

Cuban Teacher Perspectives on Race and Racism: The Pedagogy of Home–School Relations

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Background/Context: Cuba's education system has been the focus of academic study by researchers on and off the island who frequently cite the comparative success of Cuban students on measures such as the UNESCO math and language assessments. Few studies, however, consider the significance of race within Cuban education generally or the home–school relationship in particular. Indeed, there has been no empirical work made available on these topics for nearly a decade. Significant sociopolitical changes are underway in Cuba, with implications for the role of the state in the cultural life of the nation. Education is a key transmission point between the state and its people, with teachers as frontline cultural workers.

Purpose: This article examines the way Cuban teachers address racism in their professional practice, with a specific focus on teacher home visits to address racism with parents/guardians. The author analyzes the relationship between Cuban teachers and the families of students they teach (an under-researched form of teacher practice in an under-researched context). Little is known about teachers reaching and teaching parents directly about issues such as racism. Further, there is limited research on the ways in which understanding of citizenship and professional responsibility impact teachers' work and pedagogy in their interactions with parents.

Setting: Havana, Cuba.

Participants: All interviewees were teachers from downtown Havana. Twenty-two male and 23 female teachers participated. Fifteen of the teachers were Mestizo (of mixed race), one was Chinese-Cuban, 21 were Afro-Cuban, and eight were White. Survey participants were drawn from across Havana's 15 boroughs. Among respondents, 67.4% were female and 32.6% were male. As far as race, 57.8% identified as Mestizo, 18.9% identified as Afro-Cuban, 22% identified as White, and 1.3% identified as Chinese.

Research Design: This is a mixed-method study using qualitative interviews (N=45 participants), and a quantitative survey (N=150 respondents).

Conclusions/Recommendations: Teachers regularly enter the homes of parents in an effort to promote diversity and to counter perceived racism among parents/guardians. The fact that teachers have the authority and sense of entitlement to do so points to possibilities for a significant retooling of the ecology systems framework. Many teachers undertake this work with parents/guardians just as they would when addressing student academic performance. This race-work is supported by state-generated social capital that, in Cuba, embeds conceptions of race within a larger public context, as opposed to treating race as a private matter

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to be subjectively and privately understood. As quasi-curriculum, antiracism is something everyone is expected to learn. This suggests that a careful consideration of the way concepts of nation, citizenship, and professional responsibility inform teacher preparation and practice in Cuba may deepen our understanding of teachers' race-work in North American contexts.

INTRODUCTION

I have visited the homes of all of my students . . . I have talked with many of them about racism, in their own houses.

—Xiomara, a Mestizo-Cuban woman

Following incidents of student racism in school, Cuban teachers regularly visit the homes of students to speak with parents or guardians whom, based on the child's behavior, they presume to be racist. As part of the Cuban nation-building ethos, teachers on the island are deeply invested in influencing the way parents raise their children. From basic nutrition courses and child care in the prekindergarten years to parent education programs during the K–10 years, parent and guardian interaction with the education system in Cuba is part of a broader pattern of expected participation in a national program of citizen engagement. Teachers act as a bridge between school and home, and, indeed, between the values taught at school and those promoted at home. This element of teachers' work is itself understood by teachers as an exercise and requirement of citizenship. The complex and dialogical relationship between teachers and the families of students they teach takes place across a host of fields, including parent–teacher conferences, curriculum nights, communication via the student, and teacher visits to the home. This study investigates this frontline race-work of Cuban teachers in the content and context of home visits in particular. These practices both form and are formed by race politics in Cuba—by Cuba's official race discourse, which asserts that revolutionary Cuba is not, and should not be, a racist place.

With regard to the Cuban and the North American contexts, little is known as to why or what happens when teachers reach out to teach parents/guardians directly about social issues such as racism. Why teachers do this work, what accounts for variations in this work, and the very nature and content of this work are understudied areas of teacher practice and education policy. There are a variety of implications arising from these practices that raise important questions about the relationship between public and private spaces; about the role of teacher understanding of identity and citizenship in their work; about education policy with regard to school–community relations; about equity, equality, pedagogy and power that fall outside the considerations of most educational scholarship on the subject; and, finally, about curriculum—understood to include the interconnections between the hidden and the formal, and as something that informs interactions as

well as subject-specific content. Using a mixed-method approach, I look to the ways in which teachers feel responsible for, and simultaneously entitled to, cross the home-to-school divide in order to educate and, in many cases, correct the race politics of parents. This study extends the literature on home-school relations, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1986) notion of overlapping spheres in and across which learning takes place, with a focus on teachers as border crossers, race workers, and promoters of a racial common sense. This work also extends our understanding of the ways in which teachers' conceptions of professional and citizenship responsibility impact pedagogy with regard to social issues, including racism. Finally, this study also adds, to a limited extent, to research on race in Cuban education.

I use three key conceptual tools to analyze this form of teacher's race-work. First, critical race theory (CRT), which stemmed from Critical Legal Studies, allows for a race-sighted analysis of state, institutional, and micro-social interactions. As I explain below, CRT also informs the research design, implementation, and analysis of this study. Second, I offer a reconsideration of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory, which argues for the necessary consideration and connection of the separate spheres of home, school, family, media, etc. to understand student learning. Mainstream ecology systems theory has highlighted the need for teachers to better understand the social and cultural values, knowledge, and practices of the home in order to better support students (Comer, 1984). In the Cuban case, when dealing with racism and student behavior, knowledge flows the other way, with the home impacted by the discursive authority of the teacher as he or she brings the antiracist position of the Cuban state into the student home in an effort to weed out the perceived source of student racism. Third, I use Martin Carnoy's (2007) conception of state-generated social capital in Cuba, which addresses the ways in which the Cuban state produces, manages, and mobilizes education-based expectations of students and parents/guardians. I take up each of these in greater detail below.

I begin by sketching the context in which this study is situated with a brief discussion of race and racism in Cuba and the related literature, as well as an introduction to K-12 schooling on the island. I then expand the discussion of critical race theory, the ecology systems theory, and Carnoy's notion of state-generated social capital and the ways in which these inform the study, the findings, and the data analysis. A description of the study and an explanation of its methodology and research methods follow. I then present the research findings on the home-school relationship in two sections. First, I provide an overview of teachers' understanding and reflections on race and racism in Cuba generally and Cuban education specifically, establishing the epistemic and political context in which teachers' race-work takes place. Second, I look at the content, nature, and

frequency of teacher home visits undertaken to discuss race with families, as well as teacher rationale for these visits. Teachers understand home visits as part of a larger parent/guardian–teacher relationship, which includes parent–teacher nights and other direct communication between home and school. I investigate various facets of this relationship as well as concomitant power dynamics. I conclude by summarizing the significance and implication of these findings for education research on home–school relationships, race-work in education, and race and education in Cuba.

THE CONTEXT OF RACE AND TEACHER RACE-WORK IN CUBA

Cuba has one of the highest percentages of people of African descent owning their own homes and graduating from high school and university (Sawyer, 2006, p. 180). As a whole, the Cuban population enjoys infant mortality levels, life expectancies, and nutrition levels at equal or better rates than those in many developed countries, while Afro-Cubans live longer, have higher literacy rates, and are better represented in professional employment than African Americans in the United States (see Sawyer, 2006, p. 180; Uriarte-Gaston, 2004, p. 106). Indeed, the Cuban government counts the creation of racial equality among its most meaningful accomplishments and has espoused an official antiracist position for nearly 50 years (de la Fuente, 2001; Sawyer, 2006). During the 1990s, however, the Cuban economy collapsed with the fall of the Soviet Union and resulting termination of subsidized trade with the superpower. Sawyer (2006) and Blue (2007) revealed that anti-Black racism held by many White Cubans increased during this time, with implications for everything from opposition to mixed-race marriage to racist perceptions of criminal behavior, work ethic, and, indeed, even perceptions of morality. One strategy for economic recovery has been the expansion of the private sector. Between 1993 and 1996, the number of Cubans employed in the private sector increased 1300%, from 15,000 to almost 210,000 (Henken, 2002, p. 6). Without the albeit inadequate and limited formal protection against institutional racism offered by public sector employment, the private sector is a space in and through which individual racism takes on institutional form, with Afro-Cubans having a harder time gaining entry and advancement than White Cubans. This disadvantage is most marked in the tourism sector where, as D’Amato (2007) and Cabezas (2006) argued, Whites and Mestizos are generally over-represented. The institutional effect on the lived reality of race is further intensified by remittances sent from the (largely White) Cuban community abroad (see Sawyer, 2006; Greenbaum, 2002). According to estimates by Mesa-Lago (2002), White-Cubans and Afro-Cubans receive an annual average of \$81 and \$31 in remittances respectively (p. 8). This impacts employment patterns within sectors such as tourism

with Whites moonlighting “2.7 times less than blacks and 1.4 times less than Mulattos” (Farber, 2011, p. 177). Further, Whites “resell rationed products 3.7 times less than blacks, and the latter 2.1 times more than mulattos” (p. 177). Afro-Cubans are disproportionately forced into insecure, dangerous, and sometimes criminal activities, and are over-represented in Cuban prisons (Sawyer, 2006, p. 118). Thus, racism persists at various levels in Cuba despite years of progress at the institutional, systemic, and individual levels.

Research on race and education in Cuba is scarce. There are no data sets available and there has been little scholarly discussion on race and education in the Special Period and post-Special Period eras. The studies of Morales (2008), Blue (2007), Sawyer (2006), de la Fuente (2001, 2008), and Perez Sarduy and Stubbs (2000) took a general approach, as did Moore (2009) and Morejón et al. (2009). Work that treats race in specific contexts has been done by Fernandez (2001, 2009), who looked at the context of the family; by Robaina (2009), a generalist who has done work on interracial relations; by Adams (2004), who has studied racial representation in Cuban politics; and by Fernandes (2006), who studied race and Cuban art culture. Although the preceding make up a somewhat comprehensive list of the contemporary scholarly literature on race in Cuba, few used primary data and none focused on education.

Education was impacted by the economic crisis of the Special Period as well, with the education budget contracting “by 38 percent from 1989 through 1997” (Farber, 2011, p. 77). By 2011 however, pre-1998 funding levels were restored and, today, education remains a key priority of the government. In Cuba, education is compulsory for children 6–15 years old and is organized into Primary (ages 6–11/12), Basic Secondary (ages 11/12–14/15), Technological Secondary (ages 14/15–18), and Upper Secondary, also called Pre-university, (ages 14/15–18). The Educate Your Child program is a noninstitutional pre-K program for parents, and there are various curricula developed for child-care centers across the island (both for children who attend while their parents work during the day and for children who are wards of the state).

In the Primary program, the same teacher remains with the same class from grade 1 through grade 4, with another taking over for grades 5 and 6. Basic Secondary is a three-year compulsory program for all students. The content for both Primary and Basic Secondary is nationally standardized. Students who qualify academically can go on to either Technological Secondary or Upper Secondary (Pre-university). As in many jurisdictions, the content of Cuban education is highly political. This is reflected not only in the near-deification of national heroes such as Jose Martí, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and Antonio Maceo, but also in the explicit function of education as a character- and identity-forming process. The revolutionary

government has and does explicitly attend to the project of social transformation, which necessarily involves character education via formal and informal schooling. In 1964, Che Guevara famously argued that within the pedagogical life of the revolution, one would never “wonder what you should be doing. You will simply do what at the time seems to make the most sense” (Guevara, 2000, p. 23). This approach is supported by the extensive purview assigned to the Ministry of Education, which was charged with directing not only K–12 education, but also overseeing the country’s leading cultural institutions, including the National Theatre, the National Council of Culture, the National Publishing House, and the National Institute of Art (de la Fuente, 2001, p. 285). The broad reach of the Ministry enables it to exercise powerful influence over the cultural politics and the political culture of the island, controlling much of the social infrastructure in support of the revolutionary project.

CONCEPTUAL TOOLS AND FRAMEWORK: CRT, ECOLOGY SYSTEMS, AND STATE-GENERATED SOCIAL CAPITAL

Critical race theory emerges from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and provides a race-based framework for understanding and analyzing institutional, systemic, and individual racial privilege and punishment with a focus on the sources of racial oppression (see Bell, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001; Harris, 2001; Olivas, 2000; West, 1995). As a crucial and unique institutional site of racial production and reproduction, education is an important area of focus for CRT. The foundational works of Dixson and Rousseau (2005), Ladson-Billings (1999), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Lynn and Parker (2006), DeCuir and Dixson (2004), and Tate (1997) have revealed, disturbed, and attempted to resist the role of state schooling in both the preservation and the maintenance of racism and other systems of oppression. For the Cuban case, CRT is instructive for addressing the intranational conflicts and inequalities that have persisted within the revolution over the past half century and increased with the expansion of private sector employment and reliance on remittances from abroad.

A CRT approach to understanding race and education necessarily considers the relationship between schools and society broadly, and between schools and individual communities, and cultures and homes in particular. Of specific interest are the convergences and divergences, the linking and delinking of school and home culture. CRT in education has focused on the persistent inability of schools to understand, value, and integrate the knowledge (cultural and otherwise) of the home. A CRT reading of the home–school relationship would, thus, point to both the need to extend cultural understanding through bridging these spheres and the

limitations and barriers posed to doing so. Many teachers often do not understand the microsystem of the home as well as they should, and this gap can prevent teachers from bridging the school–home divide (as well as prevent them from knowing how or why to do so). A host of scholars—including McClain (2010); Gosa and Alexander (2007); Desimone (1999); Wright & Phillips Smith (1998); Delpit (1992); Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, and Johnson (1990); and Ogbu (1978) among others—have demonstrated that race continues to constitute a barrier in the home–school relationship and, thus, continues to impact student educational well-being. Tyler et al. (2010), Ladson-Billings (1995), and others have highlighted the impact of home–school dissonance for racially and economically marginalized children and families in which the cultural norms of school are, at times, inconsistent with those of the home. In these cases, the knowledge of the home is potentially inconsistent with the formal and informal curriculum taught in schools. Further, the assumption that education is value free and acts as an equalizer in society may fail to recognize student experiences of racial and economic marginalization, thus delegitimizing the lived experience—the lived truth—of students. While still problematizing the dissonance between school and home, this study takes CRT in a new direction, looking at the institutional production of antiracism in the home by teachers: looking at institutions as producers of antiracism. This approach expands the reach of CRT to more clearly and completely explore the underdeveloped dynamics of school–home relations within CRT research considering education.

Recognizing first that children do not learn only in school and, second, that cultural dissonance disadvantages children whose homes do not operate according to the cultural norms found in school, Comer (1984, 1989) and Bronfenbrenner (1986) theorized the need for bridging the home–school divide and argued for a recognition of the multiple spheres in which children’s learning takes place. There are a host of streams considering the relationship between home and school, from scholarship on culturally relevant pedagogy (e.g., Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003) to homeschooling (e.g., Alarcon, 2010; Apple, 2000) to critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1997; McLaren & Fischman, 2005) and others. Within these important areas of scholarship, however, the intersections and interconnections between multiple spheres of teaching learning are not front or center, leaving the dialogical relationship between the state, schools, teachers, parents, and students undertheorized. Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecology systems theory directly addressed these dynamics. The ecological systems theory originally identified and categorized four spheres in order to produce a more holistic portrait of the learning environment.¹ The microsystem includes the home, school, peers, immediate family, and daily learning influences

nearest to the child. The mesosystem describes the connections between the distinct components of the microsystem. The exosystem refers to elements that affect the child, but which the child herself may not impact, such as social status, parent occupation, and family relations, as well as salient sociocultural preferences and habits. The macrosystem refers to the connections and relationships between the other three elements (microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem).

The multiple spheres described above are useful for understanding the teacher home visit. Ecology systems scholars Lin and Bates (2010) argued that teacher home visits constitute an operation of the mesosystem, connecting the micro spheres of home and school. They wrote, “home visits also allow teachers to learn more about the child’s exosystem and macrosystem, especially in regards to parent’s occupations, family’s culture and parental attitudes and beliefs” (2010, p. 181). Indeed, a variety of scholars address the ways in which home visits impact educational stakeholders’ understanding of teaching, learning, and schooling. Meyer and Mann (2006) described U.S. teacher perceptions of the positive value of home visits, Peralta-Nash (2003) explained the way home visits deepen student understanding of education, while Cowan, Kim, St. Roseman, and Echandia (2002) illustrated the positive impact both on test scores and on parent–teacher relations. Lin and Bates suggested that, as a result of visiting the student home, “teachers will be able to provide more meaningful materials and activities to better meet children’s cultural, linguistic and intellectual needs” (2010, p. 181). This is the dominant understanding of the way home visitation works within an ecology systems framework and works with the CRT notion that White middle class culture permeates formal schooling to the exclusion of racially minoritized students and their cultural home lives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Applied to teachers’ race-work in Cuba, this study broadens traditional applications of both CRT and ecology systems. The structure of the ecology systems framework remains intact for the Cuban case with flow of knowledge travelling the same road but in the opposite direction. Where the ecology systems framework, as applied in North American home–school relationships, has sought to understand, recognize, and value the culture and experience of racially minoritized students, Cuban teachers are instead charged with educating parents and guardians in the home about school culture—the dominant antiracist paradigm disseminated by and through Cuban education. Here, we are dealing with a better understanding of the social ecology of systems that shape the possibilities of teachers’ race-work and the professional learning and development that tend to arise from and through it; and, from this type of approach, there emerges a range of crucial questions applicable to the broader Cuban North American context

as well. These questions begin with the limits and pressures on teachers' professional work lives in dynamics that resist their ability to understand the racially minoritized children they teach. Similarly, where CRT has typically focused on the dissonance between White middle class schooling norms and the homes and communities of students of color, CRT is useful in this study for understanding the antiracist work of school in challenging racist parents. Where Taveras (1998) pointed out that home visits impact the way teachers teach, the findings below point to Cuban teacher home visits aimed at impacting the way parents parent.

Finally, in his analysis of the comparative success of Cuba's educational system, Carnoy (2007) identified what he called state-generated social capital, which in the Cuban educational context refers to the formal and informal expectations and requirements imposed by the state on all students as far as academic achievement. Indeed, the structure of education is such that "the state 'requires' children to be successful in school as their ability permits" (Carnoy 2007, p. 36). While Carnoy's analysis is focused on the positive impact of state-generated social capital on academic achievement (grades) as well as equitable access to educational outcomes for students from diverse economic backgrounds, the idea is relevant for understanding the way race is taught in Cuba, according to participants in this study, and the home–school relationship in particular. As the findings presented below illustrate, the expectations of the state, expressed specifically through the actions and words of the teachers, form a type of social capital imposition with regard to race politics and the education of children in which academic expectations include issues such as student behavior and beliefs about race and racism. As a quasi-official extracurriculum, state-generated social capital is something everyone learns in Cuba and which, the findings illustrate, is expressed in the relationship between participants in this study and the families of students they teach.

Critical race theory and the ecology systems framework are informative for a deeper understanding of Cuban teachers' race-work and, in particular, the way that work and the rationale for it simultaneously emerge from and impact broader state and institutional contexts, pressures, and histories. The concept of state-generated social capital is crucial for posing and considering new questions and approaches for understanding home/school dynamics and teachers' professional lives in countries beyond Cuba. As an artifact produced by all education systems (in different ways and to differing degrees), the metric of state-generated social capital allows for a common frame for understanding the relationship between schools and homes generally, and between teachers and parents/guardians in particular—a metric that considers the potential efficacy, content, and impact of the teaching occurring in these relationships.

THE STUDY, METHODOLOGY, AND RESEARCH METHODS

The findings in this article emerge from a multiyear (2008–2011) mixed-method study conducted in Havana, Cuba. During five research trips to the island, I interviewed 45 Cuban teachers about their race-work in terms of broader questions and histories of race and racism in Cuba, as well as the impact of race on their pedagogy and professional lives. In addition to the interviews and in conjunction with a local research team, I surveyed 150 teachers in the Havana area on the same issues. The unique opportunity and cooperation afforded the realization and integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, capable of allowing the exploration of more detailed social processes in the context of professional biography as well as some questions of potential inference regarding the prevalence of such dynamics across a somewhat broader population.

SAMPLE, RECRUITMENT, AND DATA COLLECTION

Cuba's capital city of Havana has a population of 2.1 million. In terms of the qualitative data, all interviewees were teachers living and working in downtown Havana, in the La Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, and Cerro boroughs. The population in these three areas is largely working class and many suffer from a widespread housing shortage in the downtown core, with numerous three- and four-generation households residing in small, crowded, and often unsafe spaces. These are mixed-race areas and relevant for a purposive sample given the aims of this project, though Afro-Cubans are also slightly over-represented in these areas (Sawyer, 2006). Community liaisons assisted me in targeting teachers from these neighborhoods and schools, after which I used a snowball method of participant location and recruitment wherein the original subjects were given an information sheet to distribute to people they felt might be interested and qualified. Teachers interested in participating then contacted me directly. A roughly equal number of male (22) and female (23) teachers participated. Fifteen of the teachers were Mestizo (of mixed race), one was Chinese-Cuban, 21 were Afro-Cuban, and eight were White (see Table 1 below). Teachers varied in age between 19 and 68, and spent between 2 and 30 years teaching.

Survey participants were drawn from across Havana's 15 boroughs, including the three from which interview respondents were recruited. Respondents were recruited at a summer education institute at one of Cuba's 16 university-level schools of education. Research team members approached teachers and inquired about their interest in participating. Team members later met with interested teachers, explained the project and the survey, and answered any questions. Women outnumber men among the survey respondents at 67.4% and 32.6% respectively. The over-representation

of females was designed to match anecdotal data on the breakdown of the teacher population as a whole. As far as race, selecting from four choices, 57.8% identified as Mestizo, 18.9% identified as Afro-Cuban, 22% identified as White, and 1.3% identified as Chinese (See Table 1).

Table 1. Participants by Race

Survey Respondents (N=151)	Interview Participants (N=45)	Race
57.8%	33.3%	Mestizo
18.9%	46.6%	Afro-Cuban
22%	17.7%	White
1.3%	0.2%	Chinese-Cuban

As paired (mixed methods) samples, the survey design produces a significant degree of overlap between the data sets on the key variables (i.e., occupation, teacher race, and the location of work across urban boroughs that are both more and less mixed race). As the survey sample is only partially representative, caution is exercised in terms of inference; the inferences that are suggested depend significantly from additional interpretation available vis-à-vis the qualitative findings.

DATA COLLECTION: INTERVIEW AND SURVEY

Interviews were structured, with closed- and open-ended questions covering the following topic areas: the role of race and racism in Cuban society; the role of race and racism in Cuban education; the relevance of race to student experience; and the relevance of race for teacher work, pedagogy, and professional life. The composition of these questions emerges from themes raised in education research on home-school relations, CRT, and a small set of Cuban-focused scholarship referenced in this article. See Appendix A for representative examples of questions asked in each of the topic areas.

Interviews generally lasted 30–75 minutes, and were audio recorded. Recorded open-ended responses were thereafter transcribed by me and two bilingual research assistants. Interviews were conducted with one or two teachers at once, with each participant answering the same question in turn, in the case of the latter. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, with a bilingual research assistant present to provide clarification when needed. After each interview was complete, I recorded by hand any additional details, including side conversations (portions of which may not have been recorded), details about the context, and reflections I had. I also wrote descriptive analytic field notes detailing my gut feelings about the race politics and pedagogy of participants. The interview format values the centrality of experiential knowledge and recognizes the “subject”

as a custodian of relevant experiential knowledge (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000), a general tenet of critical interpretivist research and of specific importance to CRT-informed research and analysis. Open-ended questions and interviews allow just this within a CRT frame and are inclusive of storytelling (Delgado, 1989) and counter-storytelling (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). As Stepan (1991) argued, researching race poses unique challenges as it is a social construct that is both ideological and discursive (see also Parker & Lynn, 2002). To get at the layers, arguments, degrees, nuances, experiences, and histories during my time with teachers, a reflective conversation was needed. Elaboration and immediate follow up are available in the interview context and, through this, emerges the pursuit of thick description as outlined by Geertz (1973) and others.

The survey instrument was developed after the completion, translation, and initial analysis of the first five interviews. Guided by participant interview responses, the survey consisted of 30 closed-ended questions covering the following topics: respondent demographics, racism and the role of race in contemporary Cuba, the role of racism in the classroom, and the relevance of race in the classroom. These questions were composed to speak in a complementary way to issues raised vis-à-vis the interview questionnaire, providing a means to establish an aggregated understanding (e.g., testing of prevalence of specific practices, experiences, and opinions) of several of the key dynamics drawn into sharper and more detailed relief in the course of qualitative data analysis. Although the survey broadens the findings of the interviews, the data presented here are descriptive rather than inferential, and the results are not drawn from true random sampling. Despite the use of mixed methods, the qualitative analysis played a more dominant role in the analytic thinking reported here. Most nondemographic questions on the survey used a five-point forced choice Likert scale format. The two questions that did not follow the format asked respondents to rank a series of social phenomena in order of importance from one to five. (See Appendix B for representative examples of survey questions.) Respondents were asked to read the survey and were then asked if they had any questions before beginning. After completion, participants were asked again if they needed any clarification. Participants were given as much time as needed. The survey was written in English and translated to Spanish by a bilingual research assistant before distribution.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the interview translation and transcription were complete, I read all of the transcripts in their entirety without taking notes, but while bearing in mind the topic areas mentioned above. I then added my field notes from

each interview and read through a second time, taking notes on recurring themes from the transcripts and field notes. From there, I performed a thematic analysis of transcripts (see Ryan & Bernard, 2003) with a focus on the following themes: teacher denial of the relevance of race, distinctions between the relevance of race in the educational context and the general Cuban context, phenomena or concepts found in the existing relevant literature, convergence and divergence between official discourse and teacher responses, missing information, definitions of race (explicit or implicit), the convergences and divergences of the official and hidden curricula, and teacher commentary on the home-school relationship. In many cases, I added notes to the coding to guide further analysis. (For sample transcription coding and notes from this stage, see Appendix C.) After highlighting these themes within the transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994), responses were organized by theme from which indicative vignettes were drawn for illustration (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). From these metathemes, my cross-case analysis identified divergences and convergences within teacher responses, for example divergent/convergent conceptions of racism and practices in relation to home/school relations and teachers' broader race work (Taylor, Bodgan, & Walker, 2000). In cases where trends appeared, I grouped responses as subthemes. These findings were then considered in light of the quantitative findings from the survey (the questions that address many of the themes identified above). I used SPSS® software to derive basic descriptive statistics from the survey findings, carried out selective bivariate (cross-tabulations) comparisons of survey findings on key sets of variables implicating central analytic points emerging from the interview analysis, and make use of chi-square testing for the strength of statistical relationships.

TECHNIQUES FOR ESTABLISHING RIGOR/LIMITATIONS

The general powers of the individual methods and the combined mix-method approach aside, the research presents a series of limitations that should be noted. First, the study is limited to the Havana area. Second, despite the care in constructing a varied sample (both interview and survey sampling) this is not a true random sample. Clearly, caution is in order as a self-selection filter (as with much research) exercised by the subjects themselves sets in motion the biases of interest level, comfort level, and so on. Third, again as with social research contained by a fairly narrow time frame such as this (three years and discrete research visits), findings must be carefully contextualized not only in terms of place (Havana) but time, a matter that bears somewhat uniquely on this research in the context of a country like Cuba undergoing particularly rapid change. Fourth, while ideally the interview research would have

included an attempt at sampling across all of Havana's 15 boroughs (as in the survey research), only three were used. These core limitations of the research, dealt with as transparently and as critically as possible, nevertheless allow us to draw some relevant, if somewhat exploratory rather than inferential, conclusions in terms of Havana and, to a lesser degree, the Cuban context. Along the way, I suggest, the approach allows us to raise, as well, new questions applicable to teachers elsewhere. Indeed, these limitations are more endurable than usual given the paucity of research on Cuban teachers' professional lives generally and teachers' race-work across home-schooling divides specifically.

ON (WHITE FOREIGN) LOCATION

As far as research conducted using CRT, a consideration of race was necessary alongside a consideration of language and citizenship status. In Cuba, I am a White foreigner with only passable Spanish and there are certain ethnographic doors closed to me as a result. This motivated my decision to include the quantitative survey component and have it conducted by local Afro-Cuban and Mestizo researchers. This resulted in discrete participant groups: one group of 45 interviewed by me and one group of 150 surveyed by Cuban researchers. While my disconnection was a border in this sense, it was a passport in others. Whiteness, I am quite sure, chauffeured me through numerous situations in downtown Havana. My color acted as insulation against attention from authorities in the highly policed Central Havana region.

Within the qualitative interviews, I had to consider my own privilege going in, and had to allow the revelation of that privilege to proceed as the participants saw fit. Few conversations ended without me answering questions about my salary, my partner's salary, my partner's race, whether or not I was racist, the price of my Havana apartment, the price of my plane ticket, the cost and brand of my clothes, etc. Although perhaps small points of curiosity on the surface, this questioning opened the door for a dialogical interaction about race, class, and the relationship between the two—a conversation in which questions of my race and of racism in North America were included. I had to allow myself to be implicated in the topic and the conversation in order to begin any subversion of the traditional one-way information exchange that has characterized so much academic research. A two-way conversation also serves to validate the conversation as a site of knowledge generation in and of itself. As Hytten and Adkins argued in James (2007), "Dialogue is critical to disrupting the normative power of whiteness because in order to see our own worlds differently, we must learn to listen to others and to some extent, see ourselves through others' eyes" (p.127). Displacing the usual contours of data collection is

one, albeit small, way to get past notions of research authority, as well as the race power imbalances with which such notions come. The above considerations notwithstanding, CRT reminds us that any claim of total epistemological clarity as far as the way my social location impacted my own positionality and ability to understand the racialized nuances of the data presented would be fallacious.

RESULTS

Below, I explore the qualitative and descriptive quantitative findings in two sections. The first sketches teacher understanding of race and racism in education, illustrating the link between race-work and teacher understanding of the Cuban project as a whole. The second section looks at the content, nature, and frequency of teacher home visits undertaken to discuss race with families, as well as teacher rationale for these visits. In defining the core concepts of interest from the ecological systems perspective outlined above, in relation to these data we see teachers frequently identify the home and family (microsystem) as the primary source of racist behavior and/or beliefs held by students. This is a mesosystemic phenomenon as teachers work to effect a change in the teaching and learning that take place within the home with regard to race politics. Teachers understand home visits as part of a larger parent–teacher relationship (one between two distinct components of the microsystem), which includes parent–teacher nights and other direct communication between home and school. I conclude the results section by investigating the various facets of this mesosystemic relationship as well as concomitant power dynamics.

TEACHERS ON RACE AND RACISM IN EDUCATION

The most revealing insights with regard to the presence and existence of racism were offered when teachers explained the ways in which they addressed racism using pedagogical interventions. It was in these explanations that the home–school relationship came into focus. Speaking about the relevance of race on the island in general however, many teachers were quick to point to the successes of the revolution, historically and currently, in the elimination of racism. Of those surveyed, most argued there was indeed no racism in Cuba, and teachers overwhelmingly agreed about the success of the revolution in eliminating racism (see Table 2). Additionally, as Table 2 demonstrates, most teachers also misjudged the degree to which race plays a role in employment, education, and remittances.

Table 2. Survey Responses on Race and Racism in Cuba

Statement	% Disagreeing or Strongly Disagreeing	% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing
There is no racism in Cuba (N=150)	28%	69.9%
I am proud of the social and cultural gains of the revolution (N=150)	0%	100%
Race matters in terms of the jobs people get (N=149)	92.3%	6.7%
The tourism industry benefits Cubans of all races equally (N=150)	19.3%	80%
Whites receive more remittances than other Cubans (N=150)	84%	16%

Of those interviewed, most argued that Cuba’s socialist project, Cuban national identity, and Cubans themselves were antiracist. When pushed on these ideas further, such responses relied upon a somewhat romanticized understanding of the national past and a sense of accomplishment based on the substantial relative successes of the revolution as far as racial equality, of which most participants were highly aware. Teachers associated the antiracist character of Cuban society with national unity and identified racial harmony as a tool for political and cultural survival. Unity, for many Cuban teachers, is mandatory and is something that helps in the struggle for dignity in hard times, providing a sense of pride for those on board with the official discursive project. This social corrective function is evidenced in the following remarks from Lucia² (an Afro-Cuban woman):

The child is educated to be anti-racist. From an early age, as early as preschool they are being taught when they are in primary and secondary. The child knows how to behave in school and how to interact with his classmates regardless of race or skin color, also regardless of any disabilities . . . If there is racism, we take the necessary steps. We talk with the students and we take radical measures because in an educational centre, racism must not exist.

Lucia’s insistence that racism “must” not exist was echoed by numerous other teachers in the course of explaining the ways in which it did. Understanding of the normative role of race was indeed similar across the participant group. Teachers in no way reported grappling with their own understanding of race and, instead, asserted a prescriptive notion of race and racism centered in a refusal to accept the idea of a permanent or inherently Cuban racism. Lucia continued:

In disciplinary matters, for example one [W]hite student hates another [B]lack student, I make them play together, because if they

are together they will have to work together as a team. I have a lot of success with that. As the time passes they will achieve unity and teamwork. This is what we need to do as a nation—work together in humanity, in solidarity, in socialism for the collective future and present, in light of the capitalist and more recent socialist past. Cuba is unique in this way.

The powerful normative function of combating inequality is revealed in these explanations alongside specific strategies for countering student acts and expressions of racism.

Teacher perceptions of race in Cuba rely upon the idea that the state has been largely successful in combating racism and, further, that the conditions of daily life inherently promote racial equality. The work of Bell (2000), Ladson-Billings (1999), and other CRT scholars reminds us that a failure to name and address racism can preserve its existence and that racism can both require and create the conditions for its own invisibility. The persistence of racism, evidenced by research detailed above as well as by the findings below, is unaccounted for in the interpretations of many teachers, as is the institutional life of racism that is preserved in areas such as tourism, remittances, and jurisprudence. Teachers are not, however, race blind—or blinding—in their practice. They understand themselves and producers and products of the antiracist Cuban project and state. Against this backdrop, teachers undertake race-work in service of a normative antiracist project of nation-building. Emboldened by the notion that their expectations and understanding of race and racism are the right ones for parents and students, they are both users and transmitters of state-generated social capital. The fourth sphere identified by Bronfenbrenner is the macrosystem, which refers to the connections and relationships between the other three elements. As border crossers, teachers' work is macrosystemic, as they travel and conduct their business in and across these multiple spheres. As far as the Cuban race conversation, the common and legitimate currency linking the teachers, the home, the school, the culture, and the relationships among them is a national narrative that, while acting as a compass for the educational and moral direction of the nation, uncomfortably binds these spaces and spheres. Participants are thus traveling on a discursive passport, funded by state-generated social capital, wherein forceful appeals to the official truth (namely that Cuba cannot be a racist place and Cubans cannot be racist) both direct and condone the purpose and content of their pedagogy as well as their understanding of race and racism. As the findings below on home visits demonstrate, participants are generators of this social capital; and parent/guardian–teacher interactions as well as student–teacher interactions are acts of social capital generation and transmission.

TEACHER HOME VISITS AS MICROSYSTEM BORDER CROSSING

Participants felt empowered in their relationship with parents as far as issues of racism are concerned. Teachers glean significant support in this view from the Cuban revolutionary government's long valued and celebrated achievements of its education system linked to its orientation (created as well as recovered from the past) toward race and national identity specifically. In other words, teachers do race-work not simply as part of their job, but out of a commitment to their somewhat varied understanding of the ideals of the revolution. Patriotism fuels the race-work of teachers who feel legitimately compelled to enter and affect home culture as part of their responsibility to their students and country. Race-work with parents/guardians is not simply an act of reporting improper student behavior but, instead, aims to change parent/guardian perceptions about race and racism, which many teachers feel is the source of the racist beliefs and behaviors in students. Indeed, according to many of the teachers interviewed, the role of parents/guardians is a key primary ingredient of student success or failure in all areas:

We have to communicate with parents because without that, students can be at a disadvantage. For example, in the situation where a child is marginalized [economically] . . . perhaps he/she is very smart. The parents of this child did not receive any education. Therefore these parents wish for their children to be able to obtain good results, to build a career . . . Here is where the participation and guidance from parents is necessary and not only at home but also in the education process . . . In this case, I am talking about the people less fortunate economically. To be fair, there are cases where the financial situation is better and the parents do not show any interest either. (Ivan, an Afro-Cuban male teacher)

The corollary of Ivan's argument is the implication that parents might be to blame for student failure (since they are to be credited with success). While Ivan's analysis takes account of the degree to which learning is embedded in social context as well as contingent on personal/familial drive and volition, he also pointed out that learning and success are simultaneously mediated by particular circumstances. To clarify the significance of the point here by comparison, where deficit approach attacks on the educational ethics and/or ethos of poor and racially minoritized families in North American contexts may tend to place blame (for failures) on parents while giving credit (for successes) to schools, Ivan's approach begins with the credit owed to a family that takes the time, and mentions that the same neglect occurs in families with more money. While he did not appear to address material circumstances such as free time, he did look at educational opportunity among

the parents and, at the same time, steered away from deficit thinking or sociocultural pathologization of the families he described.

Still, this same dynamic allows that other teachers may nevertheless look less sympathetically, and with less flexibility, upon the relationship between the parent and his or her child's learning, as the following dialogue demonstrates:

Teachers are the students' parents so they learn what we are teaching them, and this knowledge is taken home and they sometimes reject their parents' comments on this matter, and they discuss this matter; "this is my friend; he is my classmate" they reject the values the parents may place on their friend's color. (Marco, an Afro-Cuban male)

Is this a problem with parents? (Interviewer)

No, of course not, school is where everything begins; we make parents feel that they cannot teach their children not to be with Blacks, because if a student tells their parents that the teacher told them to be with the Black student, the parents do not have the courage to come to school and say that their children cannot be with a black person because the teacher will not allow that. (Marco)

For Marco, the dialogical approach of convincing, rather than just silencing or demanding agreement in the mesosystemic interaction with parents is absent when it comes to parents and race. This exercise of discursive authority is common to the practice of many teachers with whom I spoke. Marco's comments on the parental lack of courage can be taken two ways: Read one way, parents know they are wrong and that their racist ideas and practices of inculcating their children are wrong. In this case, there may be a reflexive and transformative result stemming from this use of power. The second reading would be to see the lack of courage as a fear of public and political sanction. Read this way, Marco's approach does little more than reinforce, and perhaps even calcify, the very public silence that has served to preserve racism in Cuba. In the same vein, we can examine the following teacher's description of her strategy for addressing persistent tardiness, using a technique that echoes Marco's bluntness:

At the beginning of class, we line the children up and tell them only 19 children came, that so and so is missing and that it is ok . . . but then the child arrives, and . . . poor child . . . he says he is late because his mother woke up late. Then the other children say they are going to speak to the mother and we go to this child's house to speak to her. And from then on, the child arrives to school on time. (Irene, Afro Cuban female teacher)

Likewise, Ezequiel (a Mestizo-Cuban man) argued that dealing directly and unequivocally with parents “is a way to educate the parents.” In each case, due to simple practicality, we might assume that such mass visits are rare; however, what stands out here is the implication emerging from these illustrations that such powerful mesosystem crossover between school and home (between public and private microsystems) is a normal, and unremarkable, occurrence.

Although most teachers see themselves as educating and as effecting change in their relationships with parents, they generally described a more dialogical approach to this mesosystemic practice than the teachers described above. Teacher descriptions of these interactions imply an openness among parents (and among Cubans generally) to specific ideas about citizenship, politics, and possibly change but, more directly, a legitimacy of teachers to initiate and sustain with parents/guardians an overtly political discussion revolving around citizenship, the nature of the country, its norms, and trajectory of development. The following dialogue explores this further:

As a teacher, do you have the right and/or the responsibility to change the opinions—to teach within the private sphere of the family? (Interviewer)

. . . the teacher can come and take the liberty to talk to the parents about personal issues even if the teacher is new at the school. And you can tell them or advise them since there are no restrictions and parents never take offense . . . (Mariela, a Mestizo-Cuban woman)

Never, why not? (Interviewer)

Because Cubans . . . we are an open society and therefore we say what we think and that is that. It is not like I have to keep something to avoid hurting you . . . And [it is not as if] the teacher can even take the liberty to punish the students or to scold them without the parent’s consent because the parent does not get upset: parents accept the fact that teachers are an authority. (Mariela)

And Lucia, what has been your experience? (Interviewer)

Some do get mad because sometimes you scold the children and they run to their parents and tell them the teacher punished them and then the parents turn against you. But then you can explain to them so they understand but children do not explain the reason why the teacher punished them. But, when we tell them, they understand; but we do have to treat parents in a nice way. (Lucia, a Mestizo-Cuban woman)

Even in the case of parents who resist this imposition, Lucia argued that although they often need handling, they eventually come around to the position of the teacher. If we accept the Cuban teacher as the custodian of the official position, we can assume that bringing parents around is eased by the substantial legitimacy offered not only by their professional position but also by their discursive position. Teachers understand these forms of legitimacy and authority as stemming from the power of the Cuban state as exercised through and by them as teachers, as well as from a belief in the inherently just content of the ideals upon which they are insisting with parents and students. State-generated social capital is relevant here. Ivan (an Afro-Cuban man) argued “parents want their children to do well in school, and not demonstrate or have these behaviors or beliefs.” Just as teachers have the authority and, indeed, responsibility to express and maintain high expectations of student academic work as part of a national identity project, teachers also address issues of race and racism using the very same authority and legitimacy supported by a set of expectations tied to national identity and student success.

The relationship with parents is envisioned by teachers as a partnership within the broader project of the child’s education, although it is a somewhat uneven partnership, as the following quotations demonstrate:

In general, what do you think is the role that racism plays in the educational processes? For example, if there is a child that comes from a family where there are racist ideas and she expresses this toward another student, what do you do? How far does this situation go? Who is responsible for solving this situation? (Interviewer)

We just have a meeting with the parents at first at home, so they can act and help us with changes in the child’s attitude. We are not the only ones involved in their education, so we need them too, considering they spend long times with them at home. We let them know that we care about them because we see the potential their students have to be an important and recognized part of this country. (Sebastien, an Afro-Cuban man)

Do they listen to you? (Interviewer)

Yes, always. (Sebastien)

Sebastien’s colleague, Oswaldo (an Afro-Cuban man) was quick to contextualize Sebastien’s description:

It is part of the culture to educate them with the ideology of equality. It is an ideology passed on by generations. Jose Martí is one of our idols, and we learned from him that racism is not accepted; it

should not exist. So we bring this concept to our everyday life and into our education system.

Sebastien's description reveals the conversation is dialogical only to a point. While the teacher is indeed convincing, rather than insisting, it is the teacher and not the parent/guardian who is the active knower, while the parent is subject to the discourse, a subject who, as Sebastien explained, always listens. Xiomara, a Mestizo-Cuban woman, provided the following description of the process:

It is a given that if a student has an issue or creates a problem with his peers, or if he has an incorrect idea about skin colour, whether his or someone else's, then I will speak to his parents: "Where does this problem come from? Why does this child think like this?" There are parents that resist and others that do not. But there are some that are more understanding. In the end, you are the teacher and have to explain to the parents what the problem is, the situation and how their children fare in all of it. If you do not inform them, then how will this problem get solved? We have to coordinate [efforts] between the school and home . . . just as in all areas of school work.

The influence parents/guardians have on schools, as well as the reverse, thus emerges out of dialogical processes, which, albeit skewed to privilege the dominant knowledge of the teacher, is a negotiation all the same. The teacher-parent/guardian relationship seems to thus perform a dual role of challenging racism within the public sphere, while implanting what is likely sometimes uninvited official public discourse in private spaces of the home. A convergence of influences (including education itself) thus creates a conflicted space in which teachers make sense of contradictory racial truths, or racial truth claims. The home-school relationship is mobilized as a producer and distributor of normative racial common sense. From an ecology systems perspective, this common sense travels from the state sphere, through the school sphere, to the home sphere, and, ultimately, takes root in the child.

While the interviews provide a more personalized portrait of teacher understanding of the home-school relationship, the survey results provide evidence of the frequency and degree to which teachers address race as part of their professional practice. Here, I draw on some basic descriptive findings to explore some key issues. As with the qualitative findings, survey responses about race and professional practice tended to reveal a complicated and complex teacher engagement with race, racism, and antiracism. Over one quarter of teachers (28.3%) agree with the statement "I am forced to respond to issues of racism in my class" while 71.4% disagree.

With specific reference to parent/guardian-teacher, and home-school relationships, 33.6% of those surveyed indicated that they addressed issues of racism with the parents of their students, while 42.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was a teacher's responsibility to address racism via home visits. The incidence of feelings of responsibility appears more common than incidence of addressing racism in the classroom. In other words, many of those surveyed would indeed address racism more often, if it came up, as a matter of duty.

Teacher meetings with parents are not all informal and conducted at the discretion of the teacher. When asked about strategies for addressing racism, a number of teachers described the monthly parent teacher nights (called School for Parents) that happen at most K-10 schools. The School for Parents was formalized as part of the Teach Your Child program, founded in 1987, which focuses mainly on prekindergarten education but also makes recommendations for teaching and learning for older children. One teacher explained that it encourages a dialogue between parents and teachers about their students and gives parents an early idea that they should, for the good of their children, be having these conversations on an ongoing basis. Speaking about the role of education in the fight against racism, Lucia and Maritza explained:

So schools are places where you can convert students from racist to antiracist? (Interviewer)

Yes you educate them, you form them. (Maritza, an Afro-Cuban woman)

And here there is a program for parents called Teach Your Child. (Lucia, a Mestizo-Cuban woman)

About racism? (Interviewer)

No, it is not only about racism. If there is racist behavior in a child, we bring this to his/her parents' attention and ask the parents for help in the matter. Most parents know from Teach Your Child that it is important to speak and listen to their child's teachers. (Lucia)

School for Parents was a key recommendation of the Teach Your Child program. Scheduled at a time convenient for parents/guardians, administration, and faculty the meetings usually last 30-90 minutes and take place at the school. Parents/guardians often gather in the main classroom of the child (or children) for a short presentation from the teacher, followed by a discussion period. Xiomara (a Mestizo-Cuban woman) explained:

The school uses parent meetings for various purposes. For one, the school organizes them to provide parents with guidelines and

information on the courses. If there are issues with a student then you, as a teacher, can call the parent to come into the school so the two of you may resolve the issue: the parent and the teacher. But, there are monthly meetings where teachers update the parents as to their child's performance in school, how they are progressing or not, and whether you have had an issue or success with a student. This is all part of what you can tell the parents during these meetings. We use those meetings to address issues of racial inequality if they have arisen, and this way we are addressing the issue to all parents.

While meetings are supposed to be fairly structured and focused, teachers indicate they often become a catch-all check-in for parents/guardians, where assignments are discussed as well as specific behavioral issues. Some teachers pointed to the adult education function of School for Parents, citing the historical inaccessibility of education for some parents/guardians. Antiracist education for the parents/guardians can thus happen within these meetings, in a nonaccusatory way, addressing all parents/guardians and students, and advancing the official position in an informal manner. Some teachers report using highly creative strategies in these sessions, involving student-generated reflections of race and inequality, as explained in the following interview:

Can you describe the ways in which race might be addressed at the School for Parents? (Interviewer)

These schools are small gatherings for parents and we do small skits, or a small theatrical piece. One time, after one student would not play with another because he was black, we did a small theatrical skit about working and playing together. I had the two students write together, as part of a larger group. We also do it with the children and with the parents, according to the issues that need addressing. We also do it with the entire family if the grandparents, aunts and uncles want to come . . . With the older students, it sometimes gets the children and parents to connect; they are all there. (Irene, an Afro-Cuban woman)

Note that Irene is the same woman who sent her entire class to scold the sleepy mom. Irene's rich description provides a wonderful picture of community building in and around the school context, and of her own proactive approach to race and racism in the class. School for Parents is a key tool for communication between parents and teachers and, indeed, a crucial element of the overall home-school relationship.

These meetings are limited in the degree to which parents are equal partners in the discussion—above and beyond anything else, they are there to learn rather than be learned from. While this approach may

potentially suppress local knowledge, it also forms local knowledge and, as one teacher mentioned, is a learning opportunity for parents—particularly those who may need correction for what teachers consider old-fashioned thinking about race.

A CRT reading of these data raises important questions about the success of race-work here, as well as the limitations. For example, owing to a lack of data from parents/guardians, it is unclear what challenges parents/guardians might face when bringing up issues of racism facing their child at school. Given the discursive authority of the teacher, this might be particularly challenging if the teacher does not agree. It is clear not all teachers address racism in their classrooms or with the parents of students they teach. For those that do not, it is unlikely that they have simply not come across racist behavior or students in their classrooms and schools, suggesting that some teachers cannot or choose not to see and address racist behavior. Indeed, teachers who believe racism does not exist in Cuba are less likely to address race with students and parents as Tables 3 and 4 illustrate.

Table 3. Survey Responses on Addressing Race in the Classroom

Cross-tabulation Frequency Percentage		“There is no racism in Cuba”	
		Agree & Strongly Agree	Disagree & Strongly Disagree
“I am forced to respond to issues of racism in my classroom”	Agree & Strongly Agree	9.3%	90.7%
	Disagree Agree & Strongly Disagree	78.6%	21.4%

Note. Pearson Chi-Square= 71.087. $p < 0.001$ (N=150)

Table 4. Survey Responses on Addressing Race with Parents

Cross-tabulation Frequency Percentage		“There is no racism in Cuba”	
		Agree & Strongly Agree	Disagree & Strongly Disagree
“I address issues of racism with the parents of my students”	Agree & Strongly Agree	14.2%	85.8%
	Disagree Agree & Strongly Disagree	81%	19%

Note. Pearson Chi-Square= 62.198. $p < 0.001$ (N=149)

Bearing this in mind, as well as the findings from Table 2, racism may thus go unchecked in many classrooms and homes. While recognizing this potential limitation, it is clear that many teachers appear to understand

racism, as well as their professional responsibility with regard to racism, in a variety of disparate ways, suggesting that antiracist practice as well as sensitivity to racism is far from unanimous. Further, it is unclear how the lived experience of race, a crucial consideration for critical race theorists, is communicated from parents to teachers. How might teachers learn from these experiences in order to strengthen their abilities to effect change in these areas? This is a tension raised by CRT that has long argued for the relevance of cultural knowledge in the face of dominant White epistemic norms in schooling. While certainly mitigated by the fact that teachers are doing antiracist work, the findings are unclear on whether teachers are open to the possibility of learning from these encounters and, indeed, of being wrong sometimes. There is little evidence that new understanding of antiracism might be generated through this relationship.

It is clear however, that educational institutions, as well as state-generated social capital, mobilize and empower many teachers to target, contest, and challenge racism in the private spaces of Cuban life. This accounting for racism within professional and everyday operation of the classroom appears to organize the significance of racism in Cuban schools. Race conversations with parents are not taboo, and the notion of race is taken up as academic and social rather than a personal matter. For teachers, speaking to parents about a racist student comment is akin to discussing a failed test or persistent incompleteness of homework. Further, conversations about student performance with parents (be it about grades or racist behavior) rely, as Carnoy (2007) demonstrated, upon a societywide narrative of high academic expectations—state-generated social capital—which underwrites teacher authority. In place of race understood as a subjective and private matter, this creates the potential for antiracism to be taken up as objectively superior to racism (just as good grades are taken up as objectively better than poor grades).

The data begin to suggest that, understood as border crossers between the microsystems of the home and the school, teachers may constitute a particularly relevant part of a specific mesosystem that connects these two spheres—or microsystems. Bronfenbrenner identified the third sphere, the exosystem, as those elements that affect the child but that the child herself may not impact, such as social status, parent occupation, and family relations, as well as salient sociocultural preferences and habits. The home–school relationship, and teacher home visits in particular, constitute an attempt by teachers to impact the exosystemic elements of the household—in particular the cultural practices and preferences of racial inclusion and exclusion—and to link those elements to conceptions of student success more broadly. Recognizing that the fish does not notice the water in which she swims, teacher home visits focus on developing antiracist cultural norms in the home to be expressed in spoken and unspoken parent expectations of the child.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

The significance of this study is threefold. Empirically, we learn more about a group of teachers' professional work lives in terms of national narratives on race and citizenship in Cuba generally, and more about the ways in which the home–school relationship plays a key role specifically in their practice. The data here feature highly diverse teachers entering the homes of parents in an effort to promote diversity and counter perceived racism. Noteworthy in itself, the fact that these teachers have the authority to do so and have a sense of entitlement and responsibility is significant, at the very least for its retooling of the ecology systems framework and more broadly for its implications about the nature of school and society in Cuba. Teacher responses from this study illustrate that racism, understood by teachers as a product of the home as described above, is a persistent issue in many classrooms. Within the extensive experiences of these participants, the equality-oriented policies of the Cuban revolution have led to a racial transformation of many of the institutional spaces but have failed to adequately affect the private space of the home, that is to say, the way people feel about race and racism and the way it is taken up in the home.

Among the various faces and interfaces of the Cuban government, education is the primary access point between the institutions of the state and the private lives of Cubans. A paradoxical role of schooling thus emerges. On one hand, as a segment of Cuba's institutional framework that is charged with reaching into the sociomoral fabric of the home, schools can assist in preserving many of the numerous gains made by the revolutionary program on race and race relations. On the other hand, schooling itself is currently and historically insufficient as far as countering racism in Cuba, clearly either not doing enough or not able to do enough. In this light, the microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems of student learning described in this study are linked to a national race discourse that is mediated in multiple contexts by historical, cultural, and social forces. By focusing on formal education, which is the primary interface between the Cuban state and the Cuban people, this study reveals a unique portion of the mechanics of how and why race and racism work within education on the island as far as teachers' work and families' interactions with teachers. Although exploratory and descriptive rather than inferential, this study outlines a unique form of cultural transmission in the professional practice of participants, which emerges from the specific historical trajectory of the Cuban project. Although relatively small, the study thus makes a significant contribution to an under-researched area of race and racism in education.

Second, in terms of conceptual significance, we see how we are able to make these dynamics more visible with the help of a combination of CRT,

the ecological systems approach, and Carnoy's (2007) notion of state-generated social capital. Specifically, CRT reveals both the limitations and successes of race-work on the island as far as teacher practice. While Farber (2011), Sawyer (2006), and Blue (2007) demonstrated that racism is an issue in employment, policing, and other areas, the findings of this study demonstrate that race is a persistent issue in the classrooms and professional practice of participants. Tables 2 and 3 above, however, demonstrate that most surveyed teachers believe race is not an issue and that these beliefs correspond to lower rates of addressing racism with students and parents. Additionally, teachers' race-work, and the home-school relationship in particular raise important questions about the production of race in and by institutions, a central focus of CRT. As race workers operating on the authority of the state and state-generated social capital, many teachers participating in this study have aligned and merged academic expectations of students (and parents/guardians) with cultural expectations, in particular those opinions and behaviors concerning race. This reorganization of the place of race-based values raises important questions for CRT scholarship and, indeed, about the way race is understood—the place race is kept—and how racial common sense is understood, produced, and distributed. Specifically, what are the implications for CRT of state-mandated antiracism?

Ecology systems theory offers both a framework for understanding different spheres of learning in which education takes place and an analysis of the educational impact of the interplay between these spheres. In conjunction with CRT, we can analyze the power dynamics of this border crossing in the Cuban context and beyond (teachers as knowers and parents/guardians as receivers) as well as consider the pedagogical opportunities afforded by the relatively porous border separating school and the home and separating teachers and parents/guardians described by participants. Beginning with the premise that dissonance between home and school has negative implications for students, an ecology systems analysis raises important questions about Cuban teacher race-work in the home as an attempt to ameliorate the potential conflicts between beliefs of the home and those espoused at school. This is a new application of ecology systems theory. The concern for and attention to dissonance remains in the Cuban case but the solution to the problem is reversed, with the teacher expectation that parents/guardians become more culturally attuned to the dominant culture of the school. Many teachers participating in this study undertake this work in the service of students (and country) just as they would when speaking with parents/guardians about student academic performance. This race-work is supported by the notion of state-generated social capital which, in the Cuban case, embeds race questions within a larger public context, as opposed to treating race as a private

matter to be subjectively and privately determined and understood. As the data above illustrate, the expectations of the state, expressed specifically through the actions and words of these teachers, form a type of social capital expectation with regard to race politics and the education of children. Indeed, as a quasi-official extracurriculum, antiracism is something everyone is expected to learn in Cuba, an expectation often expressed in the relationship between teachers and the families of students they teach.

Third, in terms of a contribution to the literatures bearing on the intersection of issues of race, education, and teachers' professional work lives, several key questions are raised that, if applied in a similar way to the analysis in other countries with other national narratives, norms, expectations, and so on would, no doubt, initiate relevant discussion. Specifically, I speak here of the place of race in Cuban society, the barriers between school and the home (as well as teachers and parents/guardians), and teacher practice with regard to race and racism as informed by conceptions of nation, social justice, and their own authority. For participants, teacher race-work in the home relies upon and simultaneously promotes an expectation that racism is objectively bad, much like a failing grade on a test. Linking conceptions of social issues, such as race and racism, to a broader understanding of how a student is doing in school may offer new ways of thinking about holistic education, as well as links between school and community. In the extreme, we might ask whether it is possible, or even indeed desirable, for parents to conflate helping their children with homework with teaching their children not to be racist.

This brings the home-school relationship into focus, which, for much of the North American context, involves a more rigid separation than that revealed by this study with regard to matters such as race. This raises questions about the ways in which these barriers are maintained, as well as the possible benefits and hazards arising from their removal. Fleshing out the mesosystemic pathway running two ways between the school and the home, the professional practice of study participants explored here raises questions for Cuba and other contexts about the role of schools and teachers in promoting equity and equality among students, their families, and educational stakeholders more broadly. This, of course, has implications for teacher preparation programs as well, as far as the development of teacher conceptions of responsibility and professional identity. While the Cuban conception of nation is unique as far as the way it informs teachers practice for participants in this study, this connection is certainly relevant in all teacher preparation contexts. Finally, the concept of state-generated social capital, as applied to race in Cuba, offers a transposable metric for exploring the potential of teachers and education to affect student and community perceptions and beliefs concerning race and racism. The intentional linkage

of students' and parents' cultural beliefs and behaviors to broader notions of academic success offers an important example of one way in which state-generated social capital is mobilized and transmitted, a potentially useful level of analysis for study in the North American context.

This study suggests that a careful consideration of the way concepts of nation, citizenship, and professional responsibility inform teacher preparation and practice may deepen our understanding of teachers' race-work in the North American context, as well as support reconsideration thereof, in the service of lessening dissonance between the home and school. This would necessarily involve an interrogation of both formal and informal curricula at the teacher preparation, K–12, and school community levels. At its heart, this would demand a fundamental shift from conceiving of race and racism as private matters to the production and dissemination of widespread antiracist public expectations of students, parents, and teachers linked to educational success, national unity, and citizenship. As schools in the North American context struggle to support broad curricula and critical thinking around socioculture issues in the face of increased standardized teaching and assessment, the Cuban model may offer a radical and, in many ways, extreme vision of another educational approach.

Notes

1. Bronfenbrenner later added a fifth element, the chronosystem, which worked with the temporal elements of influence and referred to children's development and reaction to these events, changes, and developments over time.

2. Pseudonyms were used for all participants.

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Appendix A

Representative Examples of Interview Questions

- A. Sample questions on the role of race and racism in Cuban society:
- Can you please talk about the role of race and racism in Cuba today?
 - Do Afro-Cubans have the same access as Whites to jobs in the tourism sector?
 - Do the police treat people of different races equally?
- B. Sample questions on the role of race and racism in Cuban education:
- Does the racial composition of the teaching profession and administration match that of the population at large?
 - In what circumstances and for what reasons do you discuss racism with your students?
 - Do issues of racism arise in your classroom? If so, please provide an example of how you might address this.
 - Is racism addressed in schools as a contemporary (rather than historical) phenomenon?
- C. Sample questions on the relevance of race to student experience:
- Do students and/or parents complain about experiencing racism? If so, which students and parents, and what are some examples? Do students and/or parents raise the issue of racism?
 - Do students of all races have equal access to educational success?
 - Do you notice any race-based patterns of achievement or educational advancement?
- D. Sample Questions on the relevance of race for teacher work, pedagogy, and professional life:
- Is dealing with racism a significant part of your job?
 - Do you visit the families of your students in their home to address student behavior, including issues of racism? If so, why do you do this? Please describe the content of these conversations.
 - Does your race affect the way you are perceived, treated, regarded, and respected by colleagues, administration, and students?

Appendix B

Survey Questions Excluding Demographics

Participants responded, using a five point forced choice Likert scale (1 strongly agree, 2 Agree, 3 No opinion, 4 Disagree, 5 Strongly disagree), to the following statements:

Section 1: Racism in Cuban society/The role of race in contemporary Cuba

- I am proud of the social and cultural gains of the revolution.
- In theory, economic equality leads to racial equality.
- The revolution has put an end to racism in Cuba.
- There is no racism in Cuba.
- Race matters in terms of the jobs people are able to get.
- White Cubans receive more remittances than other Cubans.
- The increase in allowance of private businesses has affected Cubans of all races equally.
- The tourism industry benefits Cubans of all races equally.

Section 2: Racism in the classroom

- Martí's philosophy of Cubanidad is important to my practice as a teacher.
- Afro-Cuban students face issues of racism in the classroom.
- White students face issues of racism in the classroom.
- I am forced to respond to issues of racism in my classroom.
- I address issues of racism with the parents of my students.
- Students of all races are equally represented in the nation's top schools.
- White students are generally hardworking.
- Afro-Cuban students are generally hardworking.
- Afro-Cuban families are highly supportive of their children's academic success.
- White Cuban families are highly supportive of their children's academic success.

Section 3: Relevance of race in the classroom

- Students of all races should be treated equally.
- Students of all races are treated equally.
- I am skilled at successfully addressing racism when it arises in my classroom.
- I have been trained to address racism in the classroom.
- The training I received to address racism in the classroom was effective.
- It is the responsibility of teachers to address racism in students' homes with their families.

Appendix C

Sample First Round Transcription Coding

Codes are as follows: Denial of the Relevance of Race = **Denial**; Distinction Between Race in Educational Context and General Cuban Context = **Dist S&S**; Concepts Found in Relevant Literature = **Existing**; Support for Official Discourse = **Sup OD**; Divergence from Official Discourse = **Div OD**; Missing Information = **MI**; Explicit Definitions of Race = **Def Exp**; Implicit Definitions of Race = **Def Imp**; Convergence Between Hidden and Official Curriculum = **HC&OC Con**; Divergence of official and hidden curricula = **OC& Div**; & Commentary on Home–School Relationship = **HS**.

Interview Question: In general, what's the role of racism in Cuba?

Respondent A (Mestizo-Cuban male): The tourism industry or anything else is an example (**Existing**).

Respondent B (Afro-Cuban male): Yes, based on that, yes, you can see racism because it is a more general form, also for example in the tourist Industry, you can see it perfectly (**Existing - Blue**) (**Div OD – largely denied by Min Officials**) (**Def Exp – grounded statement of current role of race**). You can see it as racism, how it expresses itself. I don't know how to explain it (**MI**). I have no words to explain it, but you can see it not only in tourism but in other sectors, probably as well. But how do you see it apart from other things (like sexism—that what you see only is race, do you understand?) But we do not separate the majority of a race from another (**Sup OD – Cubans as one, walking one [socialist] road**). You cannot say for example, my race does a little more work to get there, or sometimes it's a punishment to get there, or a race can't get there because there are problems or the people are like a clan. But these issues are not based on one race or another (**Denial – decentering of race**) (**Sup OD – ties to overall class essentialism and statistical claims of gender equality**). The racism comes from that place where they are and that place is convenient for them, they do not want anybody else, it does not matter if you are White or Black, Chinese or mulatto (**Denial**) (**MI – stats through Robaina as well as Morales to the contrary – as well as foreign researchers**) (**Def Exp**). In that case it doesn't exist, but you know that the word racism is wide and there are a lot of branches.

Respondent A: There are a lot of branches based on what you say

Respondent B: It can be color, and this concept is very wide, in Cuba, it exists as an exception and there are places, there are families and people of color that it can happen to, but in sex/gender it can also happen (**Def Imp – clear linking - intersecting/interlocking of race and gender**). There are more men in an industry than women, for example in the sugar cane industry, which has harvest

time as such work, it needs a lot of physical effort, people have to work with a truck, train etc, that's why you see more the integration of men but there are women who can work and handle that kind of work but there are few **(Div OD – Gov traditionally purports equitable work/employment) (Existing) (MI)**.

Respondent A: There are obstacles

Respondent B: And there are obstacles because there are men who don't like women doing it, that is called machismo in Cuba **(Existing - Fernandes)**. Cubans are very macho. They have the concept that men should bring the money to the table and the women should stay at home, in the kitchen, you can see that even if you don't believe it so there are men in a high position, very intelligent, who still don't let or in other words that they don't understand that a woman can lead them or that a woman can drive a truck or a grua- do you understand? This is a component of the word racism. The racism in my census, in my census is masculine, **(Def Exp – gender conflated w/ race)** it should be over the feminine as an example, the other aspect, it is a position in a job. I am not going to allow somebody take my job for any reason, even if that person is more intelligent than I am. I do my best at not letting that person get my job. I will not let you take my job even though you are more intelligent **(Div OD)**. It's a career. Starting from that it is a career. **(Denial – race-decentered in analysis)**.

Respondent A: It is like . . . economics is the center **(Denial - decentering) (Sup OD – potential class essentialism in keeping with politics of Rev.) (Def Exp)**. If you don't have money, it follows that you cannot survive nowadays. A person from abroad who does not have a strong economy does not live well and he also arrives here, we are part of the world and that influences us also. I want my daughter to be general manager or the director of another institution. I want my daughter to go up, but there are other people there who don't want her to go up because they have their own social position there, they have their own stable economy. They do not understand that a person can be more intelligent or the person is young. I am sixty years old and I know my work very well but there are people who are twenty years old or they are very young and they have better ideas than mine because they are young but I don't let him go on.

Interviewer Question: Are there manifestations of these or other issues in the educational context? Such as sexism, homophobia, discrimination based on religion?

Respondent B: Yes, there are, but not in the educational context! **(Dist S&S) (Denial - displacement) (Sup OD – education/medicine as exceptional spaces) (MI – rates of Whites and Afro-Cubans at top schools)**. Not based on what you said, but in history. The history of religion and racism has to be taught **(Existing) (Sup OD – recognizing the historical but not necessarily connections to present)**. Every race with its belief and there are differences

among beliefs but as time passes by, many races are mixed and as an example the Black race, Afro is one of the most mixed, with some going to Church and some not, and there is no discrimination (**MI**). But there is also, there is no rejection from one race to another or a belief to another belief, no (**Sup OD – religion as a de-raced question**) (**MI – Fernandes, de la Fuente**).

Interviewer Question: So, for example, are the Adventists accepting of Santeria?

Respondent A: No, these are independent choices. If a person does not have that influence that is his choice. Here in Cuba we have the history of the Christian culture as a result of the Spanish, so we were under Spanish Colonist rule for a long time, and that made a certain kind of Cuban culture (**Existing**) (**Sup OD**) (**Def Imp**). It was stealing in the case of Afro-Cuban people, religion culture with the slaves (**Sup OD**) (**Def Imp**). So with religion some are Santaria, some Christian, and others say I want to believe more in man, no more will I go to church. It depends on a person's belief.

Respondent B: According to your question about education though, how do people accept these beliefs in a school or education? It's not that they don't accept it or discriminate against it, it is that their religion must not interfere in their learning process (**Sup OD – Santaria marginalized as de-raced process undertaken to support curricular secular objectives of schooling**), for example the national anthem. Do you understand? There are religions that don't have countries, they can't sing the national anthem, I do not know if there are one or two in Cuba but at least one that cannot sing the anthem (**MI**). Students know this is a problem (**Existing – oppression of Santaria in schools**). That is seen from elementary, that's a thing that comes from childhood (**Dist S&S – importe values – exported rejection thereof**) (**HS – nonrecognition of home values in schooling context**). This is not racism (**Denial**) (**Sup OD**). There is another case, the student who wears religious garments, the same White, Black, or Mulatto, objects which schools should not accept, these are things that should be left at home and that is the case, we do not permit it, sometimes it is very strict that schools should not accept those things (**Existing**) (**Sup OD**) (**MI – who does this most affect?**) (**HC&OC Con – failure to tell African stories in one hand, with a denial of religious practice on other**) (**HS – home vs. school culture**).

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