INTRODUCTION

Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people—they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.

—PAULO FREIRE, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

For the past twenty years, I have worked closely with school leaders. I have done so as a public school teacher, a lead teacher, a central district administrator, and as a professor who trained leaders and conducted research about school leadership. Though my experiences have been diverse, I open this book where my experiences as an educator began—as a middle school science teacher on the East Side of Detroit. It was a fascinating, dynamic experience for my students and for me. I felt love, rage, care, grief, hostility, and even despair in my experiences with mainly Black students and families, as well as Albanians, poor Polish and other Whites who couldn't afford to leave the city, Somalis, Bengali, Yemeni, and recently immigrated Levantine Arabs. Unfortunately, early on, I was socialized into accepting deficit-based understandings about many of these poor and minoritized students. I had little knowledge of the contexts of oppression that my students faced, which included deindustrialization, illicit drug encroachment in their space, mass incarceration, federally sponsored destruction of Black economic centers (such as the "urban renewal" of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley), and even refugee camps and forced migration. Therefore, through my own ignorance, it was easy for me to accept the deficit narratives that my more experienced mentor colleagues passed my way.

When they said to me, for example, that parents "don't show up to school because they don't care about their kids' education," I entertained the unfair "deficit" depiction of the families because only a few showed up for parent-teacher conferences. When colleagues characterized parents as "aggressive" or "apathetic," I swallowed that poison as well. For, when parents did come in, they seemed to be on edge, aggressive, or even oppositional and angry; it was, again, easy for me to accept my colleagues' explanation that "students cut up in class because, well, look at the parents' anger. Look at where they learned it from." So there I was, myself an educated Black man from a socially conscious Black "protest" family, *deciding* to teach in Detroit to help impoverished Black students, and I was guilty as charged: I held and espoused deficit-oriented constructions of Black (and other minoritized) students and I pathologized segments of our communities. Despite my professed love for them, I was complicit in the oppression of my own students and communities of color.

CONTEXT OF DAVISTOWN'S MINORITIZED URBAN YOUTH

I understood some of the daily challenges my students faced, but not much about the historical policies and practices that led to those challenges. I did not yet understand that the curriculum and pedagogy, school structures, programs and activities, and other aspects of schooling were not designed for them. I only later came to realize that all students need culturally responsive leadership and schooling; but minoritized students hardly ever have access to it.[1] This work follows the educational experiences of minoritized students—those who have been historically marginalized in school and society. In this book, I suggest that school leaders can promote schooling that addresses the unique learning *and cultural* needs of students who are Indigenous, Black, Latinx, low-income, refugees, or otherwise minoritized. Throughout this work, I place three bodies of knowledge

into an ongoing conversation: one, I constantly reflect on my own experiences as a public school teacher and administrator; two, I incorporate the extant research and literature available on culturally responsive leadership; and three, I mostly examine data that I have collected in my own research contributions. The research project that I pull from most occurred in Davistown, Michigan (pseudonym)—a midsized, Rust Belt college town—and in a school called Urban Alternative High School (UAHS, a pseudonym).

Primary Research Setting and Methodology

Michigan has some of the most respected teacher training programs in the nation, and has state-level mandates that require equitable schooling. Yet despite well-intentioned educators and policy makers, Black, Brown, and other minoritized students were deeply underserved at the time I was there. In this book I share rich data from the UAHS principal, Joe—an African American school leader who had worked in schools for over forty years. I also explore student experiences by following students in and out of classrooms, throughout the school, and into their homes and communities. During the time of this research, I also lived in one of several predominantly minoritized communities in the Detroit area. While I also include data from other districts in Michigan and from districts around San Antonio, Texas, my research in Greater Detroit is what drives this book.

By examining data from a two-year ethnographic study of UAHS principal Joe, I investigate and theorize about the central role of culturally responsive school leadership in school reform. I employed an array of ethnographic research activities: extensive field notes with dense descriptions; interviews and member checking; analysis of available school, district, and county data; regular visits to school and community-based sites; and an analysis of reports and media that have highlighted the research site. To capture this unique expression of culturally responsive school leadership, I began

by visiting the school one or two times per week and increased my presence over time. This approach enabled me to build rapport with those in the school, and as the participants' comfort increased, so did my presence. As the purpose of ethnographic research is to understand the cultural context and discursive statements and actions in the research setting, these research methods allowed me to understand cultural nuances and the relationship between the school and the surrounding community.

Davistown is a short drive from Detroit, which Secretary of Education Arne Duncan referred to in 2011 as the "ground zero of education." There is a long-running tendency of educational reformers and government officials to choose the starkest, most troubling, and most alarming language when discussing minoritized communities, especially Black spaces like Detroit. This is true because of historical understandings of Black people as subhuman, inherently troubled, dangerous when independent or noncompliant, and in need of being either saved or controlled. Detroit has been all of that to Michiganders, and even the nation, as Secretary Duncan demonstrated.

But his comment left much open for interpretation; was Detroit's educational condition the fault of these Black families, who were in some way deficient, or was it the result of decades of anti-Black sentiment and federal/state policy that eviscerated and strangled Black Detroit? According to historian Thomas Sugrue and other scholars, it was the latter.[2] Detroiters experienced decades of deindustrialization and middle-class job loss, and even when job creation did happen, it was likely in low-wage industries such as retail and restaurants; people could no longer support their families on one—or even two—incomes. As the middle-class automotive jobs moved out of Detroit, first to suburbia or rural areas, and then out of the country, poverty and joblessness steadily took root. Deindustrialization, however, would not be the only systemically oppressive force experienced by poor Black and Latinx Detroiters.

And on a final researcher note: on occasion throughout this text, I recount my positionalities, experiences, biases, feelings, and growth. It has often been stated that ethnography is cultural work, or the work of doing culture. But so many age-old questions complicate this understanding of ethnographic work: Whose culture can be seen? By whom? If it is seen, who can represent it? What is not seen even though we are all looking and experiencing? Who can represent that culture? Why did we want to see that culture in the first place? And are we contributing to oppression of these cultures by potentially exoticizing them to cultural outsiders? I have no good answer for most of these questions, and in this book, I do not take them up. But I am sensitive to and reflect on such questions throughout the text.

But it is also the case that ethnography can be painful and disruptive. This is especially true for those doing ethnography around the lives of oppressed and marginalized peoples. It is painful because you can often do little to stop the oppression; it is painful when you are asked to help, but are not in a position to do so; it is painful when you know that much of the minoritization you see will be reproduced. And it is painful when we, as researchers, swing heavily (and stay) into a "space of critique." I hold the position that it is useful for some of us scholars to issue ongoing critiques; and likewise, that it is useful for some of us to use the critique to move into culturally responsive practices to improve the lives of students in school. This all speaks to the process of ethnography, the impact it has on the researcher, and the disruption it can have for the participants in the study.

Yet, I find solace in some of the transformations that I witnessed in this study. For many years, the conversations around "outcomes" or "results" tended to focus on test score data of minoritized students. In more recent years, others have pushed back against such a narrow focus on test scores, and have argued that measures such as classroom grades and academic progress over the year should also be considered when evaluating the progress of districts. In each chapter

of this book, I share descriptions of the outcomes of this study, and every one is different for each of the content chapters (chapters 2–5). Chapter 2 indicates one of the possible results of critically self-reflective leadership: how the various stakeholders begin to question their personal and organizational roles in oppression. This, in turn, enables students and families to see leaders as fair. The typical suspicion that some minoritized students have toward school was not present, and they (UAHS students) *would* be able to learn from them (UAHS teachers).

In chapter 3, the data provides details of how minoritized students can be in school and not feel marginalized or criminalized. So the "outcomes" of CRSL in this chapter demonstrate how the children expressed that they felt a sense of belonging in school. In chapter 4, I affirm how student identities associated with minoritized communities were accepted in school, and in particular how these identities were humanized and honored despite the coterminous promotion of academic student identities in school. The result was that students expressed both comfort and a sense of belonging in school, despite their historical feelings of marginalization in school. Another outcome of this process of teachers' willingness to honor multiple student identities was that students, even while retaining their Indigenous identities, began to craft long-term academic goals for themselves—something they had not previously done. The final chapter in which I report outcomes is chapter 5, wherein I describe ways that school leaders promote culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. The results in this chapter are reported out in a couple of different ways—first, in the ways that teachers say they can relate their classroom pedagogies to students' lives, and second, in how students now say they enjoy and can identify with the content in and out of UAHS classrooms. I report in the final chapter that this all led to a model of schooling that was honored and, to an extent, even led with community (histories, experiences, perceptions) at its core.

Is Oppression Automatically Reproduced?

For culturally responsive school leaders, it is absolutely necessary to understand contexts and histories of the students and their communities. Oppressive structures and practices in schools will remain in place unless (a) the status quo is challenged and (b) educators and leaders know *how* to properly push against oppression. In Detroit, the types of oppression were so ubiquitous and diverse that it is really hard to assess the depth of the impact; from the late 1800s until the late 1900s, these included racially oppressive occupational, housing, educational, and judicial policies. Thus, in addition to deindustrialization, practices like police brutality, urban disinvestment, and highway expansion onto Black economic areas all devastated Black areas of the city. But what would later happen to Black communities would make deindustrialization and these earlier forms of oppression seem smaller in scale. The federally supported policies in the 1980s and later that contributed to the influx of crack cocaine would come to decimate minoritized (particularly Black and Latinx) communities in ways not witnessed since Reconstruction; in particular, an explosion in the incarceration rates—and the permanent stigma that ex-convicts would bear.

But unlike slavery, Black lynching, and Jim Crow policies—where anti-Black oppression was still justified by but embarrassing for Whites—now these Blacks were understood to be deserving of the oppression they faced because of their own behaviors. Or worse, they were blamed for creating their own oppressive structures: they were imprisoned because they broke laws; their schools were under-resourced because they mismanaged money; the jobs left the city because it was unsafe due to Black crime; and the murder rate was so high because unruly Blacks were killing themselves. The prison-industrial complex emerged from this context, which was a policy of containment of subhuman minorities consistent with earlier dispossession of Indigenous native lands, Native American schools,

chattel slavery, Jim Crow policy, racialized policing practices, mass incarceration, and racial housing policy, among other historical oppressive practices.

The role of federal and state policy in producing these outcomes for Black communities is rarely discussed. That the CIA facilitated the entrance and distribution of massive amounts of crack cocaine and heroin into Black and Latinx communities to quell the rage and protest exemplified by oppressed Blacks across the United States was not considered.[3] Yet, many state and federal policies led to high crime and poverty rates. Racist housing policies and high residential mobility within minoritized communities, oppression and liminalizing of Indigenous space/bodies, deindustrialization, drug addiction, violent crime, and the prison-industrial complex all permanently changed minoritized communities. The personal experiences that have followed such policies have been devastating for many minoritized families. For example, I personally know seventeen boys and men—all Black males, including four cousins—who were murdered in Southeast Michigan; it is mind-boggling that literally hundreds of thousands of other Black and Latinx men have been murdered since the mid-1980s. Such discussions must be brought into schools as you begin to learn what it means to be a culturally responsive school leader.

Connecting Context to School Leadership

What exactly does any of this context have to do with education or school leadership? Communities have collective histories, experiences, and memories, and therefore have a unique way of viewing the world, and school. When my teacher colleagues in Detroit offered deficit descriptions of students and communities, I was egregiously unaware of any of the historical processes that constructed the communities in which their children lived. Unfortunately, such uninformed views not only allowed us to blame Black families for failing schools and community underdevelopment, but also signaled a lack

of historical awareness of the communities served—something necessary for culturally responsive schooling. Most frightening, though, is that it allowed us to dehistoricize the oppression of the community, and therefore to continue the erasure of the community's histories and positionalities in the school. We were blinded to the various ways we contributed to the oppression of the children we claimed to serve. This all suggests that oppression—here, meaning the ways in which students are marginalized in school—will be automatically reproduced unless there are intentional efforts to confront the oppressive structures in society and schooling. Indeed, I acknowledge that there is no single story. Many other minoritized communities also have similar histories of oppression, and even within Detroit, the narratives are many.

LEADERSHIP + COMMUNITY + CULTURE?

Culturally responsive school leaders have a role in the communities they serve. The Western school leadership model in which principals remain in the school and have identities as individual administrators aligned to schools is starkly different from how many minoritized leaders enact school leadership. For example, Murakami and colleagues found that Latinx school principals connected their leadership to the community-based experiences of students and their parents.[4] For Indigenous leaders from Yukon lands in Canada, storytelling is an integral part of school leadership and serves to connect schools and local communities. And Siddle Walker's historical analysis of the relationship between a community and a segregated Black school in the South from 1933 to 1969 suggests that "the parents depended on the school's expertise, guidance, and academic vision, and the school depended on the parents' financial contributions, advocacy, and home-front support."[5] Her historical analysis of early Black schooling challenges current understandings of parental

involvement; the parents in her study were involved in the school in culturally specific ways. For example, while parents may not have been engaged in school in ways that many school leaders would recognize, they collectively served as the economic backbone of the school and advocated for causes that improved communities and schools. These historical expressions of Black school-community relationships allow for the following definition of school and community relations: collaborations between school and community stakeholders that benefit school, community, and student performance.

Likewise, according to Morris, early Black principals viewed their "own role as one that extends beyond the boundaries of the school."[6] Both Morris's and Siddle Walker's collective research shows Black principals who were as visible, active, and trusted as other Black community leaders such as pastors, political figures, or organizational heads.[7] These principals also viewed themselves as the "bridge" between themselves and the broader White community and as advocates for *community-based* causes. In her historical analysis, Tillman suggests that "the Black principal represented the Black community; [and] was regarded as the authority on educational, social and economic issues."[8]

Can Principals Be Community Leaders?

When addressing the question of *how* school leaders become community leaders, historical analyses suggest that for early Black principals, *advocating for community causes* was integral to community leadership. This entailed becoming heavily involved not only in school-based priorities, but also in community causes such as civil rights issues. According to Gold and colleagues, contemporary principal advocacy and organizing can actually lead to substantive and sustainable school reform.[9] Therefore, consideration of *principal advocacy* allows us to unpack the ways in which school leaders can include commu-

nity issues (as opposed to merely school issues) as part of school-community relationships.

WHAT IS EPISTEMOLOGY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

I argue throughout this book that culturally responsive school principals must lead schools with community perspectives at the center of their leadership behaviors. But how can principals shift from schoolcentric approaches to ones that are in the best interest of the communities they serve? To answer this question, I engage in a brief discussion of *epistemology* and reflect on its relevance for schools. Though the concept of epistemology originated within a branch of philosophy concerned with how knowledge comes to be understood, it has been widely appropriated by education scholars. Epistemology is concerned with anything that informs or influences us in how we learn and understand what we believe is real. For educators engaged in antibias work, this is deeply important. This is partly why people can have different realities for the same topic or phenomenon. One person's (or group's) truth is often not truth for others. Individuals and groups have different histories, experiences, and perceptions, and therefore differ greatly in how they come to know and understand reality; and because of deep epistemological differences between communities, it is difficult to generalize concepts of beauty, appropriateness, importance, or even goodness. Likewise, for educators, understandings of good or aggressive behaviors, disengagement, disrespect, grit, and even achievement are subjective and how parents, students, or community members might understand them can differ vastly. For example, educators and parents might hear the same story about a student, but have different understandings and beliefs of not only what happened, but why it happened. School leaders have always had the power to normalize schoolcentric

and educator epistemologies in schools, and to devalue and ignore community-based and Indigenous epistemologies.

Epistemological differences help explain differences that communities have with schoolcentric thoughts of schooling. Cooper, Riehl, and Hasan state, "For the most part, however, traditional notions of parent-school relations have been unidirectional, focused on what is best for the school and children's learning in school and on how parents can assist."[10] Indeed, while "communities" are neither static nor monolithic, and wide differences exist between communities, issues like safety, job growth, immigration and deportation, food security, social justice, and police brutality are likely to be more important issues for minoritized communities than standardized test scores.

In other words, what Cooper, Riehl, and Hasan are questioning is the power of the schoolcentric voice and perspective. Educators have had sole discretion to decide what is acceptable behavior and good learning in schools. Even principals who come from communities in which they work may have schoolcentric epistemologies that do not represent those of the parents and community members. Parents and community people must be fully present—both physically present, and in positions of power and policy making. But again, how can principals do this without colonizing or appropriating community and parent perspectives? It is common to see local school councils, parent-principal partnerships, and other school-community-based partnerships that veer back toward school-based goals; but now they claim to be focusing on math or reading scores, with community voice at the center of the decision to focus on academic gains. Throughout this book, I demonstrate how culturally responsive school leaders engage communities in empowering and humanizing ways, and how they leverage this community engagement to promote school environments in which minoritized students can be successful.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

This book is an ethnographic account of how an urban school leader enacted culturally responsive leadership in an alternative school. The research covered in this book offers powerful examples of schooling that will improve the lives of minoritized children who face structural barriers in school and society. I provide a groundbreaking account of how a school leader engaged students, parents, teachers, and neighborhood communities in ways that positively impacted organizational and leadership practice, teacher practice, and student learning. *Culturally Responsive School Leadership* presents three basic premises throughout: (1) that cultural responsiveness is a necessary component of effective school leadership; (2) that if cultural responsiveness is to be present and sustainable in school, it must foremost and consistently be promoted by school leaders; and (3) that culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) is characterized by a core set of unique leadership behaviors, namely: (a) being critically self-reflective; (b) developing and sustaining culturally responsive teachers and curricula; (c) promoting inclusive, anti-oppressive school contexts; and (d) engaging students' Indigenous (or local neighborhood) community contexts.

Throughout the book, I suggest that leadership in schools should happen in close collaboration with communities, and it should empower children and families; such leadership signals that an equitable power-sharing relationship between communities and schools is optimal. Yet this core goal of empowering children and communities is often overwhelmed by a rigid, traditional top-down approach to education that emphasizes curriculum, testing, compliance, and accountability. Moreover, researchers have found some schools to be subtractive and even oppressive to minoritized students.[11] In the research outlined in this book, the minoritized students were so vigorously pressured in their traditional schools—for behaviors associated with their cultural background and ways of being—many

chose to leave school. For example, students were targeted for their tone and manner of speech, clothing, modes of play and competition, cultural proclivities interpreted as aggressive, and many other offenses for which they were more likely to be suspended than their White peers.

Why CRSL? Settler Colonialism, Black Slavery, and Other Types of Oppression

When I enter schools to speak with educators and school leaders, I almost always hear a version of this statement: "We know we have problems! We know achievement gaps exist! We don't want to talk about the problems anymore, we just want to know how to fix them!" To address these widespread sentiments, we must understand something of the origins and nature of US oppression. Why? Because the ways in which Indigenous, Black, Brown, and other minoritized students are currently treated in school is deeply connected with how their bodies, knowledge, land, and communities were constructed at moments in history. Glenn states:

> Settler colonialism should be seen not as an event but as an ongoing structure. The logic, tenets, and identities engendered by settler colonialism persist and continue to shape race, gender, class, and sexual formations into the present . . . settler colonialism's objective is to acquire land so that colonists can settle permanently and form new communities . . . Native inhabitants represent a cheap labor source that can be harnessed to produce goods and extract materials for export to the metropole. They also serve as consumers, expanding the market for goods produced by the metropole and its other colonies. In settler colonialism, the object is to acquire land and to gain control of resources. To realize these ambitions, the first thing that must be done is to eliminate the indigenous occupants of the land. This can be accomplished

> in a variety of ways: genocide, forced removal from territories desired by white settlers, and confinement to reservations outside the boundaries of white settlement. It can also be accomplished through assimilation. Assimilation can be biological (e.g., through intermarriage to "dilute" indigenous blood) and/or cultural (e.g., by stripping indigenes of their culture and replacing it with settler culture). The second thing that must be done is to secure the land for settlers. This can be accomplished by imposing a modernist property regime that transforms land and resources (sometimes including people) into "things" that can be owned.[12]

But settler colonialists also invented discourses about minoritized people as they settled lands. Western colonizing nations like the United States have always provided a "story" about why they colonized and vanquished nations and enslaved peoples—claiming, for example, that Indigenous people were exotic subhumans or savages, and they had to be helped by being civilized. This exoticizing, or "othering," is a way of claiming—without explicitly stating—that Whiteness and Westernness is the only way one should exist. This all had deep implications for schooling and education because it is connected to arguments that suggest that schooling should only happen in one particular way. And when Europeans settled and moved to occupy nations and vanquish peoples, they claimed they were helping people who could not improve without European intervention. Schools were used as a point of departure in this regard. Images like the child in figure I.1, from the front cover of *Judge* magazine in 1899, helped sway public opinion and discourse about minoritized people.

While the child being cleaned and civilized by President McKinley appears in the trappings of a Negro and Indigenous American Indian child, he is actually Filipino, with the small caption reading: "The Filipino's First Bath: McKinley—'Oh you dirty boy'!" This picture represents a long tradition of demonizing and savagizing people

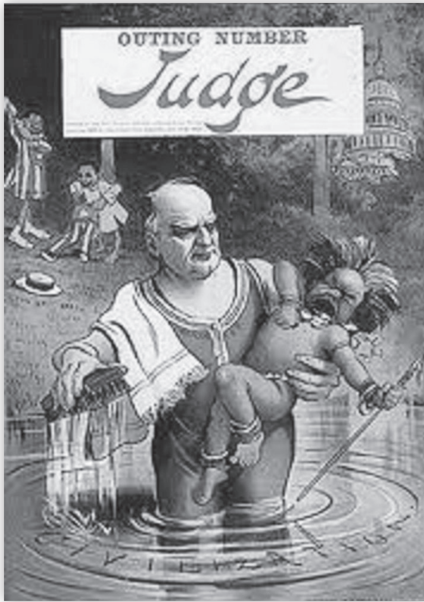

FIGURE I.1 "The Filipino's First Bath: McKinley—'Oh you dirty boy!'" in *Judge* magazine (1899).

of conquest—in this case the people of the Philippines, whose colonization had begun one year earlier. As the picture suggests, Americans were civilizing, Christianizing, and cleaning Filipinos of savagery, and this is why America *had* to conquer the land. But to convince the viewers that the Filipinos were subhuman, the artist placed the Filipino child in the image of people that Americans already associated with subhuman savagery—namely Blacks and Indigenous Native Americans.

But how is the exoticizing in this 1899 magazine cover relevant for schooling, and even more so school leadership? Strikingly, when I began teaching Black students in Detroit, both my Black and White colleagues applied modern-day exotic descriptions to our minoritized students. Decolonizing scholars such as Ramon Grosfoguel and Walter Mignolo show how European and American colonizers depicted minoritized peoples as subhuman in multiple ways, but primarily via two distinct paths—biological or cultural. For those who

were seen as culturally subhuman, colonizers felt they could easily desavagize them; in the words of Captain Richard H. Pratt, "Kill the Indian, save the man." But for those who were depicted as biologically subhuman, and who had no soul (Grosfoguel), slavery was the only option. Professor William Watkins recalls some of these earlier widespread, subhumanizing biological racist beliefs in his book, *The White Architects of Black Education*:

> White people were characterized by "energetic intelligence," great physical power, stability, inclinations to self-preservation, and a love of life and liberty. Their great weakness, according to Gobineau, was a susceptibility to crossbreeding. Asians were mediocre, lacked physical strength, and wished to live undisturbed. They could never create a viable civilization. Black people, the lowest of all, possessed energy and willpower but were unstable, unconcerned about the preservation of life, given to absolutes, and easily enslaved. . . .
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> German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, an early advocate of Darwinism, authored *Anthropogenie* in 1874. In this book he situated Blacks on an evolutionary tree below gorillas and chimpanzees. He hypothesized that individuals, in the course of development, relive their evolutionary history, that is, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. Building on this theme, race theorists such as D. G. Brinton (1890) argued that some races retained infantile traits rendering them inferior to others (Ehrlich & Feldman, 1977). . . .
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> For Blacks the pejorative term "oran-outangs" became popular, as it placed them in the realm of chimpanzees and monkeys. Thomas Jefferson used the term "oranootan" in his writings to describe Black men and even himself when he surrendered to his own passions. . . .
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> In 1799, British surgeon Charles White added a new dimension to the race dialogue. He asserted that Blacks were a separate

> species, intermediate between Whites and apes (Tucker, 1994). His book, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man and in Different Animals and Vegetables and from the Former to the Latter*, argued that the feet, fingers, toes, legs, hair, cheekbones, skin, arm length, skull size, size of sex organs, and body odor placed Blacks closer to the animal kingdom, most notably apes.[13]

In my work in schools across the United States, contemporary versions of these biological or cultural deficit discourses are often used to describe parents and students. I have heard educator colleagues describe parents as being uncaring or negligent of their children because they do not come to the school for conferences, and blame communities when they feel children misbehave; when students are described as angry, abnormal, irrational, lazy, or even from broken families, and whenever parents and students are blamed for failures of education, I can now trace many of these discourses to earlier forms of racism.

"MINORITIZATION" AS OPPRESSION. Of the hundreds of definitions of oppression in the literature, almost all mention the following terms: *prolonged unjust treatment*, *control*, *power*, and *authority*. Some definitions mention words such as *underclass*, *minority*, and *pressure*. For this book, I would like to focus on systemic understandings of oppression. I embrace these terms and see people in authority as being responsible for enacting or overseeing prolonged unjust treatment of the oppressed. But in my view, oppression is not always intentional and at the forefront of the minds of educators. Oppression is historical, yet its structures continue to shape the lives of minoritized people. It is reproductive, and requires little effort to reproduce. In fact, more effort is needed to *disrupt* oppressive systems found in schools. In this way, it is important to understand that all

educators have power in schools, particularly those with leadership responsibilities. When educators enter a school, they will assume control over systems that have been oppressive to students, particularly minoritized students. Educational leaders and teachers will either reproduce oppression, or they will contest it.

Black, Indigenous, Latinx, low-income, LGBTQ, refugee, ELL, and Muslim students are just a few examples of minoritized groups.[14] By placing emphasis on *minoritization*, school leaders call attention to the structural and historical processes that marginalize and oppress group members. Minoritization can happen along racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, national, or other lines; the word *minoritize,* as a verb, refers to the ever-morphing nature of how and on whom oppression is enacted. For example, Singh describes the case of *religious* minoritization in the United States: "While there cannot be an official state religion in the United States, Christianity has historically been given unofficial sanction and privilege in virtually every sphere of American life. Resulting from this long tradition of Christian dominance is a strong sense of entitlement and xenophobic entrenchment in significant and powerful sections of the population."[15]

Though the United States is described as a secular nation, Christianity has been given significant privilege in schools. This affects not only how school holiday and vacation breaks are organized, but also the very epistemological, interpretive, and intellectual situating of schools and learning. Thus, in this example, non-Christians are "minoritized" religiously because they face barriers and lack Christian privilege. The same is true across race, gender, class, language, and so on. Even though minoritized students develop agency in school, leaders must still understand the contexts that reproduce systems of oppression and marginalization in school.[16] Without that understanding, it can be difficult to grasp how historically oppressive

structures and discourses can continue to minoritize students. In this book I call attention to those structures and discourses that are currently minoritizing students.

A final note about minoritized students: some of my scholar colleagues and friends will undoubtedly question my approach of trying to discuss *all* minoritized students in a single text. They will claim that this dilutes the trove of powerful research that looks deeply at monolithic groups of students, such as Black male, urban youth (in addition to being a Black male myself, this is a group of students on whom I have written extensively). Moreover, how about students who have multiple intersecting identities (e.g., Black *and* low-income *and* ELL *and* refugee without citizenship *and* has been profiled by police)? And what about shifting, dynamic minoritized student identities—for example, those whose parents recently lost jobs, or students who changed their religious status to that of a minoritized group?

There is much validity to such concerns. But I want to be clear here: my choice to discuss minoritized groups together, as a collective, was intentional and reasoned in a few ways. One, I would argue that although differences in how minoritized students are oppressed and marginalized are definitely unique, there are also similarities; in other words, they are all shamed, decentered, physically removed, and asked to acquiesce to spaces that have not honored them or their cultures. So while Indigenous Native Americans, African Americans, and some Latinx groups are statistically more likely to be policed and removed from school, even White low-income students (and other demographic groups) will experience some minoritization as well. Two, this book is about structures, climates, and school organization and how such contexts are reproduced, as well as school leadership practices that can either confront or confirm these contexts. Thus the focus is not so much on a particular minoritized student identity, but rather on how they all identify and experience the systems

in which they exist. And finally, the UAHS students were all minoritized—predominantly Black and low-income, but there were also Latinx, Arabs, Indigenous peoples, Southeast Asians, refugees, ELLs, and LGBTQ, among others. It is also important to note that they all were minoritized because of how they were often treated in schools.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT. Can leaders be culturally responsive if they do not recognize the aspirations of the communities they serve? Indeed, the historical oppressive treatment of minoritized communities—through enslavement, internment, dispossession of lands, and so forth—would understandably impact the epistemologies of minoritized students and communities. In other words, these histories of oppression are directly linked to how students and parents choose to position themselves in community and school. Because of this history of settler colonialism, scholars emphasize the importance of understanding the need for communities to craft their *own goals* based on *community needs*. This may not be aligned (and often is not) with what schools want from children and families. Thus, given the histories of oppression that some communities have faced, self-determination is primarily concerned with community empowerment.

One goal of *community engagement* is for schools to find culturally responsive ways to connect with communities they serve, but this focus remains schoolcentric. The ultimate goal of *community empowerment*, however, is for communities to become healthy, whole, free from oppression, and positioned to craft and live out their own vision. Both are useful, and will benefit the educational experiences of minoritized youth. While some community-based goals and epistemologies may not seem to explicitly espouse educational goals, the results of this study suggest that healthier communities indeed *will* contribute to smarter and more successful students, trusting and engaged parents, and critically self-reflective teachers.

CONTINUING OPPRESSION IN SCHOOLS: HOW SCHOOLS WERE AND CONTINUE TO BE EXCLUSIONARY

Educators often discuss and ponder why "achievement gaps" not only exist but stubbornly persist. Many educators believe their Indigenous American Indian, Latinx, African American, refugee, low-income, and ELL students are generally performing worse than their White middle- and upper-income students. Some districts have invested literally millions of dollars in addressing problems of inequity, going from one reform or consultant to the next, often based on what they have heard other districts were doing. Unfortunately, these reforms have often not worked as well as educators expected; not surprisingly, this has led to reform fatigue. Most schools are evaluated using test scores, class failure rates, and high school graduation rates. Yet few districts have conducted *equity audits* as a way to more precisely implement reforms.[17]

The correlation between school experiences and life opportunities and incarceration has been widely discussed. Scholars have long maintained that school disciplinary experiences are directly connected to prison rates, for instance. Indeed, for many educators, these links are alarming. The figures in the appendix at the end of this chapter, "Data on High School Opportunities and Exclusions," highlight data that is worrisome to most educators.

These figures tell a horrifying story. The earlier graphs demonstrate an incessant racial oppression in US schools that has existed since the beginning of the education of Black, Native American, and Latinx students in the United States. But the later figures (see chapter appendix figures 7, 8, 9, and 10) show the impact of this oppressive education. In other words, the overrepresentation of minoritized students in remedial programs, disabilities programs, disciplinary programs, and poor academic performance directly impacts students' future; it affects their college attendance and graduation rate, their

employment rates, and even the likelihood that they will spend time in prison. That is, the same students who are minoritized in education are overrepresented in prison: while Blacks are less that 15 percent of the total US population, they represent 37 percent of the overall inmate population. And Latinx prison rates are not far behind, as their incarceration rate is roughly double their percentage in the general population. But is this correlation between the treatment of minoritized students in school and prison causal? Actually, yes. Many studies are beginning to suggest the two trends are linked.[18]

It is important that educators see that their actions toward minoritized students can, quite literally, impact the life trajectories of those students; it is alarming that educators' treatment of a Black male student, for example, can influence whether or not he ends up in prison! Another telling finding about these figures is the deep connection between academic and disciplinary data. Students who are treated badly in school perform worse, and vice versa. Table I.1 gives

TABLE I.1 Successive oppression

Earlier oppressive practice	Current school practice
Enslaving/confining Blacks on enslavement plantations	Normalizing the practice of sending Black students to in-school suspension spaces
Forcing Native Americans to enroll in "Indian schools" to cleanse them of their Indigenous culture	Preventing Native American students from congregating in a school space
Placing Japanese Americans in internment camps	Allowing students to languish in ESL spaces, even when they are already proficient in English
Lynching Black men, women, and children because of White fears	Cultural or racial shaming of Black students in school
Beating immigrants for speaking native languages in school	Shaming and harassing immigrants for speaking native languages in school

examples of everyday school practices and my attempt to connect them to oppressive historical precedents.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, ANTI-OPPRESSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

A commitment to social justice and anti-oppression has become quite important to the field of educational leadership.[19] Though broader in scope, CRSL incorporates aspects of transformative and social justice leadership, mainly critical consciousness and praxis. Cultural responsiveness also focuses on pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction. But for cultural responsiveness to be sustainable, leadership and leadership preparation must be a central part of the conversation. Judith Touré recommends that educational leadership professors and policy makers perform "a reexamination of requirements for leadership preparation which currently lack an emphasis on culturally relevant leadership content knowledge or issues of social justice."[20]

The anti-oppressive stance of school leaders must explicitly include a commitment to advocating for the inclusion of traditionally marginalized students.[21] Madhlangobe and Gordon note that culturally responsive school leaders show determination to create a welcoming school environment for all students and their parents.[22] But this is not easy given that student marginalization is often historical, normalized, and "invisibilized" in most educational contexts. Leaders who are not critically self-aware or knowledgeable about racism and other histories of oppression, and who do not embrace anti-oppression and social justice, will reproduce racism and other forms of systemic oppression in their schools.[23]

The research that I share in *Culturally Responsive School Leadership* raises critical questions about the assumed foundations of ed-

ucational leadership, as it pushes up against traditional leadership models. While many leadership models focus on instructional and transformational leadership, which almost exclusively highlight the school context, this book draws a broader picture of leadership that centers not on school interests, but on communities. I consider, for example, how neighborhoods and communities have often viewed and interacted with leaders as I explore the current roles of school principals. I begin with an assumption that CRSL behaviors are accessible to *any* school leader truly interested in positive change in her or his school and community.

FOREGROUNDING AND ASSUMPTIONS

This book contributes to emerging scholarship on culturally responsive schooling because, while the overwhelming amount of scholarship has centered on culturally responsive teaching, pedagogy, or curriculum, it has ironically neglected leadership—arguably the most sustaining, salient, and foregrounding aspect of any type of culturally responsive reform. This is an oversight, given that leaders are often considered to be the drivers of reform and the connection between policy and practice. They are also held accountable for the growth and efficacy of their teachers; they are best positioned to improve the practice of teachers who are persistently exclusionary and resistant to cultural responsiveness; they are best poised to develop the willing teachers who can actually *become* culturally unresponsive to new, unfamiliar children; and they are uniquely positioned to impact nonclassroom spaces in the school. I also address the increasingly important topic of how school leaders must become situated in the communities they serve. This book, therefore, focuses on school *leaders* because they have been entrusted to ensure that schools are serving the needs of marginalized children. With this backdrop, I

address two broader questions, with a set of subquestions that are addressed in each of the chapters. The broader questions are:

- What are the culturally responsive school leadership behaviors that can improve the lives and educational experiences of minoritized children?
- How can CRSL behaviors be exemplified in other schools? The subquestions are:
    - In what ways do schools and school leaders contribute to or resist disparities and inequities in school?
    - What roles do schools and school leaders play in either reproducing or resisting oppression in school environments?
    - How can "traditional" leadership behaviors be adjusted or nuanced to address the needs of minoritized students?
    - What leadership behaviors can support culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction?
    - To what extent must school leaders engage the communities they serve in order to be culturally responsive? What can schools do to earn the trust and credibility of the communities they serve?
    - How can schools validate the identities and aspirations of children they serve?

These questions bring history and theory into focus for practitioners and scholars alike. They allow us to recognize that is not possible to promote culturally responsive schooling without understanding the history of how schools became culturally Eurocentric. The questions also suggest that histories of oppression must be at the center of culturally responsive reforms. There can be no quick fixes or erasures and silencing of historical contexts while promoting equitable schools.

To effectively lead minoritized communities, school leaders must include parents and communities in their leadership activities;

community-based histories and perceptions must be at the center of reform efforts. To push back on education as a schoolcentric enterprise—which recolonizes communities of color in dynamic, iterative ways—school leaders must find ways to engage communities without merely reinscribing schoolcentric perspectives, but with the added claim that schools are "involving" or, even worse, "training" the community. This book puts forth *one* way that this could happen.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

In chapter 1, I argue that schoolcentric approaches to education oppress and marginalize minoritized students and communities. I theorize about minoritized community oppression and the impact that this oppression has in schools; I explain that some schools and educators are exclusionary not only to students as individuals, but toward entire communities. My primary goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how culturally responsive school leadership positively impacts schools and communities, and how it must be an integral part of any school reform. But the lack of CRSL is a reproduction of oppression, despite the good intentions that some educational leaders may have. The data and narratives in this chapter demonstrate historical tensions between schools and the communities, and trace how and why historical tensions persist between the two. I then trace the historical and cultural aspects of school leadership and school-community partnerships.[24]

Chapter 2 presents the practice of *critical self-reflection* for school leaders who serve minoritized students. Pulling on the works of Gooden and Dantley and Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian, I present data that suggests that critical self-reflection must be personal, but that it cannot *only* be personal.[25] I look at ways that critical self-reflection must be systemic, and encompass multiple structures throughout schools and districts. Since racism and other types of

oppression are so ubiquitous and normalized that they are often invisiblized, the formal and informal school structures must have levers in place that push against oppression. It is inevitable that administrators will either resist, or reproduce and reify, oppression in schools. For this reason, Joe, the principal at UAHS, continually reflected on ways that he and his staff were serving (or underserving) children.

I share evidence of how Joe fostered a staff discourse that placed students' lives at the center of the work at UAHS. This critical self-reflective posture was expressed in different ways; in some instances, Joe coached and mentored staff members, and in other cases, he challenged people directly about their treatment of children. Yet, his work did not stop with the staff; I include descriptions of Joe's administrative practices, such as "rap sessions," that contributed to the *self-advocacy* of students. I conclude the chapter by theorizing about what critical self-reflection and self-advocacy might look like in schools and districts that serve minoritized students.

In chapter 3, I use data to highlight the connection between students, space, and exclusion in school. Using the seminal work of Gupta and Ferguson as well as scholars like Appadurai, Dei, Foucault, and Rosaldo, I show how traditional schools routinely pushed the minoritized students in this study out of school by retrofitting school space to exclusively accommodate middle-class White students.[26] Joe rejected this exclusionary impulse that some of his teachers displayed. Instead, he challenged his teachers to accept many of the behaviors that they personally found distasteful, or even incompliant with school policy and expectations. Joe viewed hip-hop language and aesthetic, as well as "aggressive," "disrespectful," or "insubordinate" behaviors such as sagging pants, marijuana use, and profanity, as subordinate to the students' personal and academic needs. This widening of the school space was a core part of Joe's inclusionary school culture, and this inclusiveness ultimately contributed to student comfort and school completion.

Building on the politics of bodies and space covered in chapter 3, in chapter 4 I present ways that culturally responsive school leaders embrace the expressions of student identity and the voices that are most often marginalized in school. Through a process I call *identity confluence*, the data suggests that students' academic identities are developed alongside local Indigenous identities that typically are pushed out of school. Here the works of Mehan, Hubbard, and Villanueva as well as my own research are both important.[27] This chapter identifies and challenges practices that contribute to the marginalization of minoritized student identities. As the school leader, Joe not only tolerated the local Indigenous and community-based identities, but showed he valued them by engaging and advocating for them. Thus, in addition to refusing to disparage students' Indigenous identities, he promoted a school environment that fostered *academic* identities as well.[28]

Chapter 5 addresses some of the core components of what school leadership is thought to be—instructional leadership of pedagogy and curriculum. Unfortunately, most teachers have not been trained to be culturally responsive educators, and the curricula they use often neglect and are even hostile toward students' cultural knowledge and selves. Many educators have expressed frustration that they do not know *how* to obtain cultural knowledge—either for themselves in improving their craft, or for their curriculum so that their students may see themselves positively represented in the content. In this chapter, I argue that the leader's role is central to developing culturally responsive teachers and curriculum. I use the works of Tillman, Khalifa, Siddle Walker, and Allen, Jacobson, and Lomotey to theorize about the role of principals in developing culturally responsive teachers.[29] This accomplishes another significant development in educational leadership: I use scholarship in an attempt to add culturally responsive lenses to understandings of transformational, distributed, and instructional leadership models.

I draw out my argument in this chapter by sharing ethnographic accounts of how CRSL principals must engage communities in their roles as instructional leaders. Principals are the central driving force of instructional leadership and curriculum development in schools. Extending this case, I share evidence of how Joe developed culturally responsive teachers in his school. I recount how teachers engaged in deal making with students, which is a tactic that lowers academic expectations for minoritized students. Killing students with empathy or kindness, while at the same time requiring little, is—plain and simple—racism, and diminishes students' chances for academic success.[30] But at UAHS, Joe began by modeling and mentoring his teachers out of exclusionary practices. If teachers resisted and remained exclusionary toward students, he worked to more assertively push them toward equity. I use students' connection to and reliance on hip-hop music and aesthetic to demonstrate how principals can help teachers provide a more culturally responsive curriculum. While school leaders certainly have limitations about what can happen within classrooms, this work suggests they can yield considerable pedagogical and curricular influence in schools.

Along with the earlier chapters on school space and student identity confluence, chapter 6 discusses community engagement from the perspective of what most see as school-community relations. Traditional school leaders are often uncomfortable outside of the school walls and a few sporting events. However, the ethnographic findings in this study push the role of the school leader much deeper into the students' home communities. Thus, this paradigmatic shift significantly expands traditional notions of school-community relationships: it not only requires mutual presence of schools and communities, but also engagement in and advocacy for community-based causes. Using my own research as well as the works of other scholars such as Morris, Walker, and Cooper to frame the discussion, I show how principals must venture into

communities, though it must be on the community's own terms.[31] I present glimpses of both community-in-school and school-in-community, and conclude the chapter by making the case that CRSL entails an advocacy for community-based causes and interests—which are often unrelated to education or schooling.

I argue that it is not enough to want equity or to have courageous conversations; school leaders must enact school structures that will promote and embrace unique cultural knowledge that is consistent with the lives of children. In this final chapter, I summarize my data and findings and further theorize about the readings covered throughout the book. Cultural responsiveness in schools will never be reached if leaders enact only traditional forms of leadership. Instructional leadership, transformational leadership, curriculum development, and professional development are all important school leadership functions, but they cannot continue to ignore cultural responsiveness.

I end the book with a vignette that brings us back to a concept that predominates in all chapters of the book: community. The setting is the Wilsons' family home, and includes a female student (De'Janae), her mother (April), and grandmother (Helen)—all of whom had been Joe's students at the school. The mother and grandmother attended UAHS because they did not perform well in public schools, and because of their experiences at UAHS, they requested that their daughter be sent to this school as well. The vignette illuminates the presence, trust, rapport, and credibility that this principal (Joe) had with the students he served. I describe how many of the culturally responsive leadership behaviors enacted by Joe in an alternative school can be replicated in any school serving minoritized children.

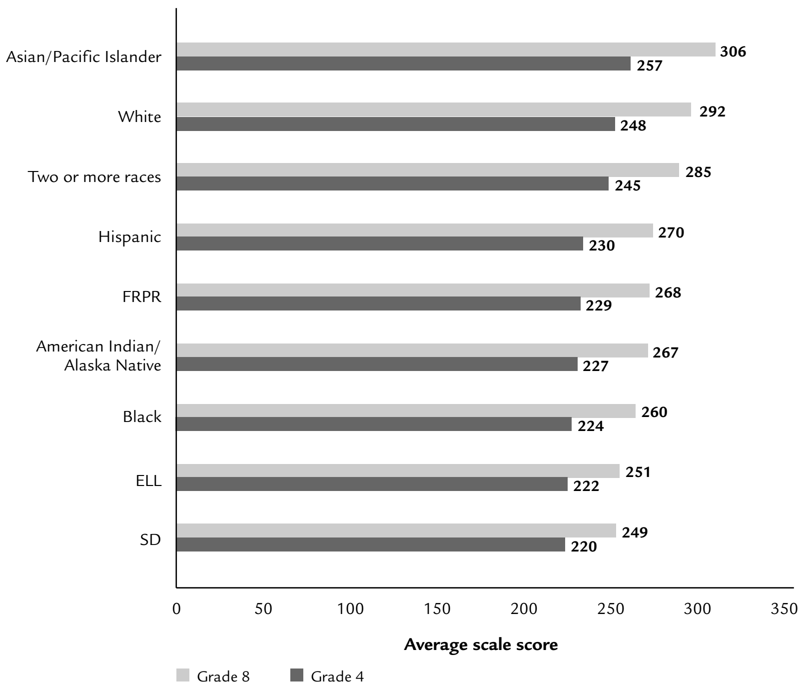
Throughout his thirty-four-year career at UAHS, Joe successfully fought off several attempts by the district to close the school. His legacy also lives through the community and students he served.

The students began to identify as "smart" and to envision themselves as "going to college"; parents felt that they were contributing to their children's education. And exposed to community-based experiences and knowledge, teachers became critically self-reflective of their own practices, and thus more culturally responsive. In the time since this study was done, Joe has passed away and the school has been closed. This work is dedicated to him, his memory, and his willingness to lead with courage and to share.

APPENDIX TO THE INTRODUCTION

DATA ON HIGH SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES AND EXCLUSIONS

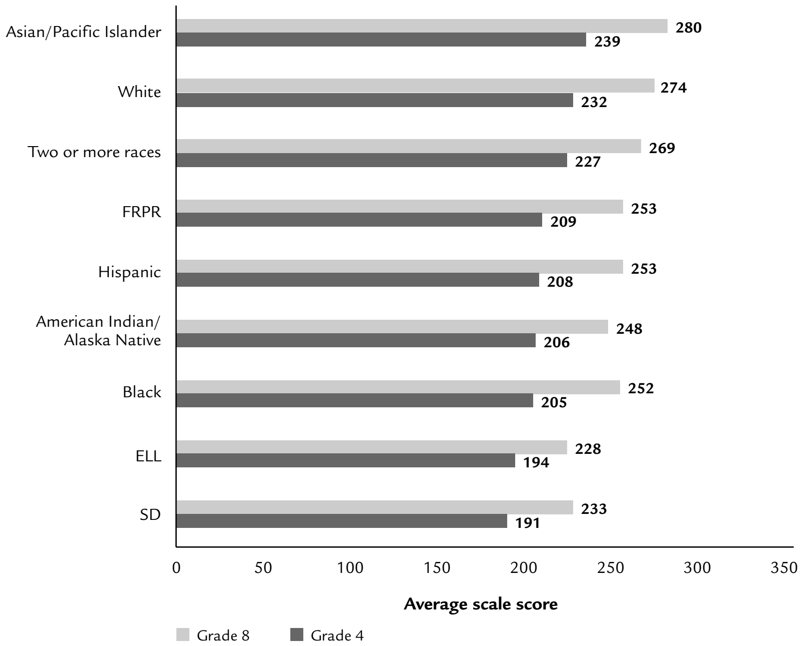
FIGURE 1 Average NAEP scale scores for grades 4 and 8 in math, 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2015 Mathematics Assessment.

Note: FRPR = Free and reduced-price lunch; ELL = English language learners; SD = Students with disabilities

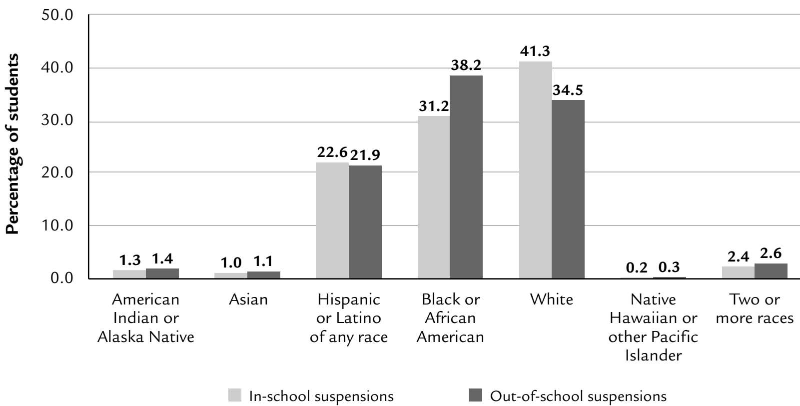
FIGURE 2 Average NAEP scale scores for grades 4 and 8 in reading, 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2015 Reading Assessment.

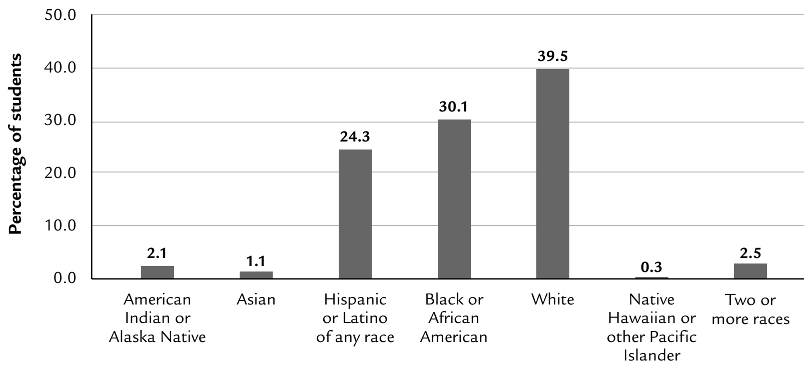
Note: FRPR = Free and reduced-price lunch; ELL = English language learners; SD = Students with disabilities

FIGURE 3 Disciplinary referrals: Percentage of U.S. public school students receiving suspensions (in school and out of school), by race/ethnicity, school year 2011–12



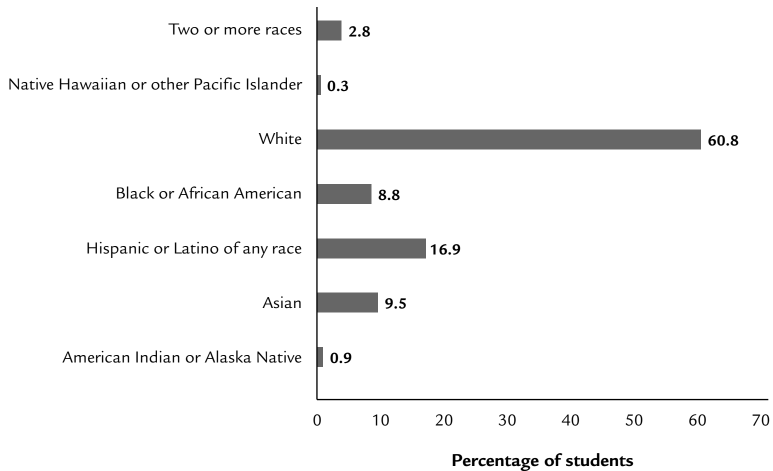
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011–12, available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov. Data notes are available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov/downloads/DataNotes.docx.

FIGURE 4 Student arrest rate: Percentage of U.S. public school students with school-related arrests, by race/ethnicity, school year 2011–12



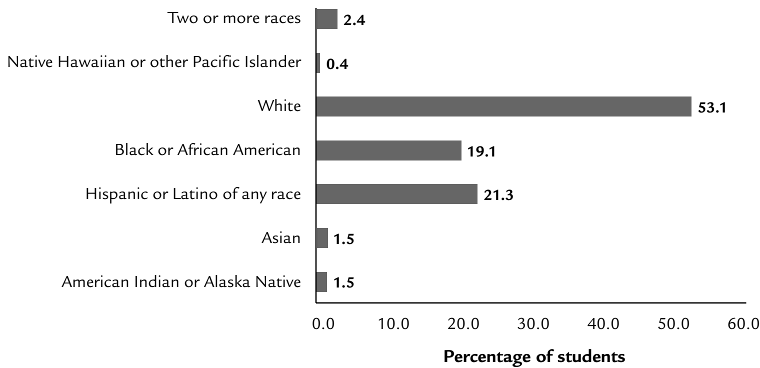
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011–12, available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov. Data notes are available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov /downloads/DataNotes.docx.

FIGURE 5 Gifted and talented enrollment: Percentage of U.S. public school students enrolled in gifted/talented programs, by race/ethnicity, school year 2011–12



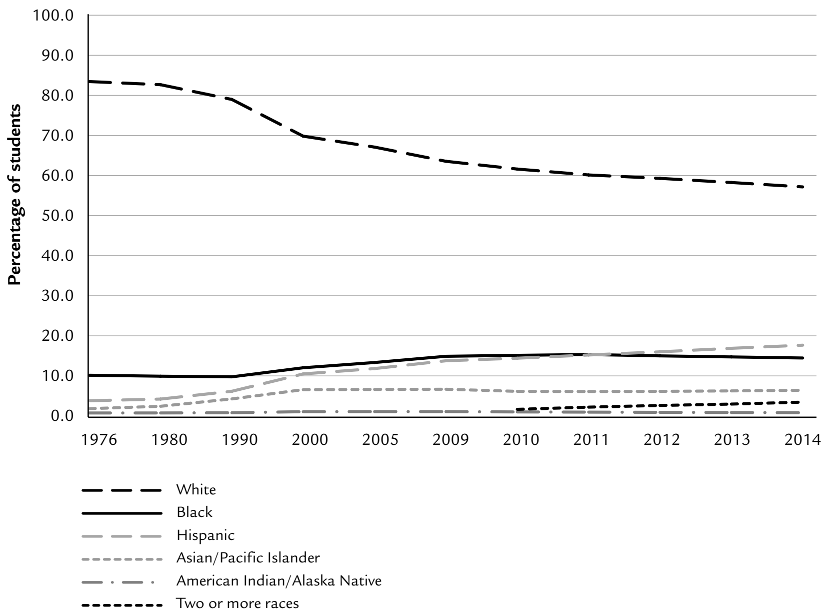
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011–12, available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov. Data notes are available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov /downloads/DataNotes.docx.

FIGURE 6 Students with disabilities: Percentage of U.S. public school students with disabilities served under IDEA, by race/ethnicity, school year 2011–12



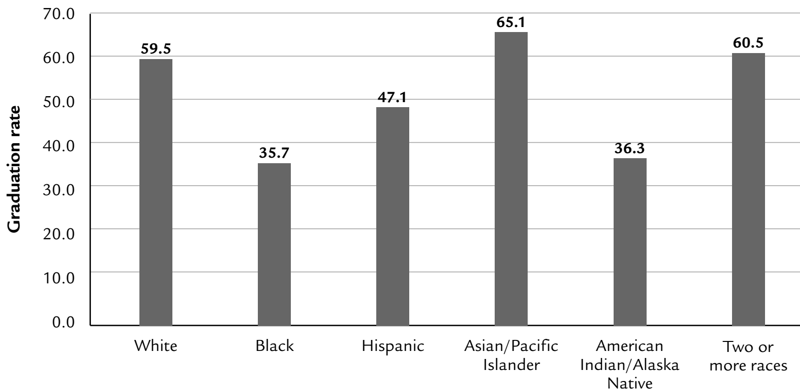
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011–12, available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov. Data notes are available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov/downloads/DataNotes.docx.

FIGURE 7 College attendance: Percentage of students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by year and race/ethnicity, 1976–2014



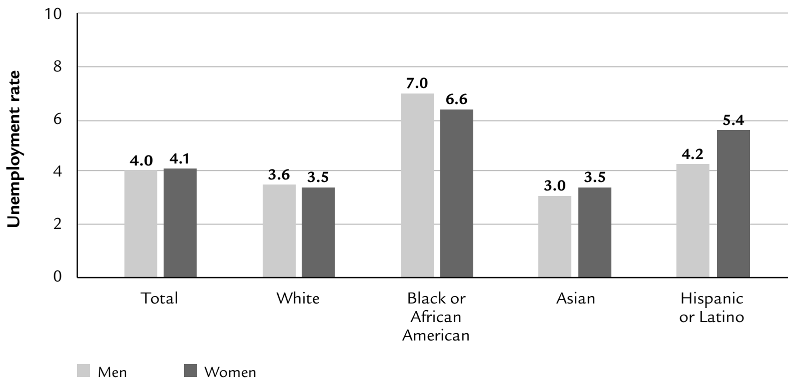
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), “Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities” surveys, 1976 and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), “Fall Enrollment Survey” (IPEDS-EF:90); and IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2015, Fall Enrollment component.

FIGURE 8 Graduation rates: Graduation rates within five years after start from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's-degree-seeking students at four-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, 2008 starting cohort



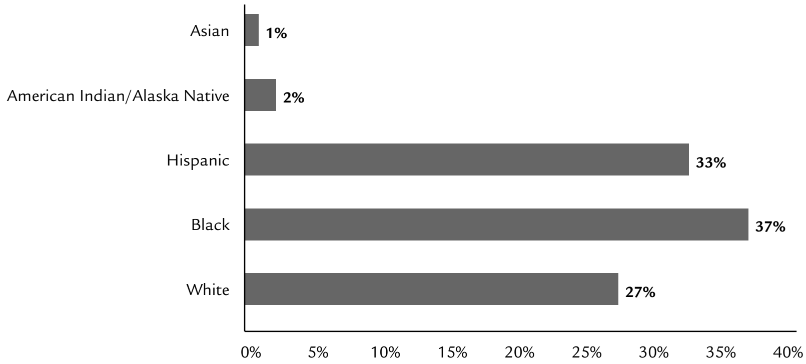
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2002 and Spring 2007 through Spring 2015, Graduation Rates component; and IPEDS Fall 2008, Institutional Characteristics component. (This table was prepared December 2015.)

FIGURE 9 Unemployment rates: Unemployment rates for persons twenty-five years and over, by race/ethnicity, 2016



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016, Table 24, "Unemployed Persons by Marital Status, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, Age, and Sex." Available at https://www.bls.gov/cps/tables.htm#charunem.

FIGURE 10 Prison rates: Prisoners under the jurisdiction of federal correctional authorities, by race/ethnicity, December 2015



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 2015, Appendix Table 3, "Prisoners Under the Jurisdiction of State or Federal Correctional Authorities, by Race and Hispanic Origin," December 31, 2015.