house and call her a nigger. So don't come into my house and call somebody in here a 'nigger.' . . . Kids can't say 'nigger' in my room. They have to say 'neighbor.'"

In a pattern we noted in a number of our conversations with middle-aged, White, female teachers, this teacher views "home" as a female domain, where women ("your grandma and I") hold authority. She also claims her status as a White authority figure and her ability to serve as a role model in the socialization of predominantly African American children through her maternal (and therefore gendered) role.

"Passing Judgment"

Whether in hallways or classrooms, however, White teachers (who were mostly female, as reflects the urban high school teaching population) expressed more anxiety and self-doubt about interrupting the use of the n-word than did African American and Latino participants. Given that the teachers who volunteered to participate in this project were those who had previous experience with or were committed to discussing

diversity issues in their teaching, we found it especially striking that there was such internal conflict and uncertainty among the White teachers participating in the project.²

Questions about their position and authority hung in the air as White teachers exchanged their perspectives, struggles, and strategies. Although African American and Latino teachers often intervened without hesitation when students used the n-word, White teachers reported interventions that were much more selective and context dependent. One White female teacher summed up her concerns about how to discuss the n-word with her predominantly African American students as follows: "How much do I really know about this thing? Am I equipped to be someone who can give a [Black] child wisdom about this?"

Like the White teachers quoted earlier who believe that the n-word holds different meaning for teachers than for their students, the following two White teachers expressed concern about unfairly "judging" kids who use the n-word. This White female teacher echoed the belief that her classroom was her "home," but she wondered aloud about how "hard a line" she should take with her students and wrestled with her place and the potential impact of her actions: "This classroom is like my home and I spend a lot of time here. I just don't want to hear these words. Actually I don't want to hear them at home either. But maybe what I'm trying to say is, yes, I would like them to have a more respectful way of dealing with each other. But then, I'm not quite sure. Am I passing . . . (long pause)—maybe the judgment I pass is not entirely useful."

This teacher was not alone in questioning her impact or her moral authority as her students "step out of her classroom" (i.e., her sphere of influence). Still another White female teacher grasped for words as she described her conflict: "I don't correct students. I mean, I don't call students on that when I hear them calling each other 'nigger,' depending on the intention certainly. But I have not heard it used maliciously in the school, and I'm sort of in conflict with this. . . . It's so complicated. I feel like it's not my . . . (long pause)—I don't feel like I'm in a position to tell them whether or not they can use that word."

Concerns about how to exercise one's authority as a White teacher in racially, ethnically diverse settings and how to earn the trust of students with whom one does not share the same background were expressed by the younger and less experienced teachers with whom we spoke. That White teachers might worry about correcting or "passing judgment" on students' language use (whether Black dialect or the n-word) is part of a larger debate about the role of culture and power in education. Lisa Delpit (1995), author of the now classic book *Other People's Children*, offers one explanation for the reluctance of White teachers to intervene in certain situations. She notes that White, middle-class, progressive pedagogical views don't always help students understand what she calls "codes of power," the vocabulary and language skills that are necessary for academic success. When students use language in contexts that can limit their opportunities for development, Delpit (1995) would regard judi-

²There was obvious selection bias in the sample of teachers who volunteered to meet and talk about their concerns, and we do not mean to suggest that the views of the participating teachers represent all White teachers or all teachers of color. Rather, we were interested in hearing from those teachers who identified themselves as "urban educators" and who were concerned about the challenges of teaching racially diverse, urban students.

icious and respectful intervention not as an option, but as a responsibility and an obligation if teachers are to serve their students of color in the most effective way.

Our project suggests, however, that White teachers' discomfort has other sources as well, including feeling a lack of support from administration, a sense of alienation from kids they do not know, and anxieties about not feeling "equipped to provide a [Black] child wisdom about [contested cultural issues]." Interestingly, to exercise their authority about this issue, teachers claimed the classroom space as their "own"—either a "home" where as women they feel comfortable claiming authority or as a professional space in which they are the boss. Teachers spoke of wanting to avoid being seen as exercising their authority as a "White" adult. One teacher, who expressed great confidence in her ability as a math teacher, still worried that her race played a dominant role in her teaching practice. She said, "As a White educator, . . . I'm reinforcing the concept of White education by my appearance. Now that doesn't mean my actions can't say something else, but yet my appearance immediately, you know, speaks for itself."

During one teacher conversation, the group focused on an incident in which a Black student complained of mistreatment by a White teacher who constantly corrected his English in class. One White female teacher reflected on her strategies for dealing with this situation. She added a powerful shift in point of view at the end, reflecting the centrality of race in making these judgment calls: "If a kid was telling a story in class . . . I would not correct his grammar in class. But if I saw there were chronic issues—and I could see it in speech and see it in writing, I would say after class, 'Do you know, do you realize that you do that? Let's talk about that construction.' But I would not stop him in class. If I were a Black teacher, would I do that [wait until after class]? Probably not."

Although it is clear that there are many White teachers who are highly successful in working with students of color, conversations about race remain difficult and frequently go unspoken. It is essential to acknowledge the role that race plays in the strategies teachers use to impact the lives and learning of their students and to openly address any conflicts or discomfort teachers experience. It is in this spirit that we hear this White teacher imagining what she might do as a Black teacher. Skeptics might ask whether this sort of racial awareness improves her teaching practice. Perhaps not directly. But we suggest that, at the very least, opening up rather than avoiding discussions about the role race plays is a crucial starting place in teacher education and professional development.

CASE VIGNETTE 2: THE SEARCH FOR RESPECT

"Oh My God, They Changed"

The first exemplar raises questions about teachers' authority and responsibility in the school building, yet even in the building we have found that teachers sometimes perceive their roles differently depending on the location—classroom or corridor—and the socializing influences that operate in them. In a related example, a teacher describes her experience with students on a school field trip, where the shift in location from the school to the subway train serves as a catalyst for dissonant perceptions in the teacher and reinforces the differences between some students and their

teachers in their interpretation of symbolic behaviors, in this case, student dress and appearance.

Arlene, an experienced White teacher, related the following incident. Her tone and demeanor in presenting this narrative combined puzzlement, shock, and even disbelief:

I have a decent relationship with most of the kids, and we were on a class trip, and we were walking out of the building, and the kids were laughing, it was a fun thing, going to the T. We're good, we were like 80 or 90 kids and adults. We get on the T, before the kids even hit the T, we're going down the stairs, all of a sudden, the whole dress or the climate of the students, the male students in particular, hoods went up . . . and I'm looking around and I'm just saying, oh, my God they changed from these laughing, kidding-around kids to these big black hoods, do-rags whatever, side by side muscle type guys on the T, and I went over and I said, "What are you guys doing?" I said, "You look like a bunch of thugs, take the hoods off, take the do-rags off, let the ladies sit down." And they were right by the door, so everybody had to push by. We told them to move, move, move, and they're standing like a blockade, and one of them said to me, "This is respect. They're not near us for respect." I said, "No, they're not near you for fear." I said, "They're afraid of you," but they took this whole thing, and they thought everybody moving away from them was a sign of respect, like they were respecting who they were, and they didn't understand that people were afraid of them. That they thought they were thugs. There were women, and even men were afraid to sit near these kids, and they're nice kids, right?

Arlene's narrative raises several crucial issues about (a) teachers' assumptions and anxieties; (b) how teacher and student identities are situated in particular contexts; and (c) how available discourses, both literal and symbolic, shape and constrain options for interaction and understanding between teachers and students. Arlene offered this particular story as part of a larger teacher conversation about a perceived lack of respect and civility among students and between teachers and students, attributed, in part, to oppositional youth culture. From the way that she tells the story, we can infer that Arlene does not observe these particular student styles—hoods worn up, do-rags, "muscle type" stances—at school, or if she does, she feels comfortable asking students to change. On the field trip, she expects the students to behave as if they are still at school, and she is surprised when they do not.

At the conclusion of this narrative, Arlene looked at her colleagues and added, "and they're nice kids, right?" This question portrays starkly the contrast between the "nice kids" that Arlene knows on the basis of her interactions with them at school and the hooded strangers that she encounters on the train. Both Arlene and the students agree that the change in appearance is meaningful—yet they disagree as to the meaning. From Arlene's story, we can infer that the boys' behavior is, from their point of view, a response to the change in the environment, not a change in

their identities. The change in their appearance, however, disrupts the connection between Arlene and them, with the consequence that they become unrecognizable to her. She looks to her colleagues to affirm her knowledge of the boys themselves, despite the uncomfortable and contradictory feelings that their changed appearance has evoked. Marla, an African American teacher responds that these boys are, "Very nice, wonderful."

After relating how the very same boys used their knowledge of the subway system to keep her from getting lost, thus affirming their status as "nice," Arlene adds, "But on the T, if I walked in and saw them I'd be afraid to sit near them if I didn't know them. And they thought that was respect. They think this dress and this hood and this persona is how they gain respect, and they don't realize the negativity it has attached to everybody else who was boarding that T or looking at them." Arlene can see only the "negativity it has attached to everybody else," and she generalizes this response. It is not only the symbolic meaning of the dress and behavior that is contested here but also *the meaning of respect itself*.

Concern about the lack of respect in schools—between students, between students and teachers, and between teachers and administrators—was a familiar refrain across all the teacher discussions, a situation often called a "crisis of respect." The notion of a crisis of respect is not new. For 30 years, educators have been decrying a respect deficit, especially in urban schools. The crisis has been attributed to (a) structural factors, such as overcrowding or inadequate supervision; to uncaring or poorly trained teachers (Noguera, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999); (b) increased concentration and marginalization of low-income students; (c) a lack of social trust and the breakdown of the moral contract (Sizer & Sizer, 1999); and (d) oppositional youth culture or what Annette Hemmings (2003) calls a "youth culture of hostility born of poverty, police brutality, and violence." Although the teachers with whom we spoke agreed about the need for more respect, there was no agreement about the meaning of respect and the ways that it could be demonstrated, as this example shows.

In the discussion that followed Arlene's narrative, Lawrence, an African American teacher, suggests that the students' behavior could have a legitimate purpose, under certain circumstances: "They want their space respected for one thing, they don't want anyone invading their space, they don't want anyone approaching them, searching them, robbing them. They don't want to appear vulnerable. Those are the survival things they have to go through."

In this instance, Lawrence offers a perspective that frames the students' behavior in terms of a wider social landscape, one that recognizes that different situations elicit different behaviors. In linking the students' behavior to his own experience, as he also does, he adds a social-historical context to this behavior, with recognition that what is happening is linked to the legacy of African American men in American culture. Lawrence's perspective affirms the highly contextual nature of relations of respect, and that for many youth growing up in impoverished urban areas respect is a valued social commodity worth fighting for. To ensure respect, many students "front" types of masculinity and femininity that they deem necessary for survival (Dance, 2002). Students "need respect to garner the social status, esteem, and protection necessary to give them some sense of control over their lives" (Hemmings, 2003, p. 426).

By contextualizing the students' behavior in this way, Lawrence also reintroduces the issues of care and authority that underlie some of the teachers' conflicts. From the point of view of authority, teachers can exercise their power to regulate the language, style, and behavior of students in accordance with certain community standards. From the point of view of care, these same teachers can recognize their students' need to negotiate a wider world of symbolic behavior in ways that can reduce their vulnerability. Taking this wider perspective, what Rosalie Rolon-Dow (2005) might call an exercise of "critical care," Arlene might be able to view these changes in the boys' appearance without the frightening shock of the impression that "they" have "changed." Our research suggests that efforts to cultivate respect in school communities require more attention being paid to how teachers grapple with their assumptions and anxieties that are inevitably mobilized as part of their own understanding and place in these battles for respect.

CULTURAL INQUIRY AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Peter Murrell (2001), an experienced teacher educator, articulates the need for what he calls "cultural inquiry" as the basis of creating and sustaining a sense of community in a school. Our approach to cultural inquiry draws on Murrell's (2001) concept of community as composed of both individuals and groups that occupy multiple positions in relation to one another in terms of power, cultural knowledge, and social awareness. We use the concept as a means to engage teachers in identifying their own discourses and to examine the frames they are using to understand and interact with each other and with students. Engaging such a process as central to a school's mission makes it possible, Murrell says, for teachers to "know the depth and texture of the social landscape of the young people who go to their school" (personal communication, May 6, 2005). We suggest that the exemplars discussed and analyzed here allow for such a cultural inquiry—an exploration of teachers' complex and situated emotional responses to contested aspects of youth culture.

The goal of the conversations elicited by these exemplars is not to determine what a teacher should or should not do in a particular situation but rather to bring to the surface some of the unspoken dimensions of the relationships between teachers and students, and among teachers themselves. Rich Milner, also a teacher educator, has outlined the complexity of preparing teachers to meet the needs of diverse populations of urban students: "It isn't a bag of tricks, it isn't a skill you learn. It's about, every day, going in there and engaging in this level of inquiry, engaging in this level of research, so that you are able to go to the next level, every day" (personal communication, May 6, 2005). Milner (2003) advocates for the importance of teacher reflection about race *in specific*

cultural contexts, and as something that requires practice for both White teachers and teachers of color. His perspective is confirmed by our research and we agree that there is no recipe or set of instructions that will neatly resolve the conflicts and tensions inherent in working with urban adolescents. Instead, we advocate a form of cultural inquiry that rests on teacher reflection and dialogue, and that incorporates an understanding of the positionality of both students and teachers, the role of cultural symbols in reproducing social inequities, and the historical context of racially and ethically charged social interactions. Through such dialogues, a school can begin to create a legacy of practice that connects teachers with one another and with their students and that establishes a link between the past, present, and future that will enhance the experiences of urban adolescents at school. So, in the case of the n-word, the entry point of discussion is to tap the emotional immediacy of this issue (for both students and teachers) and to demonstrate the wide range of perspectives that individuals bring to bear. Before simple recommendations banning certain language at school, there is important knowledge to be gained, including engaging teachers and students in the complex distinctions drawn between the historical violence-stained use of "nigger" and the contemporary appropriation and empowerment that may be embodied in the use of the similar sounding "niggah." The same can be said about issues regarding youth hairstyle, dress, and deportment about which symbolic meanings teachers and students could explore together rather than focusing only on styles and mannerisms that divide.

WHAT TEACHERS KNOW

As education scholar Linda Darling-Hammond (1990) once wrote, "Teachers teach from what they know. If policymakers want to change teaching, they must pay attention to teacher knowledge [and make] investments in those things that allow teachers to grapple with transformation of ideas and behaviors" (p. 339).

We believe that the two exemplars explored in this chapter highlight teacher knowledge in its broadest sense, including what teachers know about themselves, their strengths, weaknesses, worries, and dilemmas in working with diverse urban youth. To the already clear body of culturally relevant curricula (Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995), we suggest that teachers participate in a cultural inquiry that allows for:

- Exploring the meaning of youth cultural practices (including language) and expressions of cultural agency (including dress, style,

and participation in cultural/community organizations) so that teachers can learn more about students' everyday lives and struggles

- Surfacing, rather than covering over, teachers' conflicts that emerge in daily interactions and the role that teachers' multiple identities, positionality, and emotions play in the decisions teachers make and strategies they use
- Rethinking the meaning and exercise of care, authority, and respect, paying attention to when, where, and how teachers claim (or abdicate) authority in their advocacy on behalf of urban students' social and academic development

To the extent that African American and Latino teachers hold a firmer sense of comfort or entitlement to exercise their authority to influence the socialization of racially diverse youth (as did the teachers in our research), this aspect of their cultural knowledge benefits their students. White teachers who do not share this comfort must be supported in gaining cultural knowledge, and sorting out their conflicts with the support of colleagues so that they can arrive at a place where they feel, in the words of one White teacher in these conversations, "empowered to influence students' lives."

But for all teachers, we wonder what it would take to redefine the source of their authority so that they would be encouraged to exercise it in new ways, moving from "This is me and my space, and you will do what I say," to "This is how we are going to create a respectful, cross-racial community, and we both have a stake in—and share responsibility for—doing so."

REFERENCES

- Dance, J. L. (2002). *Tough fronts: The impact of street culture on schooling*. New York: Routledge.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1990). Instructional policy into practice: The power of the bottom over the top. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12, 339–348.
- Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Foster, M. (1997). *Black teachers on teaching*. New York: New Press.
- Hemmings, A. (2003). Fighting for respect in urban high schools. *Teachers College Record*, 105, 416–437.
- Irvine, J. J. (1990). *Black students and school failure: Policies, practices and prescriptions*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Irvine, J. J. (2002). *In search of wholeness: African American teachers and their culturally specific classroom practices*. New York: Palgrave.

- Irvine, J. J. (2003). *Educating teachers for diversity: Seeing with a cultural eye*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of Black children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, 465–491.
- Milner, H. R. (2003). Teacher reflection and race in cultural contexts: History, meanings, and methods in teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 42, 173–180.
- Murrell, P. C. (2001). *The community teacher: A new framework for effective urban teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noguera, P. A. (1995). Preventing and producing violence: A critical analysis of responses to school violence. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, 189–212.
- Rolon-Dow, R. (2005). Critical care: A color(full) analysis of care narratives in the schooling experiences of Puerto Rican girls. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42, 77–111.
- Sizer, T., & Sizer, N. (1999). *The students are watching: Schools and the moral contract*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S. Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). *Educating culturally responsive teachers: A coherent approach*. New York: State University of New York Press.