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- CALL FOR CHAPTER PROPOSALS, Race Lessons: Using Inquiry to Teach About Race in Social Studies

Researching Race in Education: Policy, Practice and Qualitative Research
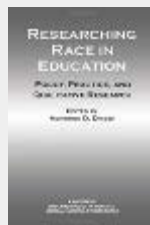
reviewed by Kindel Nash & Leah Panther — October 22, 2015

Title: Researching Race in Education: Policy, Practice and Qualitative Research
Author(s): Adrienne D. Dixson
Publisher: Information Age Publishing, Charlotte
ISBN: 1623966760, **Pages:** 274, **Year:** 2014
Search for book at Amazon.com

Claiming that talking about race causes more racism is akin to suggesting that it would not rain if people would just stop carrying umbrellas. Conversely, just as umbrellas protect against the rain, talking about race can serve as a defense against racial microaggressions and onslaughts. *Researching Race in Education: Policy, Practice, and Qualitative Research* provides a 'storm covering' that scholars can gather under as we ride out another racial storm (p. vii).

Even as we are struck by the power of Ladson-Billings' metaphor in the forward of this book, we disagree that it merely provides a 'storm covering' for scholars. There is room for others: for graduate students, teachers, activists, the dissatisfied, and those who know there are chapters missing from their course texts and books missing from their shelves. *Researching Race in Education* does not dazzle with its cover. Instead, it speaks firmly with its softness, a voice calling readers to subvert the permanence of racism which we feel ever so deeply now in the wake of rampant police brutality towards Black and Brown bodies, schools more segregated than after the Reconstruction Era, and a teaching force still in dire need of teachers of color.

Editor and critical race scholar Adrienne D. Dixson gathers the most prestigious voices in critical race studies, education, and qualitative research for this volume in the *Educational Policy in Practice: Critical Cultural Studies* series. In describing the criteria for inclusion in this volume, Dixson lists a focus on ethnographic research, race as a central issue within educational research and policy, and foregrounding methodological issues. The book's eleven chapters are divided into two sections: a historical overview of race research in education and a study of race,

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educational policy, and practice across various contexts.

The first section features three chapters, with Kristen Buras' "From Carter G. Woodson to Critical Race Curriculum Studies: Field notes on Confronting the History of White Supremacy in Educational Knowledge and Practice," acting as an apt introduction to newcomers and a refreshing review to those already familiar with the field of critical race studies in educational research. Buras' poignant writing demonstrates the potential of critical ethnographic research as it informs the reader of the oft-neglected counter-narratives of major players in curriculum theory, research, and practice. Recognizing that critical race praxis should be tied to critical race ethnographic methods, Buras "calls for solidarity, not objectification, and the naming and owning of the cultural politics that define all research" (p. 35). This results in researchers whose community-focused research produces effects rather than "pristine knowledge that helps no one, or worse, harms many" (p. 62).

The authors in the second section of the book pick up the challenge to see the many worlds of researching race in education through the facets of a cracked stained glass window; while the results may be poetic, they are hardly pristine. Instead, they are the candid, vulnerable, and complicated results of qualitative researchers who are making the "familiar unfamiliar and the unfamiliar familiar" (p. 17). One of those facets is a foremost responsibility of qualitative, ethnographic research: the responsibility of researchers to their own positionality, to authentic representation, to present research in race and education that will defy the status quo.

Chapters Seven, Eight, and Ten are acutely sensitive to these responsibilities as they awaken readers to questions about how a researcher's racial position interfaces with her or his research. Both Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner's "(Re)Searching Whiteness: New Considerations in Studying and Researching Whiteness" and Anthony L. Brown's "Complex Orientations of Racial Insider Status: A Case of an African American Male Researcher" provide a nuanced look at the raced and racist realities and misconceptions that can emerge during research; and it matters. Fasching-Varner writes:

> A part of our research should include us as the object of study, examination, and interrogation whenever we engage in our work . . . my experiences as a researcher suggest we have the ability to go deeper and have meaningful contributions when we move beyond declaring what we believe to be our researcher subjectivity and positionality, to actually placing ourselves inside the focus of study. (pp. 163–164)

As Fasching-Varner calls other White

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researchers to discuss race and bring it to the surface, A. Brown describes how his own experiences as a Black male made his racial insider status possible. Keffrelyn Brown continues these reflections on her ethnographic research as a Black woman researching White teachers. She narrates both opportunities and struggles that come with these relationships, admitting that "there is no way to ignore that race does operate in the interactions . . . these interactions can be exacerbated when researchers and participants share different race positionalities" (p. 230). Thandeka K. Chapman reinforces this idea in her chapter "Teaching Race and Qualitative Research." Her recommendation is that race *must* be included within research courses for future researchers—that more graduates and scholars *must* be invited to take action.

This book begins with a call for talking, but each of its chapters does so much more, showcasing specific research studies, counter-narratives, and qualitative tools that facilitate understanding about enacting justice in and through race work. The book talks about people and ideas that have been missing from our dominant national dialogue, such as the neglected Father of Black Studies, Carter G. Woodson, and how his fight for a voice in education and research continues with resegregated schools, minoritized parents of Black students, and higher education research departments. *Researching Race in Education* talks about critical race theory and qualitative research as lenses to see a history that haunts all of us, making way for qualitative research and critical race research that teaches about this country's racial trauma in order to move towards justice.

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