

White Teachers' Reflections on Whiteness:

Documenting the Journey

by

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ABSTRACT

Teacher learning is a complex and important idea, given the proposed centralized role these individuals have in eradicating the inequitable school outcomes for students of color. It is necessary that researchers document the complex trajectory of learning that occurs as teachers engage in critical reflection on their practice. In the current study, white, female teachers examined the ways their own beliefs, assumptions, and values impacted classroom interactions with students of color, as well as the ways power, privilege, and whiteness manifested in the classroom. Utilizing Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a framework for understanding teacher learning as product and process, as well as whiteness and feminist theories as interrogative tools, the complex and iterative learning trajectories of two elementary school teachers are described in detail. The participating teachers engaged in critical reflection in the context of collaborative interviews, in which they reflected upon excerpts from classroom videos using the lenses of whiteness, power, and privilege in order to consider their own and others' teaching related to deeply held beliefs, assumptions, and values.

This dissertation is dedicated to my Vs, who teach me about unconditional love,
happiness, and being the best person I can be.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Framing of the Study

I was a teacher for thirteen years before deciding to go back to school for a doctorate. I considered myself an effective, caring teacher – and had awards and accolades to show for it: plaques for Employee and Teacher of the Month, the Excellence in Education Award from my school district, glowing letters of recommendation from colleagues, administrators, and even parents made me feel as though I knew “good teaching.” However, something was flawed. There was an imbalance between the “successes” the students with whom I worked had achieved (according to the state standardized tests) and the wider picture. Vast discrepancies existed in our school: from the achievement gap between students of color and their white counterparts, to detention and suspension rates between racial groups, to the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. As a young, inexperienced teacher ready to take on and change the world, I felt I wasn’t making far-reaching, lasting changes. I thought I was a cog in the machine of schools, contributing to these discrepancies in ways I was unaware. Multiple contextual factors were at play, from No Child Left Behind, to the ways we all talked about literacy, to the leadership style of the school administration. Looking back on my experiences, I can more readily identify how my own biases, values, and assumptions about race, power, and privilege impacted teaching and learning in my classroom. A story from my classroom experience sets the context for this study.

When I was a fifth grade teacher about ten years ago, Jacob (a pseudonym), an African American boy, was my most challenging student. Jacob was a typical example of a student who is labeled at-risk. His father was incarcerated; his mother had struggled with addiction. He qualified for free-lunch and he often came to school in clothes that were dirty and disheveled. His career in schools had continued this profile of at-risk. He was identified as learning disabled, had been retained early in his school career, and was a consistent behavior problem. I regret that he knew how to push my buttons, sometimes on purpose and other times not.

Jacob walked into our classroom one morning, shuffled to the back of the room and pulled a crumpled piece of paper out of his jeans pocket. He looked around and tossed the paper on the back shelf of our classroom. I figured the paper was actually his homework that he had just “handed in” by tossing it on the counter. I called out to Jacob, “Hey! Is that where that goes?” He looked back at me and said, “No” while shrugging his shoulders. That really made me angry. How dare he speak to me that way? How disrespectful! He ended up in detention for “talking back” to the teacher. I had set a trap for him. I had no idea that the discourse pattern I was implementing (indirect directives) was tightly tied to my own identity as a white middle class woman. Unfortunately for Jacob’s school experience, this represents a small sample of the interactions he experienced in which whiteness (structural and embodied in my own identity) had a negative impact on his trajectory.

I was Jacob’s teacher for only one year, but now I reflect on the entirety of his schooling experience. Like a snowball rolling down the side of a mountain, Jacob

moved through his years of schooling encountering increasingly frustrating barriers and roadblocks to his success, some at the hands of well-intentioned and caring teachers. I contributed to this frustration through this seemingly minute interaction. As I was preparing for this study, I typed Jacob's real name and the word "Phoenix" into a Google search. The fourth link down was his mug shot, taken when he was arrested in April of 2011. How much did his experiences in school contribute to his eventual arrest?

Now I consider the multiple microaggressions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) he experienced that culminated in his total experience of schooling. Microaggressions, as described by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), are seemingly minute and brief daily interactions directed toward people of color that carry with them racialized and discriminatory undertones. In what ways did I, as a white female, perpetrate such microaggressions throughout the context of my daily interactions with students, thereby serving to maintain the status quo? Teachers are seldom provided with an opportunity to interrogate their own practices in relation to deeply held cultural beliefs and assumptions they bring with them to the classroom. According to Artiles and Kozleski (2007) teaching is deeply personal and relational; teachers draw from their personal histories while navigating multiple cultural activity systems that impact the ways they engage in teaching and learning. How do teachers like me (white, female) make sense of themselves as cultural beings and what does it have to do with their professional learning?

Rationale

Trent (2010) and others have offered the term *historically underserved groups* to describe students from diverse backgrounds who have experienced sustained school failure over time. Despite reform efforts to redress the outcomes for these underserved students, evidence demonstrates continuing significant discrepancies in terms of achievement on standardized tests (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009), drop-out/push-out rates (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & Kewal Ramani, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2006) and disproportionate representation in special education and participation in more restrictive environments (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010). Typically, these discrepancies are discussed in light of the “achievement gap,” usually defined as the disparities in achievement of specific groups of students, according to race and class.

- In 2007, in data that spanned across the states, 26 points separated the scale scores of black and white 4th grade students on state achievement tests in mathematics. Thirty-one points separated the two groups in eighth grade mathematics.
- In the same year, 27 points separated black and white fourth grade students on reading achievement tests, while 26 points separated the two groups at grade eight (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009).
- In 2010-11, white students outperformed black students by 100 points on the Critical reading portion of the SAT, a test designed to predict how well

students will do in college (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). On the math and writing sections respectively, 108 points and 99 points separated the two groups.

- While drop-out rates for white and black students have decreased, the percentage of black students dropping out of high school is close to twice that of white students. The drop-out rates for Hispanic students in 2010 was three times that of white students (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b).

Unfortunately, many analyses of the achievement gap do not take into account the historical and contextual factors that play into these discrepancies. Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that the focus on the achievement gap inherently imposes a deficit perspective on students of color, centralizing the problem on the here and now. The deficit perspective holds that students of color have shortcomings and deficiencies that contribute to their low achievement and result from their cultural background. In other words, students who carry identities that are decentered and marginalized (i.e., racial, linguistic, dis/ability) may be viewed as “less-than” by educators and those who have decision-making power within the school system. This continues the cycle that focuses all efforts on technical solutions for the gap – “research-based” reading initiatives, new programs, and revamped policies. Ladson-Billings (2006) offers the construct of the education debt, as opposed to the achievement gap. The education debt, likened to the national debt, demonstrates the accumulated debt over time, accounting for historical, socio-political, and contextual factors that have impacted the education debt.

The nation owes a significant educational debt to students and communities of color. This debt emphasizes the importance of contextual factors that cannot be addressed through technical remedies alone. Therefore, the idea of the educational debt reminds us that critical reflection is how we begin to take into account the historical, socio-political, and other contextual factors impacting current discrepancies. Within the present manuscript, I describe the journey of two white female teachers as they engaged in collaborative interviews, reflecting on and discussing power, privilege, and whiteness, and their influences on the classroom. Whiteness, at both individual and institutional levels, impacts practices in the classroom in myriad ways. It influences how teachers set up, navigate, and facilitate social, political, and intellectual interactions in the classroom. Whiteness manifests in many ways in the classroom, making it necessary for white teachers, to interrogate their practice in relation to individualized and institutional whiteness. As they reflect critically on the ways their identities influence their classroom, the dominance of whiteness can be more effectively and sustainably decentered and challenged.

In what ways might this type of reflection offer an entry point into addressing the long-standing education debt? Delpit (1995) writes that it is “vital that teachers and teacher educators explore their own beliefs and attitudes about non-white and non-middle class people” (p. 179). This exploration can impact white teachers’ ability to connect their own deeply held beliefs related to classroom practices that, perhaps unintentionally, (re)produce inequitable outcomes for students of color. However, as Bush (2011) suggests, it is also necessary for us to interrogate connections between racialized beliefs

at the individual level and the racism and discrimination *embedded in social structures* in order to do away with historical inequities.

Some scholars critique a reliance on introspection of “privileged Euro-American teachers” as self-indulgent and assert that it actually serves to reify the dominant ideology and stereotypes of the immigrant experience (Florio-Ruane, 2001). However, left unexamined, the beliefs and assumptions that white teachers may have regarding students of color will only serve to maintain the dominant culture. It is the simultaneous, macro- and micro-level evidence of racism that must be examined in order to do away with inequities in our society. According to Leonardo (2004), whites are complicit in the continuation of systemic discriminatory practices as whites “daily recreate white privilege on both the individual and institutional level” (p. 139). As a result, students of color experience inequitable outcomes related to achievement, graduation, college-attendance, and placement in Special Education. White people tend not to view themselves as racialized beings (Mahoney, 1997; Florio-Ruane, 2001). Without a critical investigation of one’s own identity and privilege through the lens of whiteness, white teachers are left to position themselves “without culture”, focused on the “other” (e.g., students and colleagues of color) as the owners of, and actors within, culture. This study was designed so that the participants had unique experiences that might provide them insights into the experiences of students from marginalized populations. As will be described in subsequent chapters, the white women who participated each had unique experiences that both assisted and hindered reflection on whiteness, power, and privilege in the classroom. It was challenging and emotional work. This document reflects their

initial understandings of relatively new constructs of privilege, power, and whiteness.

Once white teachers are supported in reflecting on power, privilege, and whiteness in the classroom, they can begin to see themselves as participants in, as well as *enactors of*, the dominant culture.

Teachers in the crosshairs. Growing concern over the persistent achievement gap has led to increased stakes for teachers. Value-added models have been implemented to measure teachers' effectiveness and the level of their preparation (Rothstein, 2010) with mixed results. There has been a push to reward those teachers who are seeing "results" (in the form of high student scores on achievement tests) and punishing those teachers who fail to demonstrate gains in achievement. Others advocate for addressing inequitable school outcomes through diversification of the teacher workforce (Kozleski, Artiles, McCray, & Lacy, in press). However, the question remains whether teachers and schools alone can eradicate the achievement gap. Dobbie and Fryer (2009) determined, after conducting a study at the Harlem Children's Zone, that quality teachers significantly increase the achievement of "the poorest minority children" (p. 3), thereby closing the achievement gap. However, others have provided ample argument for structural and contextual factors as the primary source of inequity, and therefore, reform of public schools (see Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Berliner, 2009; Glass, 2008).

The focus on standardization and accountability in an increasingly heterogeneous school age population (Kozleski, Artiles, McCray, & Lacy, in press), and the reliance on high-stakes testing have subsequently narrowed the focus of teacher learning opportunities. By and large, teachers experience, and have even come to expect,

professional learning to be centered on the implementation of strategies and pragmatic solutions (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009) in other words, technical learning. Within the context of this study, I expand upon typical conceptions of teacher learning as technical endeavors toward the inclusion of more critical aspects of learning (i.e. how white teachers' beliefs, values, and assumptions about race, power, and privilege impact classroom interactions with students of color).

Conversations regarding the achievement gap have been conflated with concerns about teacher preparation and quality (Cochran-Smith, 2004). A focus on the achievement gap, as measured by standardized tests, and the pressure placed on teachers to address the gap forces the hand toward technical solutions. Perhaps too much focus has been placed directly on the backs of teachers, as factors outside the classroom are downplayed by society as a whole (e.g., funding inequities, political forces, etc.) While there are many complex institutional and systemic factors influencing persistent inequities, teachers offer a point of leverage that provides us with optimism for upcoming generations of students. As they conduct their work in classrooms, from the instructional strategies they choose to the ways they interact in everyday moments with students and families, teachers are enacting cultural values that represent themselves, the larger school system, and society as a whole.

Currently, schools are not structured in a way that supports and encourages reflection among teachers (Levine & Marcus, 2010). One could argue rampant standardization (e.g. scripted reading programs, high-stakes testing) removes teachers

from the equation of school improvement and reform. However, teachers must have the opportunity to connect thoughts to action (Dewey, 1933). White people (including white teachers) do not typically think of themselves as cultural and privileged beings (Mahoney, 1997; Florio-Ruane, 2001). Race, like culture, is seen as something “others” have, not something they themselves enact, embody, and embrace. Mahoney (1997) writes, “Whites are free to see themselves as individuals, rather than members of a culture” (p. 331). However, as members of the *dominant* culture, it is of the utmost importance that this population of teachers is afforded the opportunity to critically reflect upon thoughts and actions connected to their own individualized whiteness, structural evidence of whiteness, and its impact on classroom interactions.

Ladson-Billings (1994) documented the reflections of teachers and the resulting changes at the micro-level, specifically practices related directly to the classroom. However, there is a paucity of research connecting teachers’ critical reflections with changes at the macro-level. Perhaps the structural inequities inherent in the school system actually serve as barriers to reflection and teacher learning. Another perspective, drawn from a critique of Florio-Ruane’s (2001) work with the Future Teachers’ Autobiography Club, is that the focus on white teachers’ reflections on whiteness in the classroom actually may serve in the reification of whiteness, rather than the critique of it (Pailliotet, 1995). Teachers’ reflections on whiteness begin at the micro level and come up against situated practice and contextual factors.

Practices are influenced and impeded by policy, structural limitations, and barriers. Teachers offer leverage in rectifying disparate outcomes for students of color

and other populations in U.S. public schools. It is necessary to examine teachers' individualized practices in conjunction with the structural and institutional inequities prevalent in the school system, as well as larger society. Therefore, I frame whiteness as both an individualized and institutionalized phenomenon: one that cannot be questioned and fought against from one perspective or the other. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter two. However limited the research on the impact of teacher reflection on policy or structural change/reformation, classroom practices cannot be critiqued and revised without consideration of institutional barriers to equity. All teachers, including white teachers, must be encouraged and supported in questioning the ways whiteness moves through and around schools so that they may be able to “teach against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991) toward more equitable schools, classrooms, and outcomes.

Future teachers. White, middle-class women make up 83% of the public school teaching force (USDE: NCES, 2010; See Kozleski, Artiles, McCray, & Lacy, in press). The education debt has lasting implications on the lives of students of color. Another important aspect of this debt is the future of the teaching profession as a whole. Florio-Ruane (2001) writes about the recruitment of teachers of color, offering the perspective that people who enter the teaching profession have often experienced an “apprenticeship” to teaching through their experiences as students. They enjoyed school, participated in the structure successfully, and could envision themselves as a teacher. According to Kuchar (1999), all students should experience schooling as an apprenticeship to teaching. However, students of color are often marginalized within the school experience. Given these negative experiences, what encourages students of color to see themselves as

teachers? How can more teachers of color be recruited into the teaching profession if their experiences and ways of knowing are not valued in teacher education spaces? One way to (re)create the teaching profession is to encourage the current teaching population, which is mostly made up of white, female teachers, to consider culture in dynamic ways, rather than static, superficial ways. Through the examination of the ways culture influences learning, educators can create new spaces in which all children are successful – thus making it more likely that all children can see themselves in the teaching profession.

Teacher Learning

The scope of professional learning for teachers, which will be discussed at length in the second chapter of this manuscript, has been largely limited to technical realms of inquiry designed to standardize classroom practices (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Much of the literature on teachers' participation in professional learning opportunities report that their learning experiences, as well as their expectations for those experiences, center on technical aspects of learning. Simply changing practices without a critical investigation of the ideologies that inform the practices may result in superficial change, but will largely fall short of transforming the educational system into a more socially just and equitable space for all students. While learning new strategies is important, teachers must participate in critical investigations of the beliefs and assumptions that inform practices at all levels of the school system if sustainable change related to achievement is to occur.

It is evident that technical learning alone (i.e. the development of skills and strategies) is insufficient to create sustainable change in schools. Nor is critical learning on the part of teachers sufficient to produce meaningful change. Coupled with consideration of contextual factors, professional learning opportunities have the power to create sustainable change for all students. Teachers must have multiple, continuous opportunities to engage in conversations and learning related to their own values and beliefs (White, Zion, & Kozleski, 2005). This critical learning must occur in addition to the technical learning related to current school reform efforts. Additionally, teachers must be critically reflective on their own practice, as well as capable of successfully communicating their reflections in order to build a collaborative community of teacher learners.

Teachers in U.S. (K-12) public schools offer an entry point for engaging in conversations around the disparate outcomes experienced by students of color in public schools – conversations that may lead to equitable and sustainable change. Teacher learning occurs across time and space, in other words, learning occurs beyond the “four walls” of the professional development workshop or classroom. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) wrote about three distinct conceptions of teacher learning: Knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice. This conception signifies the complex nature of teacher learning because it pushes beyond thinking solely about technical learning. In the context of this dissertation, I imagine teacher learning as process and product, occurring through teachers’ simultaneous participation in multiple contexts. For the conceptual framework, I rely upon Cultural Historical Activity Theory

(CHAT) as the central theoretical frame, and borrow elements from whiteness studies and feminist literature that support and make visible important understandings related to teacher learning.

Definition of whiteness. Race, according to Mahoney (1997), is a relational concept: white people see their own race in terms of differences with others. While it is widely known that differences between perceived racial and ethnic groups have no founding in biology (Frankenberg, 1993; Leonardo, 2002), the social construction of whiteness pervades every aspect of U.S. society, including schools and classrooms. According to Frankenberg (1993), whiteness is made up of three dimensions, including; 1) the structural advantage of race privilege, 2) the standpoint from which white people look at themselves and others, and 3) the “unmarked” or “unnamed” nature of a particular set of cultural practices. In other words, whiteness is much more than simply the color of one’s skin. It is the privileges granted in relation to the color of ones skin as well as hair texture, nose shape, culture, and language (McIntosh, 1989; Leonardo, 2004). The challenge of whiteness lies in the fact that privileges are often granted unbeknownst to the (white) person receiving them.

Whiteness is an individualized and structural phenomenon that shapes participation in the activity system that is teacher learning. In the words of Zeus Leonardo (2010), multiculturalism, or an overemphasis on minority students, leads us to “focus solely on the margins, which negates a critical look at the center” (i.e. whiteness) (www.niusileadscape.org/bl/?p=538#more-538). The privilege associated with whiteness must be interrogated within the classroom, and also solicits consideration of the *lack of*

privilege connected with *non-whiteness*. Whiteness, and the power and privileges associated with it, mediates the ways teachers conduct the work of classrooms. Teachers are afforded very few opportunities to interrogate their own whiteness in relation to their practices and yet, whiteness permeates every aspect of society. Participation in teacher learning provides the opportunity for teachers to make visible, question, and potentially change the influence of individualized and structural whiteness in the school setting.

In the words of Lea & Sims (2008), whiteness “runs like a mainstream through the heart of our classrooms, schools, and U.S. society” (p. 186). The narratives that uphold whiteness in classrooms and schools include standardization, meritocracy, tracking, and color-blindness (Lea & Sims, 2008), among others. I lean heavily on Frankenberg’s definition of whiteness to attempt to understand the ways white teachers come to identify their own positionality, as well as the “unmarked” or “unnamed” nature of deeply hegemonic practices within the classroom.

Sociocultural Learning Theory

In preparing for this study, I hold three tenets of sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003) central; namely that: a) knowledge is co-constructed in activity systems; b) learning is a sociocultural, contextually mediated activity; and c) learning is the process of change of participation in an activity system. Each of these tenets represents an important aspect of this study. The co-construction of knowledge occurs through participation in an activity system, which will be described in further detail in the following section. Teacher learning, conceptualized in this way, is both the process and product of participating in the activity system. Teacher learning does not

occur in a vacuum. Teachers come to the table with experiences, knowledge, values, and beliefs that all play a part in creating new knowledge.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

The CHAT triangle, (see figure one) offers a visual representation of the complexity evident within and throughout teacher learning. Learning is (and occurs through) participation in an activity, that is mediated by artifacts within the activity system. Actors, and in the case of this study, teachers, simultaneously participate in a multitude of activity systems. I envision teacher learning as one activity system in which teachers participate. There are multiple activity systems that represent teacher learning in the school site. Teacher learning is both process and product of the activity system. In other words, *the act of engaging in the activity system is, in and of itself, learning* (process). Additionally, learning is evidenced through changes in participation in the activity system (product). The collaborative interviews did not mirror other teacher learning opportunities the participating teachers experienced.

The bottom layer of the CHAT triangle represents the institutional components of the activity system. CHAT enables us to envision and theorize the rules that govern participation in an activity system. In the present case, school context and leadership and the structure and expectation for teaching and learning at the school site represent the context in which this activity system is taking place. Additionally, rules at the macro-level of the school system also mediate participation in the activity of teacher learning. For example, the increasing standardization of classroom practices and assessment procedures has certainly impacted the participation of teachers in learning opportunities,

from what they learn about to how learning is constructed within the activity. Context at multiple levels informs and influences teacher learning, from federal reform initiatives, to school and district context, to leadership at a school site.

According to Cole (1996; 1998), human beings mediate all activity with artifacts, including primary, secondary, and tertiary artifacts. Cole (1996) describes primary artifacts as those “used directly in production” (p. 121). In the current study, primary artifacts include classroom videos, protocols, and the free write strategy, which will each serve as a way for teachers to mediate the activity. Secondary artifacts, representing “modes of action using primary artifacts” (p. 121) include reflection, collaboration, observation and dialogue. I have positioned these as secondary artifacts because the participating teachers have preconceived understandings of each related to their own practice. Lastly, tertiary artifacts can “come to color the way we see the ‘actual’ world, providing a tool for changing current praxis” (p. 121). In the context of this study, I conceptualize whiteness as an artifact that mediates participation in an activity system.

Cognitive artifacts, according to Norman (1991), enhance the speed, power, and intelligence of human beings. *Enhancement* might be a problematic notion for the current study. In what ways might whiteness *enhance* our ability to participate in activity systems? Here is a point of departure from current conceptualizations of artifacts.

Whiteness can be conceptualized as a tertiary artifact that literally comes to “color” the way participants see the world. However, I forward whiteness as an invisible artifact: one that mediates action in the system without subjects being cognizant of its impact, or even presence. I argue that whiteness, as an artifact, can serve to make our participation

in an activity system more efficient while also having a deleterious effect on the object. In other words, whiteness mediates the activity of teacher learning without the subjects necessarily being conscious of its role in the activity. As will be discussed further in the findings chapter of this study, each of the participants had experienced whiteness in a variety of ways but didn't have a name for those experiences. Participation was deeply influenced through and by institutionalized and individualized instances of whiteness.

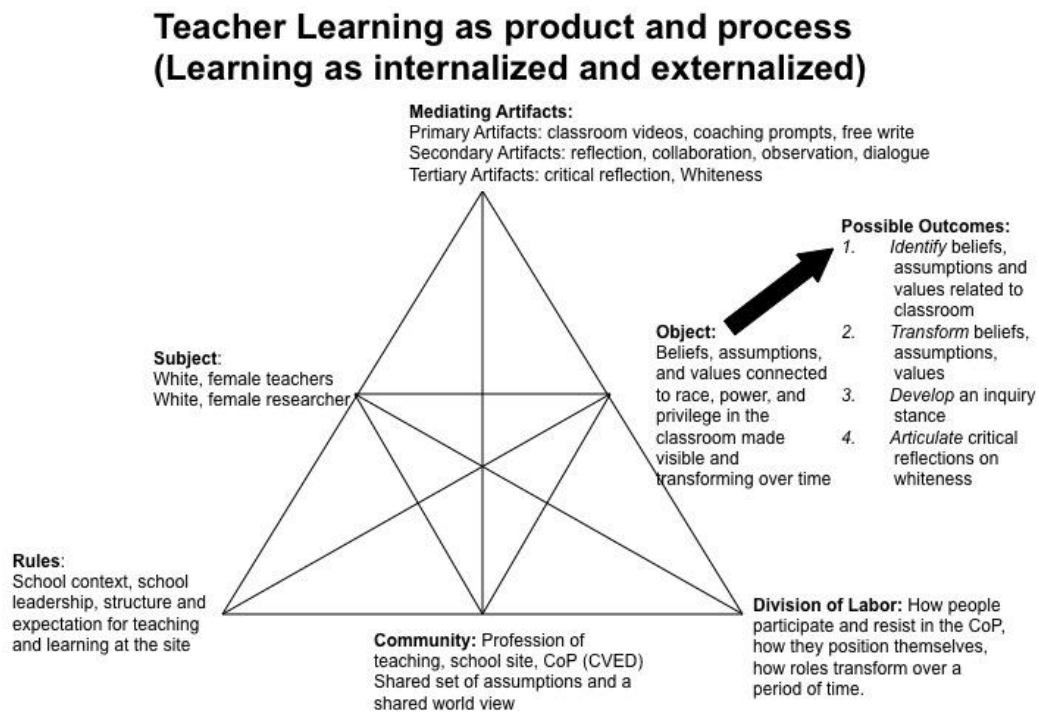
Schooling is increasingly standardized in terms of curriculum, practices, and assessment, among other factors. Teachers experience their learning trajectory within this standardization and hence, may also experience a sense of *powerless*-ness as they are targets of standardization and other reform efforts overly focused on technical remedies. According to Engeström (2001), contradictions are “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” (p. 137). These contradictions create disturbances, but also allow a space in which the activity itself can evolve and transform. Bodker (1989) offers the idea of “activity flow”, which is the automatization of an activity. “Interruptions and unexpected results break the activity flow, forcing conscious attention upon the task. For many activities, this ‘bringing to consciousness’ is disruptive of efficient performance” (p. 6). He further discusses that while a disruption in the activity is usually undesirable, it can offer an opportunity if it “forces conscious attention upon critical...aspects of the task” (p. 6). Within the current study, these interruptions offered a space in which contradictions were identified and whiteness was made visible to the participants, providing them an opportunity for engagement in teacher learning as a process and product.

The aim of this study was three-fold. First, I sought to document the participating teachers' critical reflections on the assumptions, values, and beliefs on race, power, and privilege related to their classroom interactions with students of color, as well as how identified assumptions, values, and beliefs may have changed over the course of the study. We focused on interactions with students of color because of the inequitable educational outcomes that disproportionately impact that population of students. Secondly, teachers were encouraged and supported in identifying power and privilege as they played out in the classroom, in terms of their own whiteness and complex identities. Finally, I documented contradictions participating teachers experienced as they engaged in this type of learning.

It is important to note that participants in this study were intentionally white, female teachers. I have foregrounded whiteness as a mediating artifact, due to the paucity of research focused on teacher learning and whiteness, which will be discussed in detail within chapter two. However, intersectionality reminds us that gender and race (among other social identities) interact in complex ways to shape lived-experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). While Crenshaw's piece focused on the intersection of gender and race and the subsequent oppressions experienced by women of color, the concept of intersectionality has been expanded to include various identities, including class, sexual orientation, immigration status, among others (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005; Lykke, 2010). Each of the participants described experiences that centered on marginalization and oppressions they had encountered over the course of their lives. While this offered the participating teachers important insights into the lived experiences

of their students, the construct of oppression proved to be a challenging one. A deeper analysis of whiteness and oppression as invisible artifacts the teachers used to mediate their participation in the activity system of teacher learning will be included in chapter four.

Figure 1 – Graphic of conceptual framework



Guiding Research Questions

Within this research study, I sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do white, female, urban elementary school teachers describe their beliefs, values, and assumptions related to power, privilege, race, and gender in terms of classroom interactions with students from historically underserved and marginalize populations?

2. What do tensions and contradictions that arise in the context of the collaborative interviews reveal about these teachers' learning related to issues of race, power, and privilege?

The Study

My intention was to set up this study for participating teachers to engage in their own growth, reflection, and professional learning. By documenting the critical reflections of white, female teachers working with students of color, I sought to contribute to the literature on teacher learning regarding the importance of critical reflection, as well as the tensions, celebrations, and challenges that arise. My role as researcher and my positionality as a former teacher served as a contributing voice toward the thinking and learning presented in this study.

Reflection was, and still is, an important part of my career as an educator and is a significant reason for my selecting this area of study. Since I have been out of the classroom, I have come to a deeper understanding of my own biases, assumptions, and values influence my participation in classroom spaces, yet I have fewer opportunities to interrogate their impact on my practices in the classroom. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on my past classroom practices, with the benefit of hindsight and the support of colleagues and mentors who push me to interrogate these practices. My own research interests are greatly impacted by my experiences in the classroom and as a coach for new teachers in urban schools. This journey is never-ending. I will always strive toward critical reflection so that I may work against and disrupt inequities in schools and larger society.

The methods for this research are inspired by the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings' *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of Black Students* (1994), in which she documents case studies of several African American teachers, as well as white teachers, who are considered successful teachers of African American students. Personally, this piece contributed to my own conceptions about successful teachers and pushed my thinking in terms of my own identity as a white woman educator. Given that white, middle-class women make up 83% of the public school teaching force (NCES, 2010; Kozleski, Artiles, McCray, & Lacy, in press), it is imperative for researchers to consider and document the learning of white teachers of students of color. Therefore, the primary focus of this study was to document white, female teachers' journeys engaging in critical learning centered on the connection of values, beliefs, and assumptions and their influence on interactions with students of color in the classroom.

Teachers critically reflected upon their own practices through a process I am calling collaborative interviews (CIs), drawn from the work of Tobin, Wu, & Davidson (1989) and Tobin, Hsueh, Karasawa, (2009). The use of video observation to improve teaching strategies has been documented in the literature (van Es, 2012; Zhang, Ludenberg, Koehler, & Eberhardt, 2011), but the learning has largely been technical in nature, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. For example, teachers can observe peers or themselves utilizing a specific strategy and then work to replicate or improve it in their own classrooms. Through the use of CIs, I sought to create a space in which teachers could collaboratively examine practices, discourse, and strategies using a critical lens: so as to interrogate these practices with the constructs of power, privilege,

and questions of benefit (i.e. who benefits from the way things are?) in mind. In the following chapters, I detail their practices and critical reflections on those practices using ethnographic strategies. I took great care to create a supportive space in which the participating teachers feel safe. Bogden and Biklen (1992) write, “Researchers must build trust by making it clear that they will not use what they are finding to demean or otherwise hurt people” (p.79). Given the fact that race is a central, and emotionally-charged, component to this study, the reflective work conducted by the participating teachers was held in the strictest confidence. It was not my intention to “catch” the teachers being disrespectful or unresponsive to students of color, rather, I sought to value the experiences the teachers brought with them in order to create a climate for all of us to critically interrogate practices. The second question was aimed at documenting the tensions and contradictions experienced by the participating teachers as they engaged in reflection focused on issues of their deeply held beliefs, values, and assumptions, along with power, privilege, and whiteness. Contradictions, according to Engestrom (2001) are, “sources of change and development...[and] are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” (p. 137).

Teaching is a largely solitary endeavor due to many structural and institutional factors. It is easy for some teachers to go about the daily business of teaching without questioning and examining their own practices. In fact, it’s quite easy for individual teachers to assume all other teachers perform the act of teaching just as they do. I recall my own experiences as I moved out of the general classroom into a peer coaching role in the same school.

When my principal asked me to consider the position of collaborative peer teacher, I wondered aloud, “Why me?” As a collaborative peer teacher, my role would be to assist teachers in reflecting on their practice in order to improve achievement outcomes for all students. The solitary nature of teaching had led me to close my door and do what I felt was best, with little guidance and support in making instructional and pedagogical decisions. The guidance I received I personally sought out, in the form of mentors and supportive colleagues. My principal recommended that I go visit some other classrooms to get a feel for what other teachers were doing. I was, perhaps naively, stunned to see the variety of teaching styles and strategies throughout the school: many of which were innovative and successful. The process of watching others teach made me consider my own teaching more closely. I thought about decisions I made in light of this new-found knowledge. I realized that there were other ways of thinking, doing, and teaching out there.

One fascinating aspect of the work of *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989; Tobin, Hsueh, Karasawa, 2009) was that teachers were able to uncover deeply held cultural beliefs that were tied to their practice by watching teachers from a different culture. For example, an excerpt from the section on Chinese preschools describes a scenario in which a student stands up in front of his classmates and tells a story. The other children in the class, at the prompting of the teacher, critique the quality of the story and then vote if he has earned the title, “The Story Telling King”. The teachers from the United States found this situation odd. Upon being asked by the interviewer about critical feedback in the classroom, one of the U.S. informants stated,

“We’re more fearful of damaging children’s self-esteem” (p. 67). Their reactions allowed the researchers to uncover the teachers’ beliefs that were deeply tied to cultural values and ways of thinking, in this case, specifically as their beliefs and values connected to building the self-esteem of students. This research, as well as my own experiences as a coach for practicing teachers, solidifies for me the power observing peers has for interrogating one’s own practices.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter one provides and clarifies the rationale and the conceptual framework for this study, as well as the research questions guiding the study. This chapter also includes my personal reflections on my teaching and coaching experiences, and how my positionality influenced this work, which will be expanded upon in chapter five. Chapter two is a literature review, first focusing on *teacher learning*: how learning happens, where learning happens, what learning is happening. Then, I include literature on whiteness and the image of the white, urban, female teacher, as these concepts are central to the analysis of findings. The literature review will also include literature pertinent to the methodology of this study and the theories that inform the conceptual framework applied in this study. In chapter three, I describe in detail the research design and methods, as well as include additional literature relevant to the methods I used throughout this study. Chapter four serves as a Findings/Discussion chapter, in which I address and elaborate upon the research questions, braiding the two together. Finally, in chapter five, I will describe the implications for this work, as well as provide personal reflections on the process in its entirety.

Conclusion

Given that the teaching force in U.S. public schools is largely made up of white middle class women (NCES, 2010; Kozleski, Artiles, McCray, & Lacy, in press), and the insidious nature of whiteness, it is of the utmost importance that teachers engage in critical exploration of their own cultural identities and how they influence the school experiences of students of color. It is through this exploration and interrogation that teachers can begin to understand the ways power and privilege infiltrate the classroom, contributing to the disparate outcomes students from historically underserved groups continue to experience. By focusing on uncovering and revising the assumptions, beliefs, and values white female teachers bring with them to the classroom about race, power, and privilege, this study actively works against the current tendency of teacher learning opportunities to embrace and forward technical remedies for inequitable outcomes for students of color.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing the Review

As discussed in Chapter One, I envision teacher learning as one activity system within which teachers participate. Teacher learning is both process and product of the activity system. Whiteness, among other concepts, is positioned as artifacts that mediate teachers' participation in the activity system of learning. I have chosen to organize the literature review in a way that compliments the conceptual framework I have designed for this study.

In this chapter, I present an overview of the literatures related to two central topics pertinent to the current study: teacher learning and whiteness. First, I tackle the body of literature on teacher learning and how it occurs in schools. Teacher learning is positioned as process and product within this study; therefore, I have included literature that unpacks the complexity of teacher learning. I have organized the literature into three categories; 1) *Where* does teacher learning happen?, 2) *How* does teacher learning happen? , and 3) *What* teacher learning is happening? The first section shows the context and process of teacher learning in schools and the structures present that facilitate learning. The second section focuses on the strategies for teacher learning that are documented in the literature and reflects the process. The third category continues the discussion from the first chapter and describes the content of teacher learning as focused on technical endeavors. This will lay the foundation for understanding critical learning

on the part of teachers, leading the way into the literature on whiteness studies and the image of the white, urban, female teacher.

Culling the literature. I first conducted an advanced search in Academic Search Premier using the search term “teacher learning.” With 9,900 matching results, I began to narrow my search to literature published after 1990. I removed articles relating to pre-service teachers because such scholarship is beyond the scope of this study. Those included in the literature review were closely tied to this research in methodology or focus on whiteness. Finally, I included the search term “identity” and “whiteness” in order to further reduce the number of pertinent articles. Since the purpose of this study is to understand the ways white, female teachers come to understand the ways their own values, beliefs, and assumptions impact the classroom, I selected concepts I felt would be evidenced in future data collection. Finally, I conducted a search using the terms “teacher learning,” “power,” and “privilege,” which resulted in one reference, focused on pre-service teachers.

The search for literature on whiteness studies began with a search in the ASU library for books on the subject. Upon collecting a number of books on the topic, I began to include secondary sources by culling citations from the reference lists in the books. Additionally, I garnered suggestions of authors to include from my co-chairs and committee member. As a result of these conversations, literature by Zeus Leonardo, Thea Renda Abu el-Haj, and Susan Florio-Ruane, among others, were included to round out the literature in both the teacher learning and whiteness sections of this review.

This is when I began examining teacher learning and whiteness. I began by using Academic Search Premier to search the terms “teacher learning” AND “whiteness.” Remarkably, this search resulted in only two articles: one article called “Erotic Pedagogies” in the Journal of Homosexuality and an editorial piece from Educational Action Research. Additional searches were obviously necessary. The same search netted 23 citations using JSTOR, which are included in this review.

Dissecting teacher learning. Perhaps because of the highly public and critiqued role that teachers play in school reform, their learning has been discussed in the literature in many ways including, professional development, professional learning, teacher development, and teacher education. For the purposes of this study, I have used the term teacher learning as I document the process of teachers interrogating the ways their values, beliefs, and assumptions impact the classroom through the use of the collaborative interviews around classroom videos. My reasoning for choosing “teacher learning” in particular stems from the sociocultural theoretical frame. According to Hammerness, et al, (2005) teachers must truly embrace the role of life-long learners, particularly in “societies like ours where expectations regarding academic standards and equitable education are constantly being refined” (p. 358). It is imperative that we focus on the learning of teachers, which is a complex and iterative process. Terms such as “development” or “education” imply a linear process which neglects to account for the iterative and multifaceted aspects of teachers coming to deeper understandings and engaging new ways of thinking about their practice. The term teacher learning encompasses the idea that teachers are on a continuous and complex journey as they are

afforded opportunities to co-construct knowledge and change their participation in activity systems connected to schools.

Sociocultural theory holds that learning is a culturally and contextually mediated activity and is the process of change in participation in an activity system (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003). I delineate important differences between the terms above and teacher learning. While Rogoff (2003) uses the term “development” to discuss her theory of learning, in the realm of schools, “professional development” and “teacher development” are typically associated with “one-shot-deal” workshops and inservices provided to teachers after school or on weekends. The format of this type of learning opportunity is the sit-and-get “sage on the stage” model, which mirrors the banking model displayed in our K-12 school systems (Freire, 1970/1993). Little is done to incorporate or challenge the experiences, knowledge, and beliefs teachers bring with them to the table. Additionally, teachers are not often encouraged to explore the ways their own cultural identities manifest in the classroom. Scripted and “research-based” programs are introduced to teachers with little regard for the context in which they are being implemented (Lieberman, 1996; Wilson & Berne, 1999). These opportunities may well be useful for teachers, and possibly students, in the short-term, but they have historically done little to create sustainable changes toward more equitable outcomes for students. Additionally, these types of professional development opportunities do little to address the need for critical reflection on the part of teachers regarding the ways identity, whiteness, power, and privilege impact the classroom. Therefore, I sought to expand the

concept of teacher learning to move beyond the four walls of the professional development room toward a more holistic view.

Typically, teachers are encouraged to employ the idea of colorblindness or “colormute”-ness (Pollock, 2004; 2008) which can in fact *unintentionally* maintain practices and beliefs that marginalize students of color. Only color-conscious efforts can begin to reduce historical disparities between marginalized groups and their white counterparts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Both students and teachers are complex, cultural beings who bring multiple identities to classroom interactions. The teachers in this study have been encouraged to examine the ways their own beliefs, assumptions, and values, which are informed by their identities as white women, impact classroom interactions with students of color. In other words, this critical reflection will intentionally incorporate race as an underlying construct, focusing on power, privilege, and the marginalization of certain groups of students.

Teacher learning takes many forms and occurs across time and space. Sociocultural theory forwards the idea that knowledge is co-constructed between participants in activity systems. Therefore, within the context of this study, it is necessary for us to think beyond formalized teacher learning opportunities (e.g., inservices, university classes, etc.). Informal opportunities for collaboration between teachers can support the creation and sharing of knowledge. Further, formalized structures of collaboration between teachers can forward their critical investigation of classroom practices.

Where Does Teacher Learning Happen?

Learning is (and occurs through) participation in an activity system. In many ways, the current study is informed by the literature focused on *where* teacher learning occurs. Teacher learning occurs across time and space, in both formal and informal situations. The collaborative interviews (CIs) described in chapter three are the community in which I have examined teacher learning, in collaboration with the teacher participants.

Communities of practice. Communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) can be applied to the concept of teacher learning. A community of practice is a group of people who share and work toward common goals and passions. Within the context of schools, communities of practice encompass collaboration between teachers, although these communities can be organized in ways that are more or less conducive to collaboration between members. The more prescriptive model of instruction currently implemented in schools is quite contrary to the idea of building a collaborative community of learners among teachers. In order to address discrepancies between populations of students, many school districts mandate scripted programs (i.e., Success for All) or other reading programs that limit the instructional options teachers may implement (Levine & Marcus, 2007). On the other hand, schools have created spaces that honor the multiple and varying learning trajectories experienced by teachers through collective inquiry and discussion (Levine & Marcus, 2007).

Wenger (1998) states, “Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity” (p. 215). This idea ties tightly to the current study.

The identity of the teachers (i.e., who they are, their beliefs, assumptions, and values) is a central focus of the collaborative interviews, and it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of interrogating these concepts to the learning itself. In my own reflective practice, my identity has genuinely shifted in terms of how I view myself, others, and my actions within the educational system. Additionally, this quote alludes to the fact that each individual is on his or her own learning trajectory, which is influenced by their past and will influence their future history.

Perhaps contributing to the complexity of critical learning in collaborative groups, collective inquiry is largely driven by the participants, in this case, teachers. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) and others (Meier, 2002) collective inquiry between teachers offers them the opportunity to identify biases they hold toward certain groups of students while also identifying structural inequities present in the school system. This type of inquiry requires that teachers are responsible for their own learning, yet there are barriers to such responsibility (e.g. structural, administrative, etc.). However, teachers who are resistant to such changes may sway the learning trajectories of other participants in negative ways. Framing teacher learning as an individually driven trajectory is a powerful image that contradicts the type of learning often expected from teachers in the current highly standardized and accountability-driven context. We must recognize that teachers' learning trajectories are influenced by contextual factors and can change direction and depth quickly. This is contradictory when considering the current ways learning is framed in schools for students and teachers.

Critical friends groups. Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) represent a specific type of structure present in schools that affords teachers the opportunity to reflect, collaborate, and develop together through a shared investigation of published works and/or student products. Typically, CFGs are designed in ways that incorporate contextual factors and allow for participant-driven learning, making them unique and individualized. Core CFG activities include “Connections,” text discussions, protocols on student/teacher work, peer observation and action research progress updates, team building, and journaling. Curry (2008) offers a description of the possibilities and limitations within the structure of the CFG at an urban high school in the Pacific Northwest. She suggests that participating teachers are offered the unique opportunity to connect individual practices to the “larger picture” of school practices.

However, the CFG at the center of this study also portrayed a seemingly haphazard array of topics, ranging from student writing in chemistry, to technology, to strained relationships between team teachers. This approach created the sense among participating teachers that the meeting times were too crammed with activities, which limited the depth of discussion and investigation. This further complicates the notion of individual teachers’ being responsible for their own learning trajectories. How can learning opportunities be designed in ways that are organized and structured, but allow for divergent topics and areas of study? However, participants *were* afforded opportunities to interrogate school and district policy from a critical perspective. The CFG provided a space in which “democratic and dialogic discussions” could occur.

Professional learning schools. Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) describe the context of a professional learning school, in which “practitioners and researchers at various levels of experience, expertise and interests come together in a common mission” (p. 657) to interrogate questions centered on equity within a school context. The focus of this work includes questions such as “who benefits from the way things are?”, “is this the way we want things to be?”, and “what steps can we take to ensure that our students experience equity?” In order to achieve this deep learning, participating teachers are apprenticed into the school community and supported in their learning through semesters focused on identity, culture, learning, and assessment. A more detailed description of the program’s focus on identity is included later in this chapter. Professional learning schools, according to Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) emerge when elements from professional development schools (PDSs) and professional learning communities (PLCs) are combined.

How Does Teacher Learning Happen?

CHAT offers a framework for understanding the complexity within and throughout teacher learning. Learning is (and occurs through) participation in an activity, which is mediated by artifacts within the activity system. According to Cole (1996; 1998), human beings mediate all activity with artifacts, including primary, secondary, and tertiary artifacts. In the current study, primary artifacts include videos collected of participating teachers’ classrooms, coaching prompts used to facilitate conversation and reflection, and a free write strategy, meant to encourage reflection of individual participants. Within the literature described below, these primary artifacts are described

in more detail. Secondary artifacts pertinent to this study include observation, reflection, collaboration, reflection, and dialogue. Each of these secondary artifacts represents a section below, describing how teacher learning happens. Finally, I position whiteness and oppression/marginalization as invisible artifacts which serve as mediational tools within the activity of teacher learning without the subjects necessarily being conscious of their role in the activity.

Observation. Teacher learning occurs through teacher observation of peers. Grierson and Gallagher (2009) describe a demonstration classroom professional development initiative, during which less-experienced teachers observed literacy lessons of a designated “master” teacher. Self-reports on the part of the observing teachers indicated that they found the experience rewarding and cited the “vicarious” nature of the observations as a positive aspect of the experience. This study demonstrates a strong connection between teacher learning and context, as the demonstration teacher was in the same school district as the observing teachers. Teachers also benefitted from the collaborative nature of the professional development initiative, as both less-experienced teachers and master teachers were afforded opportunities to dialogue about implementation of lessons. However, these collaborative conversations still center on technical aspects of the lessons, including teaching and literacy strategies.

Additionally, the literature on teacher learning also demonstrates support for the practice of teachers observing their own teaching through the use of video recording technology (Sherin, 2007; Hennessy & Deany, 2009). This allows for teachers to more deeply examine the macro- and micro- decisions made within the context of the

classroom. Teachers can cultivate and further develop a shared professional vision (Sherin, 2007) which encourages teachers to examine classroom practices, interactions, and events with the benefit of watching them occur secondhand.

Teacher collaboration. Collaboration between teachers is often discussed in the literature, although a positive correlation between teacher collaboration and improved student achievement hasn't been solidly demonstrated (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). However, the collaborative relationships between teachers provide fertile ground as we consider how teacher learning happens. Depending on the context, teachers may have multiple opportunities to collaborate including formal, informal, or a mixture of the two. From formalized team meetings with structured agendas, to collaboration between special and general educators, to a few teachers having lunch together in the staff lounge, teachers have the opportunity to benefit from collegial relationships with one another. However, not all school contexts support teachers in cultivating and maintaining collaborative relationships for the purpose of improving instruction. In fact, collaborative relationships can actually serve the opposite intention by promoting planned resistance between teachers regarding implementation of new initiatives or school reform efforts (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

Rosenholtz (1989) argues that isolation, or a harkening back to the days of the "one-room schoolhouse," is probably the greatest barrier to teacher learning because teachers revert to teaching as they themselves experienced school, relying on trial and error or their own experienced models of teaching. Although many scholars suggest that an increase in teacher collaboration (a sharing of ideas, strategies, pedagogies, and

experience) would result in improved instruction, this remains a largely theoretical argument. The focus on outcomes of collaboration has largely been to the benefit of teachers, as opposed to students. In other words, teachers experience heightened efficacy (Brownell, Yeager, Rennells, & Riley, 1997) and an increased sense of trust between colleagues (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) among other benefits, but there is a paucity of research that demonstrates a strong connection between teacher collaboration and increased student achievement (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

The opportunity for collaboration between teachers focused on collective inquiry is a powerful concept. Through collective inquiry, teachers are afforded opportunities to understand how their own attitudes impact the classroom and to interrogate inequities that are built into the larger school system (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992). However, structural designs and institutionalized perspectives work to limit the ability of teachers to rely on one another for support and collaboration (Brownell, Yeager, Rennells, & Riley, 1997; Curry, 2008).

Hennessy and Deany (2009) described a case study conducted within the context of the implementation of technology in an elementary school in the U.K. The participating teachers watched videos of each other implementing specific types of technologies and then spent time discussing the videos. The focus of their research was to describe in detail the collaborative process between teachers, rather than outcomes of the technology implementation program. The goal was not to identify effective practices related to the technology, rather, the researchers and teachers set out to identify the theory underlying the implementation of practices. Importantly, an in-depth description of the

collaborative process allows us a glimpse at the process of teacher learning and may afford opportunities to refine the process in order to move toward critical reflection on pedagogical practices. In developing the collaborative interview aspect of this study, I drew from the work of Tobin, Wu, & Davidson (1989) and Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2009) by incorporating elements of video-cued, multivocal ethnography, or the “Preschool in Three Cultures” method. Video recordings of classroom interactions served as the prompt for focus group dialogues. I will further elucidate the methodology of this study in the following chapter.

Reflection. Reflection is a key concept to this study, as well as the larger body of literature related to teacher learning. However, the definition of reflection is largely left up to interpretation, as there is little agreement about a single definition or what types of reflective practices result in teacher development (Hatton & Smith, 1995). There is little debate about the fact that reflection is viewed as an integral aspect of teacher learning. Further, the term critical reflection is important to this study, which will be discussed later in this section.

Richards (1990) defines reflection as recalling, considering, and evaluating an experience as it relates to a broader purpose. I build on this definition of reflection within this manuscript. Participating teachers reflected upon their *own* classroom practices while considering *other participating teachers’* practices through the use of video technology. This centralizes the participation and learning of teachers in a shared space, as opposed to as an individual endeavor. The “evaluation” of classroom practices brings with it certain connotations, particularly in the current school context, so driven by

teacher accountability systems focused on student performance on standardized tests. Through this process of reflection, participating teachers were afforded opportunities to engage in critical reflection of classroom practices, while also considering the broader picture (context) and purpose (equitable outcomes for all students).

Dysconscious racism (King, 1991) connects to the idea of critical reflection in this manuscript. According to King, dysconscious racism is “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given...dysconscious racism is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges” (p.135). This form of racism is unintentional. King (1991) described the structure of her teacher preparation class in 1987, in which she challenged “students’ taken-for-granted ideological positions and identities and their unquestioned acceptance of cultural belief systems which undergird racial inequity” (p. 134). Participants were encouraged to interrogate their own taken-for-granted perspectives on interactions with students of color through the process of critical reflection and collaborative interview.

Zeichner (1987) and others (Mulligan & Kozleski, 2010) have proposed three levels of reflection: The technical level, focused on practical strategies, the second level, which incorporates consideration of contextual factors, and the third level, which includes an investigation of moral and ethical concerns. Expanding this definition to include socio-cultural and political contexts requires the use of the phrase critical reflection, which connects the act of reflection with a socially just and equitable stance toward school change and teacher learning. Burdell and Swadener (1999) offer the term

critical personal narrative, which is pertinent to this research in that participating teachers will have the opportunity to share their own *critical* personal narratives as they critique “prevailing structures and relationships of power and inequity in a relational context” (p. 21).

Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) describe a Masters in education program designed after an apprenticeship model that strives toward developing “teachers who have the skills, contextual awareness and critical sensibilities to teach diverse groups of students that are being denied full participation in society” (p. 655). Teachers within this program were being prepared to teach in and lead schools toward becoming inclusive to all students. Importantly, the first semester of this program is centered on teachers coming to understand their own identity as it relates to practice in the classroom. It is imperative that teachers are afforded the opportunity to interrogate and investigate practices, and the assumptions that inform them, at each of these levels.

Thea Renda Abu el-Haj (2006) writes about extrapolating and interrogating “ideas that animate action” (p. 3). For Abu el Haj, reflection and the resulting discourse creates a space for social change and action. Discourse, she writes, “propels what we can and cannot imagine, and, as such, creates and limits possibilities for action” (p. 3). The space created by reflective dialogue allows teachers to draw out and problematize the tensions between their practice, policy, curriculum, and pedagogy, and ideas about social justice. Within this study, reflection and the ensuing dialogue represent the trajectory and evidence of teacher learning. Teachers critically reflect through their engagement in dialogue with colleagues.

Delpit (1995) writes that it is “vital that teachers and teacher educators explore their own beliefs and attitudes about non-white and non-middle class people” (p. 179) with regard to practices in the classroom. However, it is white teachers who often claim that they have no culture or view discussing race and culture as impolite and even racist (Florio-Ruane, 2001). The ability to engage in critical reflection and dialogue about the role of culture in the classroom, along with issues of whiteness, power, and privilege, offer powerful opportunities for teachers to work against the perpetuation of dominant culture values and beliefs. Teacher learning opportunities have often been framed as technical endeavors during which participants gain knowledge and skills specific to practices in the classroom. Teacher learning is much more complex than this simplistic view dictates. In fact, Florio-Ruane (2001) offers that beginning teachers “would need to experience engagement in an activity that was immediate, compelling, and authentic to their experience and purposes” (p. 49). In order to accomplish this, reflective dialogue should engage participants in examining their own identities, related to the context of the classroom and the wider school system.

Storytelling and narrative.

Stories about what happened at one time in a single school or district may be interesting, but they do not justify broader implementation. (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 498).

The above quote is from Phi Delta Kappan, a publication aimed at practitioners, in which Guskey and Yoon put forward a particular, traditional stance toward professional development. I begin with this quote to exemplify the gap between academia, which would question my use of such a publication, and the experiences of the

practitioner. Phi Delta Kappan, and other publications geared toward the practitioner, provide a simplistic view of teacher learning, conceptualized as professional development, and also advocate for the standardization of professional development practices for teachers. According to the authors, “stories” like case studies or ethnographies, provide us little information in deciding what should happen on a broader scale in terms of professional development. This construes teacher learning as a linear and simplistic process. The focus of this research was to allow for and describe the complexity of teacher learning, particularly as it relates to critical investigations of practice and contextual factors.

Ladson-Billings (1998) offers the notion of “naming your reality” in connection with storytelling. She states, “Stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting” (p. 13). All teachers bring their own “reality” to the classroom, one that is deeply embedded in their experiences and identities. Because the vast majority of teachers are white females whose values and beliefs mirror the dominant culture values embraced in schools, it is necessary for teachers to make evident their own realities, which inform their teaching so much. The act of naming realities in relation to practice allows for teachers to explore the complex notion of race in the classroom.

Further, Delgado (1989) proposes three reasons for naming one’s own reality: 1) Much of reality is socially constructed, 2) Stories provide members of outgroups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation, and 3) The exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the dysconscious conviction of viewing the world in one way. I recognize that Delgado’s proposal is focused on the story-telling of

people of color. However, it is important to document the stories of white female teachers as they grapple with the complexities of their own identities and how they impact classroom practices for students of color, lest the status quo remains intact and unchallenged. Whiteness, which permeates schools and larger society, serves as a barrier for teachers engaging in the critical work of ending inequitable outcomes for students from underserved and marginalized populations.

Much of the literature pertaining to teacher learning had to do with technical aspects of professional development. In investigating the seemingly logical and intuitive connection between improved professional development and improved student achievement, Guskey and Yoon (2009) conducted a research synthesis designed to assist school leaders in assessing the effectiveness of the professional development. However, the undercurrent of this synthesis forwards the traditional ideas connected to professional development; that “time” is a factor, “sufficient resources” must be made available to teachers, and that teachers must have “support” in their learning. Lip-service is paid to the idea that context is important to consider while planning and evaluating professional development, however little discussion is provided as to how contextual factors come into play throughout professional development opportunities. One contextual factor left out of this conversation on teacher learning is the historical and cultural trajectories of the participating teachers. The knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, and values each participant brought to this research were central to the co-construction of new knowledge.

Guskey’s (2003) synthesis of resources provided by researchers, teacher associations, national education organizations, and even the U.S. Department of

Education demonstrates how complex the landscape is as educators consider and design professional development opportunities for teachers. The author compiled lists of “effective characteristics” of professional development and compared them. Not surprisingly, there were few characteristics that appeared on multiple lists, perhaps demonstrating the unspoken or implied importance of context and historical trajectory as related to professional development. Even more surprising were the characteristics that showed up on fewer than three of the lists: a) Helps accommodate diversity and promote equity, b) takes a variety of forms, c) provides opportunities for theoretical understanding, d) is driven by an image of effective teaching and learning, e) provides for different phases of change, and f) promotes continuous inquiry and reflection (p. 13-14). This study purposely incorporated the six characteristics that were neglected in Guskey’s literature review regarding professional development. This research is driven by the need for equitable outcomes for all students, in this case, students who experience marginalization due to ethnicity, language, and/or gender. The type of learning opportunity presented here represents a few different methods of learning (e.g., collaborative interview, individual and group critical reflection) and is also open to the individual learning trajectories of the participating teachers. Through the collaborative interview, teachers were afforded an opportunity to interrogate the theoretical frames that inform their practice. Each of these notions, neglected in the literature about “effective” professional development, deeply inform this research.

What are teachers learning?

As teachers participate in professional learning opportunities, they are asked to revise and refine their own practices. Yet, these opportunities remain a technical endeavor. The types of professional learning opportunities afforded to teachers are focused on the implementation of particular strategies or programs related to instructional practices. This has limited the scope of professional learning for teachers to largely technical realms of inquiry designed to standardize classroom practices (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Much of the literature on teachers' participation in professional learning opportunities report that their learning experiences, as well as their expectations for those experiences, center on technical aspects of learning. Simply changing practices without a critical investigation of the ideologies that inform the practices may result in superficial change, but will largely fall short of transforming the educational system into a more socially just and equitable space for all students. While learning new strategies is important, teachers must participate in the critical investigation of the beliefs and assumptions that inform practices at all levels of the school system if sustainable change related to educational outcomes for students from historically underserved and marginalized populations.

The participants within this study were white, female teachers interrogating their practices. The choice to focus on white, female teachers is purposeful. The vast majority of teachers in K-12 public schools are white and female, so it is imperative that this group of teachers be encouraged to examine their positionality as it connects to classroom interactions with students of color.

Not only are the learning opportunities typically designed as technical endeavors; teachers express a desire and an expectation to participate in “pragmatic” learning that focuses on student achievement. For most teachers, increasing their own competence is reflected in the achievement and behavior of students (Harootunian & Yargar, 1980). Therefore, they hope to gain specific, concrete, and practical ideas that directly relate to the day-to-day operation of their classrooms (Fullan & Miles, 1992) that will have a direct and measurable impact on student achievement. Technical learning, while sometimes superficial and separated from the context in which it is implemented, is a necessary aspect of school transformation. Teachers must understand the “how to” related to improving outcomes for all students. Unfortunately, practices that are implemented without a critical investigation of the underlying ideologies and beliefs that inform them may unintentionally continue to privilege some students while marginalizing others. Additionally, critical analysis on the beliefs, values, and assumptions teachers bring with them to the classroom may not yield immediate, measurable outcomes, such as increased achievement on standardized tests. This may present one potential limitation to the study, as the participating teachers, as well as the school administrators, experience a significant amount of pressure from the district to maintain and increase achievement on standardized tests.

Implementation of techniques and strategies absent of critical analysis of the practice will result in a perpetuation of the status quo. Teachers must engage in learning to reform teaching while participating in the context of schools, as opposed to solely in the university setting (Cochran-Smith, 1991). “Prospective teachers need to know from

the start that they are part of a larger struggle and that they have a responsibility to reform, not just replicate, standard school practices” (p. 280). Standard school practices, as described in this quote, represent practices that reflect the values, beliefs, and ways of knowing of the dominant culture. Replication of unexamined practices serves to continue the cycle of privilege and marginalization that some students, particularly students of color, experience in U.S. public schools.

Technical strategies always come up against situated practice. While it seems instinctive to assume that technical strategies that have been successful in one setting are easily transferable to another, this assumption neglects to account for the ways contextual factors influence the implementation. The histories related to the context, the individuals (who each have their own histories and belief systems) implementing the practice, and the assumptions and ideologies that inform the practice, among other factors, all influence outcomes. It is imperative that teachers have the opportunity to critically examine the beliefs and assumptions that inform practices within the classroom, as well as the ways in which power and privilege impact the daily work of teachers in schools. Opportunities for critical learning must create a space for teachers to investigate ideologies related to the practice of teaching, as well as other strategies and structures at play in schools. This is a core component of sustainable school reform and transformation.

Whiteness

As I conducted the literature review, I could see a wide and varied number of pertinent articles. To refine my search, I considered my own experiences coming to

better understand whiteness. Certain key words were included within the search based on my own journey toward understanding my beliefs, assumptions, and values, as well as how it impacted (and currently impacts) my teaching. Given the necessity for critical reflections on whiteness, power, and privilege in order to address inequitable educational outcomes, literature from whiteness studies is included in the literature review for this study.

My own learning trajectory related to my positionality as a white woman has been lengthy, emotional, and continuous. I am, and will always be, learning about whiteness and the privileges and power associated with it, as well as navigating a society in which whiteness is centralized, valued, and provides an abundance of opportunities and benefits. It is challenging to think about whiteness while simultaneously working to push it from its comfortable position in the center. I begin this section by acknowledging those scholars upon whom I rely in order to become the researcher and person I wish to become. Drawing upon Bakhtin's notion of the multi-dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981), I build upon the voices of others in order to further the dialogue around whiteness in the classroom. Scholars of color and those who are allies offer me the ground upon which I can gain footing, develop a deeper understanding, and work toward more equitable schools for all students. I have organized the vast literature on whiteness into two sections: whiteness as an individual phenomenon and whiteness as a structural phenomenon. However, I begin this section by describing the image of the white, urban teacher, as it provides a framework through which the findings of the current study will be discussed.

Image of the White, Urban Teacher

When asked to imagine a teacher, what image comes to mind? Scholars have argued that very specific, if somewhat romanticized and mythologized, images permeate the minds of children and adults in the US (see Burbach & Figgins, 1993; Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Bulman, 2002). I relate these images to cultural schemas, which, according to Quinn (2005), are generic constructions, built up through our multiple and varied cultural experiences. She writes that schemas "...include experiences of all kinds – unlabeled as well as labeled, inarticulate as well as well-theorized, felt as well as cognized...in short, [schemas] can be as various and complex as the experiences from which they are derived" (p. 38). In order to provide a framework for the reader, I have chosen to engage the cultural schema(s) of the white, urban teacher as a way to organize and construct the findings related to this study. I argue that the image of the white, urban teacher indicates a complex cultural schema that each of the participating teachers simultaneously enact and contradict, consciously and unconsciously. I begin this chapter by setting the context through a brief description of images of the white, urban teacher. The image will be further developed and complicated throughout the findings chapters.

Describing the schema. To describe the pervading image of the teacher, one must consider the demographic information associated with the identity. As previously stated, the current population of elementary teachers is made up largely of white females, with 84% of elementary teachers being female (USDE: NCES, 2010). While this national statistic does provide an image, the demographics alone do not account for the representation of teachers that vary between states, contexts, and grade levels, etc. Thus,

it is necessary to consider the varied images of teacher; images that better evoke the experiences and identities of the participants in this study. In order to deepen the current examination, I shift focus toward images of white, urban teachers, which carry somewhat different connotations from that of the more generic “teacher.” I begin by including descriptions of teachers from examples of pop culture.

Weber and Mitchell (1995) begin their volume on images of teachers in popular media with an excerpt from the book series *Sweet Valley High*, which was immensely popular with tweens and teens in the mid-90s. The excerpt describes a teacher, nicknamed The Hairnet, who wears orthopedic shoes, thick glasses, and keeps her hair in a tight bun. She is constructed as authoritarian and joyless; similar images to others asked to imagine a teacher. I remember my own fifth grade girls clamoring for the few copies our school library had. While very few of my colleagues resembled the image of the teacher portrayed in the books, the students would often laugh together at the mean, old teacher from the stories. These shared cultural experiences aid in the construction of the image of a teacher, even as contradictions arise with the students’ lived experiences in an urban school.

Another image of white, urban teachers is presented in the form of LouAnne Johnson, the “tough, yet caring” high school teacher portrayed by Michelle Pfeiffer in the film *Dangerous Minds*. Giroux (1997b) critiques the portrayal of LouAnne as an “innocent border crosser,” entering into a chaotic and out-of-control classroom in an inner-city school. This white, female teacher embodies the face of authority, orderliness, and control, which is contrasted with the chaos-filled and dangerous urban classroom.

This makes prominent the image of the white, urban teacher as savior, or as a Great White Hope, here to save students of color from themselves and their cultural and historical backgrounds. Giroux (1997b) writes, "...whites can come into such schools and teach without theory, ignore the histories and narratives that students bring to schools, and perform miracles in children's lives by mere acts of kindness" (p. 306). Kindness is an important notion to consider when imagining the cultural schema of the white, urban teacher. As uncomfortable as I am to write this, I often described my own desire to teach in an urban setting through the language of the "savior." I just wanted to "help these kids," positioning myself as the only hope "these kids" had for a "better life." This perspective immediately places students in a helpless state, while centralizing the role of white, middle class values and beliefs in helping students achieve success in school and in life, as determined by the teacher.

At the same time, LouAnne's kindness is often displayed through acts of "tough love." For example, upon being run out of the classroom by the unruly students the first day, she arrives the next day wearing jeans and a leather jacket, as a military officer on leave who knows karate. This image reifies how authority lies within the teacher through fear and intimidation of the less civilized students of color in the classroom. In my own experience as a teacher coach and instructor of pre-service teachers, I have engaged novice teachers in conversations around technical power and its role in the classroom. For many novice teachers, their greatest concern is "controlling" the students in their classrooms. Research has demonstrated that strict control of behavior, tracking students, and highly structured discipline frameworks are more likely associated with schools and

classrooms that serve students of color (see Oakes, 2005). This phenomenon upholds the teacher as the authoritarian who is responsible for controlling and “civilizing” the unruly masses.

While images from film are powerful, many scholars have documented the ways white, urban teachers engage in their work, thus uncovering and contributing to cultural schemas of the white, urban teacher. Harding (2005) describes one white, female teacher who was deemed “successful” in teaching students of color through the methodology of portraiture. One important point the author brings up is the “struggle” to empower kids by “mastering Standard or ‘school English’” (p. 1). This is reminiscent of Delpit’s work describing the culture of power (1995) and its impact on the teaching of “other people’s children.” The concept of empowerment is a complicated one in that it has been critiqued to be problematic without an accompanying interrogation of power (i.e., the power of teachers), as well as questions of students’ agency (Freire, 1970/1993; Inglis, 1997; Archibald & Wilson, 2011). However, it is evident that the concept of empowerment of urban students (i.e., “at risk” from poverty, single parent families, or racial background) is deeply entwined in the narrative of the white, urban teacher.

The essentialization of the experiences of people of color neglects the unique and varied experiences of individuals from a shared cultural identity group. This is a central idea within whiteness literature, demonstrating the frequency this happens to people of color. However, essentializing or oversimplifying the experiences of white people is dangerous as well, although arguably not as deleterious. Further complicating images of the white, urban teacher, Harding (2005) also raises the theme of being a “different kind

of white person” (p. 73). The participating teacher in Harding’s study described many experiences with people of color, which actually serve to marginalize her (minimally) in the “white world.” Additionally, these experiences afforded her glimpses into the world and experiences of the students she is teaching, many of whom were students of color. In my own preparation for conducting this study, I wrote about the need for me to be aware of essentializing the experiences and identities of the teachers who agreed to participate. In other words, identifying as “white” meant that while the teachers would have some shared experiences, values, and beliefs, I would also need to uncover within-group differences. As we talked over the course of the study, both participants in the current study verbalized, in their own way, their status as a “different kind of white person.” All in all, images of the white, urban teacher – domineering, authoritative, yet kind and caring, working to “save” the children under her charge, was both upheld and contradicted in the discussions and observations collected throughout this study. This organization will assist the reader in understanding how the participating teachers connected their beliefs, values, and assumptions about power, privilege, race, and gender to their classroom practices and interactions with students of color.

Embodying the Image of the White, Urban Teacher

Throughout this manuscript, I use the word “embodiment” as a characterization of the participation of teachers in co-constructing, challenging, and reifying the image of the white, urban teacher. There is vast literature on embodiment, from many schools of thought. Current reflections on embodiment have their beginnings in literature related to the body. The body has been explored in variety of ways in the literature. Descarte

(1984) offered dualism, which is the connection between the mind and body (i.e., I think, therefore I am). Foucault (1977) identified the body as the primary target of power, discipline, and control. Some feminists have challenged the positioning and perception of the female body in terms of sexuality and sensuality (Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1993; Collins, 2000). Disability studies literature (Snyder & Mitchell, 2001; Ginsburg & Rapp, 2013) offers critiques about dis/abled bodies and their participation in the world. “Bodies are considered open systems that connect to others, human and non-human, so that they are always unfinished and in a process of becoming...which is the concept that moves beyond seeing bodies as fixed and closed to explore how they are produced and performed” (Blackman, 2008; p. 105).

Judith Butler’s (1993) concept of performativity reiterates the idea that bodies, female bodies in particular, are built through discourse and interaction in order to build meaning. In other words, females come to *be* female through repeated and lived discourses that co-construct that identity. While the focus of this study is not on the female-ness of the participating teachers, the notion of repeated discourses as a means to co-construct identity is pertinent to the work done here. In this case, the teachers are co-constructing the schema of the white, urban teacher through discourse and participation in activity systems. This most closely represents the definition of embodiment applied in this study.

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus further refines the working definition of embodiment related to this study. According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is a “system of durable, transposable dispositions...which generate and organize practices and

representations” (p. 53). The teachers, in reflecting upon their beliefs, assumptions, and values, were describing the process of “becoming” teachers. *Becoming*, in this case, meant reflecting and enacting the dominant image of the white, urban teacher. While the teachers upheld the image of the white, urban, female teacher in some ways, they also contradicted and challenged it in important ways. As it is used here, embodiment also includes the co-construction and re-imagining of the image of the white, urban teacher.

Whiteness as an Individual Phenomenon

Whiteness, according to Mahoney (1997), is a relational concept in that white people are racialized only in terms of differences with others. Whiteness is the “unmarked” identifier, against which all other identities and cultures are measured (Florio-Ruane, 2001). In other words, the social construction of whiteness exists within a binary relationship to blackness or to “otherness”. It is centralized through the marginalization of the “other.” While it is widely known that differences between perceived racial and ethnic groups have no founding in biology (Ignatiev, 1997), the dominance of whiteness pervades every aspect of society, including schools and classrooms. This socially constructed, “made-up” thing that is whiteness has very real consequences. According to Ignatiev (1997), whiteness is a strategy for securing advantage through the social significance of white skin. However, whiteness is much more than simply the color of one’s skin. It is the privileges granted in relation to the color of ones skin as well as hair texture, nose shape, culture, and language (Leonardo, 2004). This privilege is bestowed to individuals, based on physical attributes related to

identity. The challenge of whiteness lies in the fact that privileges are often granted unbeknownst to the (white) person receiving them.

Privilege associated with whiteness is often given without the person's (re)cognition that it is being granted. Imagine money being stuffed into the pockets of an unknowing white person who is walking down the street (Leonardo, 2004). The privileges and power associated with whiteness are deferred onto unknowing people, who are re-creating white racial domination as a result. Peggy McIntosh, who has done extensive work in understanding white privilege, was addressing an audience at a workshop and expressed that coming to terms with white privilege is not about blame, shame, or guilt. My own learning process has resulted in emotional and (at times) even traumatic discoveries related to my own privilege. However, Leonardo (2004) counters that while racial domination precedes us, "whites daily recreate it on both the individual and institutional level" (p. 139). Bringing whiteness toward consciousness at the individual level is an imperative aspect of decentralizing its power.

Racial domination is formed out of the historical and patterned treatment of social groups (Leonardo, 2004). Given that white people tend not to consider themselves as racialized beings, it is all the more important that the idea of "color-blindness" is challenged. The "color-blind tendency" of current U.S. society is problematic for understanding whiteness because it pushes beyond the idea that racial preference is wrong, and forwards the notion that race should not be a consideration in determining access and policy (i.e., affirmative action) (Leonardo, 2004). In schools, teachers are encouraged to see past color toward the individual. Lawrence & Tatum (1997) write, "It

is the teacher who does not acknowledge her or his own racial or ethnic identity...who will not recognize the need for children of color to affirm their own” (p. 163).

Whiteness as an Institutional Phenomenon

According to Frankenberg (1993), whiteness is made up of three dimensions, including; 1) the structural advantage of race privilege, 2) the standpoint from which white people look at themselves and others, and 3) the “unmarked” or “unnamed” nature of a particular set of cultural practices.

In describing whiteness, Zeus Leonardo (2007) includes in the definition a connection to white supremacy, which he describes a “racialized social system that upholds, reifies, and reinforces the superiority of whites” (p. 261.) The term white supremacy carries with it many deeply emotional and even dangerous meanings. Images of racist men in white sheets, burning crosses exemplifies the power of racism. Racism and whiteness are related in that they are often constructed and perceived as individualized phenomena. They are intentional acts committed by racist individuals. However, whiteness is much more insidious. The manifestation of multiple structural inequities throughout society (e.g. employment, housing, educational opportunities) as well as within the structure of U.S. public schools is evidence of the pervasive nature of whiteness.

Whiteness and Teacher Learning

Whiteness is simultaneously an individualized and structural phenomenon that shapes participation in the activity system that is teacher learning. In the words of Zeus Leonardo (2010), multiculturalism, or an emphasis on minority students, leads us to

“focus solely on the margins, which negates a critical look at the center” (i.e., whiteness) (www.niusileadscape.org/bl/?p=538#more-538). The privilege associated with whiteness must be interrogated within the classroom, and begs consideration of the marginalization connected with non-whiteness. Whiteness, and the power and privileges associated with it, mediates the ways teachers conduct the work of classrooms. Teachers are afforded very few opportunities to interrogate their own whiteness in relation to their practices and yet, whiteness permeates every aspect of society. Participation in teacher learning provides the opportunity for teachers to make visible, question, and potentially change the influence of individualized and structural whiteness in the school setting.

In the context of teacher learning, Berlak (2008) defines whiteness as the “interlocking system of advantages that affect the ways people move in and see the world” (p. 49). She also explains the concept of the adaptive unconscious, which is the part of our mind that thinks at a non-conscious level. This part of the mind allows for efficient, sophisticated interpretations of the world around us; it can set goals, evaluate evidence and influence judgment, actions and conscious feelings. Adaptive unconscious has a big influence over our lives, although we do not necessarily realize it. Simultaneously, the conscious mind informs our thoughts and actions, but at a much slower, laborious pace. This is reminiscent of the sometimes diametrically opposed thoughts and actions of teachers. For example, teachers may profess the belief that all students can learn, while simultaneously enacting a deficit perspective on certain students. How does this happen? Perhaps the adaptive unconscious is at work, beneficially allowing teachers to move through their days with ease and efficiency, while

doing little to challenge the hegemonic code of whiteness because it is done at an unconscious level. Berlak (2008) writes, “thus, individuals can honestly claim they are aware of the diverse set of racist practices that hold in place the hegemony of whiteness and yet be completely unaware of them at an implicit automatic level” (p. 51).

In the words of Lea & Sims (2008), whiteness “runs like a mainstream through the heart of our classrooms, schools, and U.S. society” (p. 186). The narratives that uphold whiteness in classrooms and schools include standardization, meritocracy, tracking, and color-blindness (Lea & Sims, 2008). Whiteness is created and sustained through various ideological perspectives, including the idea that whiteness equates with being “American” (Kinchloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1989). The idea of meritocracy (pulling oneself up by the bootstraps), also contributes to the ideology of whiteness in that it exempts white people from inspecting privileges associated with their whiteness, thereby attributing successes to hard work and perseverance. Simultaneously, those people of color who experience less success (in terms of financial, educational, employment, etc.) are then blamed for a lack of hard work and perseverance.

One germinal work that informs the current study is Vivian Gussin Paley’s work, *White Teacher*, (1979) in which she shares reflections on her experiences teaching in a predominantly white school as it became integrated with students of color. The openness and willingness to be vulnerable is an important aspect of Paley’s success in coming to a deeper understanding of the ways her own whiteness informed her actions and interactions within the classroom.

Whiteness as an Invisible Artifact

Within the context of this study, I conceptualize whiteness as an artifact that mediates participation in an activity system. The literature on whiteness demonstrates that it is both an individual and institutional phenomenon. However, when considering whiteness in the framework of CHAT, it is possible to argue that whiteness is a tool that individuals use to mediate their participation in an activity. Whiteness is *enacted by* and *acts upon* individuals, in this case, teachers participating in a learning opportunity.

Whiteness literally comes to “color” the way participants see the world. However, the invisibility of whiteness is a result of subjects’ lack of (re)cognition of its impact. As stated previously, whiteness can make participation in an activity system more efficient while also having a deleterious effect on the object. In other words, whiteness mediates the activity of teacher learning without the subjects necessarily being conscious of its role in the activity. Participation is “easier” (i.e. more efficient), however it serves to reify whiteness, and further, the status quo. In this study, the process of teachers critiquing whiteness and its impact on classroom practices represents their trajectory of learning.

Whiteness and Gender

Teacher learning, described earlier in this chapter, occurs on an individual trajectory, influenced by the past histories of the individual, their own envisioned future, and the participation of multiple actors in an activity system. This presents a complex, yet exciting aspect of the current study. The individual trajectories and past histories of participating teachers were truly unknown and came as a welcome surprise. One of the most fascinating aspects of this study uncovering the ways learning and identity collided

within this study. Therefore, it is important to make a disclaimer at this point. The data of collaborative group discussions served to guide the analysis of the study. It was important that I extend my review of pertinent literature as data were interpreted. Therefore, it is important to note that additional literature, specifically literature on white motherhood is included in the findings chapter of this document.

Conclusion

Within this literature review, I have summarized the literature on teacher learning in terms of where teacher learning happens, how teacher learning happens, and what learning is happening, as well as literature on whiteness. When considering these two bodies of literature, we recognize that teachers enact and are acted upon by whiteness as they engage in the practice of teaching and learning. Reflection, collaborative relationships, and observation are all strategies employed within schools to help teachers acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and effective teachers. However, the literature reveals that teachers have limited opportunities to engage in learning that pushes their thinking beyond the status quo, and supports them in engaging in critical reflection on issues of whiteness, power, and privilege.

In the following chapter, I will provide details about the research design and methods for the current study. Included within the next chapter is a timeline for completion of the study, along with additional research that informs the chosen methods.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research design and methodological approach of this study to answer the research questions: 1) How do white, female, urban elementary school teachers describe their beliefs, values, and assumptions related to power, privilege, race, and gender in terms of classroom interactions with students of color? 2) What do tensions and contradictions that arise in the context of the collaborative interviews reveal about these teachers' learning related to issues of race, power, and privilege?

Description of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide and document the critical reflection, growth, and learning experienced by the participating teachers in the context of the collaborative interviews. The teachers were considered “researchers,” as their own interrogation of data and critical reflection was central to the success of the study. By documenting the critical reflections of white, female teachers working with students of color, this study contributes to the literature on teacher learning regarding the importance of critical reflection. Additionally, I trouble the concept of learning as both process and product. Finally, describing the complexities and tensions of this work will demonstrate its importance and encourage others to embark on such a journey of self- and collaborative-discovery.

Research Design

This study was reviewed and approved by Arizona State University's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (Appendix A). I used qualitative methods in collecting

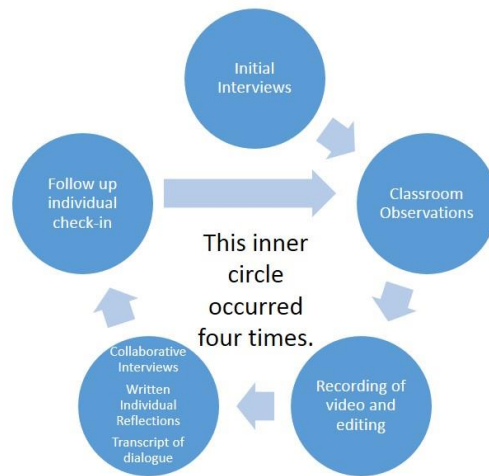
and analyzing the data for this study. The collaborative interviews were inspired by the ethnographic method, multi-vocal video-cued ethnography described in Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, (1989) and Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa (2009). As I analyzed the data collected, I coded according to emerging themes that corresponded with the research questions.

Flowchart. The steps of this study, which will be explained in further detail throughout this section, were as follows:

1. Soliciting a school site.
2. Invitation of white, female teachers to participate in the study (n=2).
3. Collection of personal and professional narratives of participating teachers through individual interview.
4. Observation of participating teachers' classrooms – Proposed time in each classroom is two to four hours a week, one to two visits per week.
5. Recording of a “typical day” in the classroom during the twice a week observations.
6. Editing video for the collaborative interview – 5-7 minutes of video.
7. Once a month collaborative group watches a video together and shares critical reflections.
8. Steps 3 through 8 will be repeated a total of four times.
9. Meet with participants to discuss initial findings.

Figure two (below) visually demonstrates the cycle of these steps.

Figure two: Graphic Organizer of the Study



Soliciting a School Site. Soliciting a school site for this project proved to be more challenging than I initially thought. Building on a professional relationship that originated during my participation in a master’s program in Educational Leadership, I contacted the professional development director, Bernice Kingston, in a southwestern urban school district. The district administrator was familiar with my research interests and was eager to learn about the study. After having a lengthy conversation with her about the specifics of the project, she offered to contact a few principals throughout the school district to gauge their interest in having teachers participate in this research study. Fortunately, the principal in an elementary school agreed to meet with me to further discuss the project and agreed to allow me to work with her teachers. A detailed description of the school site will be provided later in this chapter.

Selection of participants. Since the aim of this study was to understand how white, female teachers come to understand the ways identity impacts classroom

interactions with students of color, it was necessary for me to target this specific group of teachers. As mentioned previously, a focus on white female teachers has been critiqued with Florio-Ruane's (2001) work, in that white teachers' reflections may serve the reification of whiteness, rather than a critique of it (Pailliotet, 1995). This is an important point, which will be discussed further in later chapters. The demographics of schools in the U.S. indicate that white, female teachers make up the vast majority of the teaching population. Over 75% of teachers in K-12 schools in the United States are female and 83% are white (NCES, 2012). It is documented in the literature that whites do not typically view themselves as racialized beings (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Leonardo, 2002; Leonardo, 2004). At the same time, it was important to avoid essentializing participants' identification as a white person, allowing room for within group differences. However, Lewis (2004) points out whites' "similar location within the racial structure – locations that have material implications" (p. 626). It was necessary for me to find participants who self-identified as white so as to avoid making assumptions about participants' identities. The Recruitment and Self-Assessment form can be found in the appendices of this document (Appendix C).

While it was initially my intention to find teachers who had previously engaged in learning around culturally responsive practices and equity issues in the classroom, this proved to be much more difficult than originally conceptualized. Very few principals contacted by Ms. Kingston described even fewer teachers who had engaged in this type of learning; an issue reflected in the literature on teacher learning. In fact, securing any participants at all was such a challenge that Ms. Kingston finally agreed to allow

participating teachers to accrue Continuing Education Credits (CECs), which could be applied toward teachers' recertification. Finally, the principal at Dragonwood Elementary School met with me and agreed to allow me to recruit teachers at her school.

I solicited eleven teachers from Dragonwood Elementary to participate in the study. There were many factors that led teachers to decline participation; some of which were readily apparent, and others that were uncovered once I better understood the climate and culture of the school site. Upon inviting teachers to participate in the study via email, multiple teachers declined to participate, citing busy schedules and participation in other committees and classes throughout the school year. A handful of these prospective participants were within the first three years of beginning their careers, which contributed to them declining to participate. Additionally, it became evident that the teachers at Dragonwood were unaccustomed to having visitors and/or colleagues observing in their classrooms. This is important to note, since the state recently adopted a new observation criteria which requires that all teachers are observed five times over the course of a year. I believe all of these factors combined to impact the number of participants in this study. In the end, I was able to secure the participation of two teachers; a fourth grade teacher named Vivian Garcia and a music teacher named Mandy Parker. I learned much about these women, teachers, and friends, which I will share in the findings chapter.

The first guiding research question I developed made clear my focal participants for this study: How do white, female elementary school teachers come to understand the ways their deeply held beliefs, values, and assumptions impact their classroom

interactions with students of color? I am interested in studying white, female teachers not because I do not value the insights, reflections, and expertise of teachers of color. In fact, both Ladson-Billings' work *The Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of black children* (1994) and Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*, provide significant inspiration for the current study in terms of methods and conceptualization of learning. I chose to focus on white, female teachers in part because they make up a vast majority of the current teaching population. If this population of teachers is not afforded the opportunity to wrestle with their own beliefs, values, and assumptions as they relate to teaching, then the status quo is likely to be maintained. Choosing this population of teachers also has to do with my own journey of coming to a deeper understanding of how my identity as a white woman impacts my work as teacher and researcher. The benefit of hindsight makes me believe that I would be a much better teacher and coach now because of my deeper, albeit emerging, understanding of power, privilege, and whiteness.

Personal and professional narratives of participating teachers. The first step of data collection involved an introductory interview, during which I collected each participant's personal and professional histories. I drew from a narrative perspective and allowed the participants to convey their pertinent stories, experiences, and recollections during the course of the interview. While I provided the questions to the participants prior to the actual interview, I allowed them to lead by conducting a semi-structured interview. See Appendix D for initial interview questions.

Once initial interviews had been conducted with the individual participants, I met with the teachers together so that we could “set the tone” for our meetings. I discussed my tentative plan for the monthly meetings, describing the process of classroom visits and video recordings. I was very conscious of the way I positioned myself during the meetings so as to avoid centralizing my own opinion and experiences. I intentionally encouraged the participating teachers to provide feedback to me in terms of the structure and timing of those meetings. This allowed them to take more ownership of their own learning and participation in the study.

Informal follow up interviews were conducted after each CI in to the form of email conversations, which provided participants an opportunity to elaborate upon, clarify, and reflect further upon topics covered during the CIs. These informal exchanges consisted of short emails in which I prompted individual participants with short, clarifying questions. The interview environment was a crucial factor in the teachers’ participation. I sought to create and sustain an environment that was safe and welcoming, as critical reflection on identity can be an emotionally trying journey. I believe I was successful in building a positive rapport and trust with my participants, which encouraged them to reflect with honesty. I was open about my intentions throughout the data collection process and worked to privilege the perspectives of the participating teachers as though they were conducting action research of their own. Confidentiality is central to this study. I have not shared data collected with the administration or other teachers. The participant consent form can be found in the appendices of this document (Appendix B).

Classroom observations. As stated in previous chapters, I draw from the work of Tobin, Wu, and Davidson, (1989) and the subsequent study by Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2009) in terms of gathering classroom information via observation and video. In order to get a sense for the teacher's practices, the classroom environment and climate, I observed in each classroom once a week for between two and four hours (total/week). This provided me an opportunity to familiarize myself with the structure and schedule of the classroom, which informed the video collection. Additionally, the extended time I spent observing in the classroom increased the comfort level of both the teachers, as well as the students. Observation times also offered me the chance to speak informally with the teachers. Notes from these informal conversations were included in field notes. One limitation of this study is that my presence in the classroom may have changed the ways teachers interacted with students. I attempted to lessen this impact by spending time engaging in building relationships with the teacher and the students in the classroom.

Field notes were recorded during each classroom observation, describing events, interactions, activities, and conversations within the classroom (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). More detail was added to the notes once I left the school. Classroom interactions were recorded, as well as my own reflections, questions, and intuitions. The classroom observation field notes allowed me a space to record informal conversations I had with participating teachers, which contributed to the findings described in this manuscript.

Recordings of a typical day. The video recordings of classroom interactions played an important part in this study, as they served as the prompt for each collaborative interview. Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2009) spent time in the classrooms recording

multiple hours of footage that were eventually edited down to short 20 minute snapshots that were meant to portray the “typical day” in each preschool classroom. Only one camera was utilized in recording the classrooms, which represents a potential limitation (Kumar & Miller, 2005; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). One camera was stationed in the back of the classroom on a tripod, and was focused on a wide shot of the class. I sat behind the camera, which allowed me to manually zoom in on specific events and interactions as they occurred in the classroom.

I began by watching the classroom videos in their entirety after they were collected. Initially, I simply familiarized myself with the content in the video and looked for interactions between the teachers and students. Upon subsequent viewings, I cross-checked the videos with my field notes, which provided additional insights into the contextual factors at play during the video, as well as side conversations I had with the teachers. My original goal was to edit classroom videos down to 5-7 minutes. I recognize the power I held as the researcher and editor of the videos. I chose which excerpts to include, which to remove, and how long to spend on different classroom interactions. Many of these decisions were made with time in mind, but I also recognize how my own positionality as an insider (a former classroom teacher) may have influenced the final videos. Since I have elementary classroom experience, I could identify both formal and informal interactions that were useful to this study. I believe my role as a former coach for new teachers also may have influenced the selection of certain excerpts. As a coach, I was responsible for watching teachers conduct lessons and provide critical feedback and support as they worked to improve their instruction. It is entirely possible that the frame

through which I was viewing the classroom videos was that of a coach. In other words, I may have included certain snippets because I saw them as an opportunity for the teachers to do something different.

The process of editing videos down to short 5-7 minute clips was challenging because the videos are full of interesting interactions between the teachers and students. Therefore, I sought the advice and feedback of my committee members and other colleagues in selecting snippets of video to include. I imagine that the results pertaining to this study might vary somewhat if other excerpts had been included or excluded. However, I am confident that the videos I edited successfully represented a “typical day” in the classrooms of the participants.

The classroom videos were edited down to be snapshots of less than 7 minutes, so as to afford more time with the participants in dialogue, rather than watching classroom video. I used iMovie as the video editing tool, as I was familiar with the software and it provided an efficient means for quickly editing and manipulating classroom videos into shortened excerpts for the CIs. The final edit of the classroom videos were accessed via my laptop for each CI.

Collaborative interviews (CIs). Sherin (2007) offers the concept of teachers’ professional vision, which is applicable to the current study. “What is it that enables the archeologist to see a collection of stones as part of a larger structure?” she writes, introducing the concept of professional vision, originated by Goodwin (1994). Sherin applies this notion to teachers, explaining that professional vision is teachers’ “ability to make sense of what is happening in their classroom” (p. 384). Within the context of

video clubs, Sherin describes a study in which teachers watch video and have the opportunity to observe and discuss specific events in the classroom. While the observations of the teachers changed over the course of this study, (seven meetings with the video club) the teachers focused largely on technical aspects of the classroom. For example, the first meeting centered on the pedagogical decisions the teacher made during the course of the lesson. (i.e., Did you have a plan for this lesson or did you want to just see what would happen?). By the seventh meeting, the teachers had begun to focus on the mathematical conceptions of students, in other words, the way the students thought about specific mathematical ideas. These foci remain technical in the sense that they are based within technique of instruction. Within the context of this study, teachers were supported and encouraged to develop and hone critical professional vision that focuses on understanding and interrogating how power, privilege, and whiteness manifest within the classroom.

Once a month, the participating teachers and I met in order to view the edited versions of the classroom video. I served as a facilitator during these dialogues to encourage and support critical reflection on identity and its influence on classroom practices. In my capacity as a collaborative peer teacher in a middle school in the Phoenix area, as well as my position as Assistant Director of NIUSI-*LeadScape*, I spent many hours coaching teachers and principals to reflect on their practices. I have increased my capacity since my days in public schools, since those reflections were typically centered on technical solutions to problems teachers were experiencing in the classroom. My journey continues as I learn more about facilitating critical conversations

with teachers. I drew from the expertise of my committee members throughout this process. During my tenure as Assistant Director of NIUSI-*LeadScape*, I came to a deeper understanding of the concept of dialogic third space (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). It is my goal to serve as a facilitator during these dialogues in order to create a space in which knowledge can be co-constructed between all the participants.

At the beginning of each collaborative interview, participating teachers were asked to first watch the video and then “free write” about their reactions, comments, and questions. These short written responses also served as sources of data for the study. For the third and fourth collaborative interviews, I provided readings meant to support the teachers’ deeper interrogation of relatively new concepts, including whiteness, power, and privilege. The readings can be found in the appendices of this document (Appendix E, F, and G).

Sharing initial findings. Approximately one month after the final CI was conducted I reached out to both participating teachers via email. This served as an opportunity for the participants to provide a member check on the initial findings and also provide clarification on my analysis. The participants were comfortable with the short email I sent describing initial findings, and seemed uncomfortable questioning me. I assume this is related to the relationship that exists between teaching and academia. They mostly shared clarifying details about their own stories, leaving the interpretation and analysis up to me.

Subjectivity of the Researcher

Researcher positionality is important to note as the research design and methods are described for this study. My own position is fluid between insider and outsider. My experience as a classroom teacher, coach for new teachers, and my doctoral work provides me with familiarity and general respect for the participating teachers. I understand the pressures and responsibilities of teaching. I am very familiar with the work of classrooms, with coaching, and schools in similar contexts. I have also been on a personal journey toward understanding the ways my own identity as a white woman impacts my teaching and research. I can empathize with teachers as they move on the challenging and emotional trajectory of learning about equitable schools for all students.

Drawing from Cochran-Smith's (2000) use of personal narrative documenting her own experiences implementing a teacher preparation program at Penn State University, I have been deeply influenced by my own trajectory of learning about identity and whiteness. I have included, within this research, narratives about my own experience, which also contribute to my "insider" status. However, I still remain an outsider because of my status as an emerging scholar. The teachers at the school site, like many teachers, might have been wary of the academy; finding it to be less than useful to their day to day work. Also, I was a stranger to the staff, which may have limited my ability to recruit more teachers.

The way I positioned myself to the participants was an important aspect of this study. The dialogues with participating teachers were emotional, focused on sensitive issues related to race, power, and privilege. It was not my intention to "catch" the

participating teachers enacting racist (unintentional or otherwise) or discriminatory practices. I positioned myself as a colleague to the participating teachers on a similar journey. It was my intention, as indicated by my research questions, to document the teachers' journey as they engaged with complex topics, such as their own whiteness, power, privilege, and how each impact interactions with students of color.

Situational Context

As described in earlier chapters, the current focus on technical aspects of teacher learning is tightly tied to the present socio-political and historical context of schooling. Initiatives from the various levels of the school system (e.g., federal, state, district, etc.) have created a push toward a perceived need for technical solutions. This current study seeks to stretch the limits placed on current teacher learning opportunities through the act of critical reflection. Critics may say that learning about identity will not directly improve student achievement. Therefore, I recognize the way this study may be perceived by some members of the education and academic community. Namely, I was concerned about participating teachers' skepticism, which led me to be very critical about the selection process, described in the following section.

Dragonwood Elementary School is in an urban community on the outskirts of a large city in the southwest. It serves kindergarteners through fifth grade with almost 600 enrolled students. The schools' mission and goals are as follows:

[Dragonwood School]...in partnership with families and community, develops self-assured life-long learners who become responsible, productive members of society inspired to create a future full of hope and promise. [We will] increase

math, reading, and writing skills as measured by the District Achievement Plan, including district and state criterion and standardized norm-referenced tests. (School Report Card, 2013).

As of the fall of 2012, almost 75% of the students attending Dragonwood Elementary qualified for free/reduced lunch, which is an indicator often applied for determining the socioeconomic levels of a school population. Hispanic students represented the majority of the school population (63%), while white (13%), African American (8%), and American Indian (7%) represented the three next largest populations. Much like the rest of the country, many of the classroom teachers at Dragonwood are white, females, which makes up approximately 83% of the teaching staff (classroom teachers, grades K-5).

The office is located at the front of the building, easily accessible from the school parking lot. The rest of the school, however, is surrounded by a fence of blue metal bars. Children's bicycles are locked to the fence by the office door, ready for when school is let out. Upon entering the office, one is greeted by the young receptionist. I quickly developed a positive rapport with the office staff, including the receptionist and the school secretary, who sits at a desk directly outside the principal's office door. Interestingly, the principal's office has a large, floor-to-ceiling window instead of a wall, which seems to set up the principal as easily accessible to the community and staff, given that she is visible as soon as you walk in the office. All in all, I visited the school approximately 20 times over the course of the study. There was only *one* instance when the principal was not seated at her desk in her office. This indicated that her leadership

reflected a hands-off style, contributing to a school culture that was skeptical of classroom visitors and observers.

Method of Gaining Access

The selection of the school site had much to do with ease of access and convenience, although the demographics and the school outlook are also important factors. A former classmate of mine in the Education Leadership Masters program at Arizona State University, Bernice Kingston, is currently the professional development director in an urban elementary school district. She was aware of my research interests and had expressed excitement about the topic. As a district-wide administrator, she reached out to several principals across the district she thought would be open to inviting me on campus to conduct this study. Upon hearing back from the principal of Dragonwood, Ms. Kingston provided me with contact information. I formally met with the principal of Dragonwood in January to further discuss the details of the study. Additionally, the principal of Dragonwood assisted me in contacting potential candidates for participation.

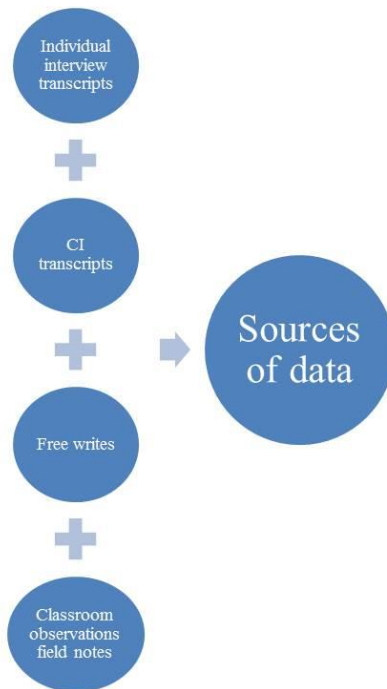
Methods of Generating Data

Farrell (2001) offers three modes of reflection: 1) journal writing, 2) classroom observations, and 3) group discussions. Each of these modes of reflection were incorporated into the methodology. As discussed in the literature review, technical learning (i.e., learning focused on specific instructional or behavior management practices, etc.) is insufficient alone in creating and sustaining more equitable outcomes for all students. Therefore, each aspect of data collection was designed so that teachers

could connect assumptions, values, and belief systems to classroom practices, as well as interrogate issues of power and privilege at play.

Transcripts of the individual interviews and the CIs, along with my own field notes collected during classroom observations served as data. Additionally, participating teachers were asked to free write after watching the classroom video, but before participating in the collaborative conversation. This was done to center their thinking and reflection. Sources of data for this study are displayed in the graphic below (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sources of Data



Analysis of the Data

The research questions driving this study were intentionally quite open-ended, as is the tradition of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I have included them below for easy reference throughout this dissertation.

1) How do white, female, urban elementary school teachers describe their beliefs, values, and assumptions related to power, privilege, race, and gender in terms of classroom interactions with students from historically underserved and marginalized populations?

2) What do tensions and contradictions that arise in the context of the collaborative interviews reveal about these teachers' learning related to issues of race, power, and privilege?

The table below reflects the data I have collected based on my observations, conversations, and reflections.

Table 1: Compiled data

Data	Amount
Initial interview transcripts	2 hours (approx. 1 hour for each participant)
Field notes from classroom observations	18 (approx. 9 for each classroom)
Collaborative Interview Transcripts (CIs)	Approximately 4 hours
Free writes completed by teachers	8 documents (4 for each participant)
Interview notes	6 (2 initial interviews and 4 conversational interviews)

Initial analysis of the data collected began immediately after the first CI, which allowed me to reflect on the data in order to make informed decisions about future meetings and interviews with participants. Four CIs were conducted with the participants, with follow up conversations conducted via email and during classroom observations.

In describing human learning, Engeström (2011) states, “Humans – practitioners, teachers, students – are intentional and interactive beings who keep interpreting and reinterpreting the challenges and tasks they face in their own, multiple, changing, and often unpredictable ways” (p. 599). In other words, the complexity of documenting learning in the context of this study is evident. However, contradictions can be viewed as a space for transformation and development. Therefore, data analysis for this study incorporated an analysis of contradictions and tensions experienced by the participants as they engaged in critical reflection on classroom practices. The data collected demonstrated contradictions and tensions and were fertile ground for coming to a deeper understanding about teacher learning.

While this study is not ethnographic, elements are drawn from ethnographic strategies, including the use of open-ended interview strategies and the video-cued nature of the collaborative interviews (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) describe how grounded theory complements ethnographic strategies so that ethnographers can “conduct efficient fieldwork and create astute analyses” (p. 160). The authors outlined general steps to data analysis, which included: 1) Collect data on what happens in the research setting, 2) code data line-by-line to show action and process, 3) compare data with data in memos, 4) raise significant codes to categories, 5) compare data with category in memos, 6) check and fill out categories through theoretical sampling, 7) compare category to category, 8) integrate categories into a theoretical framework, 9) write the first draft, 10) identify gaps and refine concepts, 11) conduct a comprehensive literature review, and 12) rework the

entire piece. This list guided me as I began collecting, coding, and analyzing data. It provided a roadmap as I engaged in the data analysis and writing process. I view the final step (rework the entire piece) as an iterative process. I look forward to the feedback of my committee, moving me closer to publications from this manuscript.

Formal data analysis began with general coding of recurrent themes within the transcripts of interviews, CIs, written responses and fieldnotes. I used the qualitative data analysis software Atlas TI in order to organize and code data. Repeated readings of transcripts resulted in codes that shifted and were refined. As codes were developed and refined, I worked closely with my co-chairs, especially Dr. Swadener, to use a broader lens in examining patterns and categories. The recurring categories were written into memos. The memos served two important purposes. First, they provided information that allowed me to further refine my follow-up individual and collaborative interviews with participants. In fact, the addition of reading materials was a direct result of memoing with Dr. Swadener. Additionally, the memos assisted me in organizing my own thoughts with regard to findings and also allowed me to garner important feedback from committee members and co-chairs.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative studies such as this one require attention to potential issues with trustworthiness. Data triangulation, member checks, and debriefing with my committee were all strategies incorporated into the study to ensure that findings and subsequent analysis were valid. Data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) is the use of several data sources. In this study, data sources included transcripts of initial interviews, transcripts of

collaborative interviews, free writes completed by the participants, and field notes of classroom observations. However, triangulation was not only meant to look for consistencies within the data. Mathison (1988) wrote, “All of the outcomes of triangulation, convergent, inconsistent, and contradictory, need to be filtered through knowledge gleaned from the immediate data” (p. 16). In other words, the data and subsequent analysis was enriched through converging ideas as well as contradictions. Using the CHAT framework as a means for understanding teacher learning allows us to view contradictions and tensions as a site for learning. Additionally, member checks were conducted informally with participating teachers during classroom visits and also via email. Lastly, I leaned heavily on my co-chairs and committee member to talk through initial findings and push my thinking in terms of drawing in new literature to compliment the analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

All teachers participate in and move through multiple, overlapping activity systems at the same time (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larsen, 1995), carrying ways of mediating their participation, the rules of various contexts (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström, 1987), and their own cultural beliefs, values, and dispositions (Cole, 1996). *Simultaneous* participation in multiple activity systems changes, interrupts, and influences their participation in *each* activity system (Engeström, 2001). They draw from their experiences (e.g., rules, forms of participation) in conscious and unconscious ways. Teachers see how elements from each activity system influence the others, and sometimes they do not. They literally move from one space to another; for instance, between their own classroom and a district offered professional development opportunity. They also move metaphorically as they engage in their work while interacting with various participants (e.g., administrators, parents, colleagues, students) (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larsen, 1995) to accomplish myriad goals (e.g., soliciting support for a student who is in trouble, discussing student progress, collaborating on lesson plans). Systems operate in nested contexts (Ferguson, Kozleski, & Smith, 2001; Kozleski, Thorius, & Smith, 2014; Kozleski & Thorius, 2014), as schools operate under the leadership and administration of federal and state departments of education, as well as district policy-makers (See Kozleski & Huber, 2010, for an example.) This adds to the complexity of teacher experience and makes it less likely that a single approach to teacher learning will have sustainable impacts on everyday practices.

I begin this chapter by reminding the reader of the research questions guiding this study, as well as providing an overview of the research, including its organization and the research process. Next, I organize the major findings into broad topics that relate to the research questions and were uncovered in the data analysis. These include: 1) embodying and problematizing the image of the white, urban, female teacher, 2) navigating overlapping activity systems, and 3) mediational tools and practices. I have included discussion throughout each section.

Framing of the Study

White, urban, female teachers are seldom asked to participate in learning related to issues of power, privilege, race, and gender within the classroom. Thus, teachers engaging in learning focused solely on technical issues of practice will subsequently *enact* practices that potentially do nothing more than maintain, or even deepen, the inequitable outcomes present in U.S. public schools. Throughout this chapter, I report on and discuss both research questions, braiding them together.

1) How do white, female, urban elementary school teachers describe their beliefs, values, and assumptions related to power, privilege, race, and gender in terms of classroom interactions with students of color?

2) What do tensions and contradictions that arise in the context of the collaborative interviews reveal about these teachers' learning related to issues of race, power, and privilege?

The purpose of this study was to provide and document two teachers' participation in growth and learning through the examination of classroom videos and critical reflection. Two white, female teachers from a southwest, urban elementary school were participants. Initial interviews were conducted to glean a more complete profile of each participant, including personal histories and other background information. Over the course of approximately six months, I observed in the teachers' classrooms, recorded lessons that reflected a typical day, and using the videos as a stimulus for conversation, met with the participants four times in collaborative interviews (CI). During the CIs, I served as a facilitator and encouraged the participating teachers to engage in critical reflections on race, power, and privilege in the classroom. Over the course of the study, I provided three readings so that teachers could engage in deeper reflections around the topics of race, power, and privilege. The readings were presented as a means for providing the participants "footing" on central concepts with which they had not previously engaged. Citations for the selected readings can be found in Appendix E, F, and G of this document.

Participants

Vivian Garcia. Vivian Garcia is a fourth grade teacher in Dragonwood Elementary. She is a designated teacher of English Language Learners, students whose primary language is other than English and who have not yet demonstrated sufficient proficiency in English. Many of the students speak Spanish as their primary language, an important point related to Vivian's history. Perhaps immediately, given the focus of this dissertation, the reader may notice her surname. Vivian married her husband, a Mexican

man, and together they have two children whom she identifies as biracial. Both of her sons attend Dragonwood Elementary, which she believes provides her with a unique perspective on the experiences of students at the school, given that she serves as both a teacher and a parent in the school community.

Vivian's family immigrated to the United States from Belgium when she was two years old. She entered kindergarten with French as her primary language, which significantly impacted her experiences as a student learning English. Over the course of the research, she often referenced her own experiences as a student who was marginalized due to her family's primary language.

They would tell my mother, "Oh, you need to speak English," and my mom's like, "I don't know English." I decided that - I hated school. I was sent to the principal's office. I was put in Special Ed...the funny thing is the Special Ed. teacher's like, "There's nothing wrong with her. She just doesn't speak English. Her intelligence is fine." (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013).

Vivian described her experiences as a kindergartener as harrowing. She was often called stupid and made to feel "less than" in many areas, beginning with her language and continuing to the way her mother's accent was perceived and the way she dressed Vivian for school. As a young child in a public school in the Western United States, Vivian longed to just be "normal" – "I just wanted a pair of jeans" she stated, as she recounted her experiences as a child acclimating to a U.S. school. She credits her first grade teacher with supporting her in learning English and recognizing her as an intelligent child.

‘Cause my first grade teacher kept me after school every day. She’d been in one of the internment camps for the Japanese. She knew what it was like to have to learn English. I didn’t know English-but she kept me after school every day and then drove me home. Basically, she taught me English. (Vivian’s initial interview, February 20, 2013).

These experiences contributed to her journey toward becoming a teacher. She stated, “I think I always looked for the underdog…” after experiencing such marginalization in her first year of school. Her use of the term “underdog” as a description for her students signals her recognition that the various cultural identities of her students (e.g., immigrant status, language, socioeconomics, racial/ethnic identities) are not always honored and valued within the school walls. At the same time, she also attested to what many teachers count as a reason for choosing the profession; she really likes kids.

I have a sister who’s 12 years younger than me, so I was considered the best babysitter on the block just because I had experience at home, wasn’t afraid of diapers, wasn’t afraid of-you know. Then in the summer I’d run little mini day camps to make money. I was in high school and people would pay me to watch their kids. I’d have like six kids. I was making three times as much money as my friends working at McDonald’s (Vivian’s initial interview, February 20, 2013).

One of the most important identities reported by Vivian was her role as a parent. She and her husband have two boys who attend Dragonwood Elementary. She drew

many parallels between her own experiences as a student learning English, her boys' experiences growing up in a dual language home, and the experiences of her students, many of whom are emerging bilinguals. While she never taught her boys French, they do get exposed to Spanish through her husband and his family. However, "my husband and I were adamant that they would learn English first, because we both had horrible experiences as children," (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013). Vivian recognized the value placed on English, largely drawing from her own identity as an English Language Learner as a child.

As the only general education teacher (out of approximately 25) at Dragonwood who volunteered to participate in this study, Vivian exhibited a strong sense of self and a reflective nature. As I got to know Vivian better, it was clear that she had come to the study having reflected upon her personal history and its connection to her current work as a classroom teacher of students learning English. Simultaneously, by her own admission, the concepts of whiteness, power, and privilege were new to her.

Mandy Parker. When I asked Mandy to tell me about herself, she spoke immediately of her identity as a single mother of four children. In her words, her "whole life is wrapped up in her kids" (Mandy's initial interview, February 21, 2013). She spoke about her ex-husband, a Mexican man, who chose not to speak Spanish in their home because he felt his ability in the language was lacking. Like Vivian, Mandy also shared an immigration story related to her own history. Her mother had to renounce her Canadian citizenship when Mandy was in high school in order to become a citizen of the United States. Mandy remembers this as an emotional experience.

[My mother] was forced to get American citizenship to keep her job as a teacher. She made the decision, which was extremely difficult for her, to become an American citizen only because she wanted to continue to teach. She had never had the desire to be an American before this. She wasn't allowed to have dual citizenship and had to renounce her Canadian citizenship to accept the American citizenship. My mom was and is very proud of her heritage and her identity as a Canadian...[also] my mom raised us with the belief that teaching is a calling and something that you give everything you have towards making a difference, even your identity. I also feel that I understand and appreciate the pride that students have for their cultures and the difficulties with celebrating two different cultures simultaneously. (Email communication, June 27, 2013).

Mandy arrived at teaching as a back-up plan to her intention of being an orchestral trumpet player. At her parents' behest, she got a teaching degree along with a major in musical performance. When she participated in clinical studies in the classroom, she found, "This teaching thing's pretty cool" (Mandy's initial interview, February 21, 2013).

Mandy's participation was a surprise to me. With approximately 25 teachers at Dragonwood, over half of whom identify as white women, I expected recruitment to be relatively easy. However, as will be discussed in the section focused on the context of the school, it became clear that the teachers at Dragonwood were less than eager to participate in a study focused on whiteness, power, and privilege. While the topics are emotional and potentially volatile, I hypothesize, based on my observations of school

culture, that they were skeptical of having observers in the classroom. This idea will be further explored in a subsequent section of this manuscript.

While Vivian and I met in the staff lunchroom to discuss her participation in the study, Mandy happened to be eating lunch at the same table. I was brainstorming with Vivian, asking her to suggest other teachers who might participate, when Mandy expressed interest in participating. Mandy is the music teacher for Dragonwood Elementary and not as a general education classroom teacher. However, her willingness and genuine interest offered a unique opportunity to further examine the activity system of teacher learning from multiple participants' perspectives.

Over the course of the study, Mandy continually expressed how her thinking about teaching was transforming as a result of our conversations. Again, like Vivian, she came to the study as a self-proclaimed “super-reflective” teacher. “I spend a lot of time – probably more time than I should – just going over how did things go and especially ruminating on the things that didn’t go well” (Mandy’s initial interview, February 21, 2013). The reader will see how both participants’ reflections changed from being centered on technical aspects of practice toward more critical examinations of power and privilege in the classroom.

The researcher. The role of the researcher is an important consideration in any qualitative study. I was cognizant of the power I held as the researcher as I decided on meeting times, chose footage of classroom video, and proposed questions for the participating teachers to consider. Most importantly, I drove the purpose for our meetings, as they served as a contrived space for this project. It was important that I not

assume understanding or agreement on the part of the teachers by leading the conversations too much. However, as much as I sought to decentralize my role within the CIs by consciously limiting my own speech, my participation was still a driving force of the conversations.

As the study progressed and I encouraged us to dig deeper into dialogue around power and privilege, both topics that were largely unfamiliar to the participants, my own participation shifted further toward a facilitator/coach role. For the final two CIs, I asked the participants to read articles that would provide them support in reflecting on power and privilege in the classroom. While it was not my initial intention to conduct a study in which I implemented an “intervention” and assessed its impacts, I needed to implement supports that assisted participating teachers in positively engaging in and contributing to the dialogue. In the following section, I utilize the image of the white, urban teacher to further elucidate the complexities inherent in the participants’ identities and personal histories, and their influence on teacher learning in the context of the CIs.

Embodying and Problematizing the Image of the White, Urban Teacher

In chapter two, I shared literature that built the cultural schema (Quinn, 2005) of the white, urban, female teacher, as well as literature defining embodiment. Drawing from the work of Judith Butler (1993) on performativity and Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of habitus, embodiment as it is used here includes the co-construction and re-imagining of the image of the white, urban, female teacher. This image of the white, urban teacher – domineering, authoritative, yet kind and caring, working to “save” the children under her charge, was both embodied and contradicted by the participating teachers. These

embodiments and contradictions include the following areas; white, urban teacher as technical strategist, as tough, and as woman. These categories were determined through repeated readings and analysis of the data collected. Multiple categories were refined to the above sections. I will describe and discuss each in the following sections.

White Urban Teacher as Technical Strategist

At the start of each collaborative interview, I asked the teachers to “free write” a response to the classroom video they watched. The first classroom video we watched was an excerpt from Vivian’s classroom during a reading lesson in which the students were expected to work in partners to answer questions about a story they had just read. As noted in earlier chapters, we know that teachers often focus their attention toward technical issues of practice. “Extraneous noise in the room is overwhelming to me. Students appear to be on task and following teacher directions. Choral reading was good. Use of technology (doc cam) with the students” (Mandy’s free write, March 18, 2013). Vivian wrote, “I notice I have to repeat myself often. I have to model exactly what I want them to do and I still have to correct them individually. There was a lot of side talking” (Vivian’s initial free write, March 18, 2013). The teachers felt comfortable focusing on technical issues related to practice throughout the rest of the conversation.

After watching the first video excerpt of Vivian’s classroom, I began the discussion with a question on privilege. The excerpt below shows how my effort to turn the conversation toward more critical reflections was unsuccessful.

Researcher: Let's focus on privilege first. How do you see privilege in a lesson like that? What evidence of privilege is present? (*Pause.*) Or talk to me about what you know about privilege, or what you don't know about privilege.

Vivian: I guess I don't really understand what you mean by privilege.

Researcher: When you hear the word privilege, what do you think about?

(Five-second pause. Both participants look at each other and giggle.)

Mandy: I think about those who have more than others.

Vivian: More than others, yeah.

Researcher: Is that-has anybody ever talked to you, or read anything about privilege in the classroom?

Both: No (First collaborative interview, March 18, 2013).

The teachers were more comfortable focusing their reflective attention on technical skills related to the lesson we had just watched. Most of our dialogue during the first interview centered on issues of practice related to the lesson we had observed, but also related issues they had experienced in other lessons. The story itself, as described by Vivian, is "a day in New York City...all these immigrants are becoming American citizens" (First CI, March 18, 2013). As a designated English Language Learner teacher, many of her students identify as young Latino/a children who have personal family immigration stories. Not only did Vivian share her own immigration story, but she talked about how the students connected their own experiences. "For a lot of them, they had a lot of questions. Like, 'When can my mom become a citizen?' It kind of laid the groundwork" (First CI, March 18, 2013). At first, I thought this

conversation was an entry into a deeper conversation about privilege. Rather, both participants continued focusing on technical elements of the lesson, such as the reading and summarizing skills necessary to comprehend the story and the factual information potential citizens must know in order to successfully pass the citizenship test.

This classroom exchange reflects commonly described attempts at incorporating “multicultural” elements into lessons (Sleeter, 1992). The content of the story reflected the lived experiences of some students in the classroom and could be classified as an Additive Approach to multiculturalism (Banks, 1999). Analyzing the content of the story is beyond the scope of this study. However, it did provide an opportunity for Vivian to facilitate exploration of deeper issues related to social justice and action for her students, as well as related to her own learning.

White Urban Teacher as Tough

In my own experience, the vast majority of pre-service and novice teachers, particularly those in urban school settings, are concerned about their ability to control the behavior of the students. They seem to envision a classroom filled with chaos, disruption, and possibly danger. This observation is supported in the literature. Teachers and administrators tend to perceive African American and Latino/a youth, who predominantly make up the populations of urban schools, as louder (Morris, 2005; 2007), more disruptive (Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2005), and more challenging of teachers’ authority than their white counterparts (Varvus & Cole, 2002). Additionally, teachers expect students of lower socioeconomic status to achieve less academically and exhibit

disruptive behavior at a higher rate (Chamblis, 1973). Even veteran teachers focus much of their attention on classroom management (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005).

Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larsen (1995) describe these phenomena, among others, as scripts played out in the context of the classroom. Teachers (re)create scripts, which “represent an orientation that members come to expect after repeated interactions in contexts” (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larsen, 1995; p. 449) and construct and maintain the power teachers have over the classroom. Conversely, students create counter-scripts by resisting, denying, and acting against the scripts laid out by teachers. However, power remains with teachers through the “displacement of student knowledge” (p. 449). One image of the white, urban teacher is that of a tough, no-nonsense disciplinarian in the classroom. It should be noted that the idea of toughness often carries with it negative connotations, particularly for women. The teachers, however, viewed toughness as a necessary aspect of their identity as teachers. In the activity system of classroom teaching, the rules of participation dictated that teachers adopt this “tough teacher” stance. This may be connected to the increase in “zero-tolerance” policies regarding student behavior (Skiba, 2000), which was spurred by the Safe Schools Act of 1994 (Giroux, 1997a). However, interrogation of teacher power focused on the technical realm (e.g., controlling students’ behavior) masks the necessary dialogue about power affiliated with individualized and institutionalized whiteness.

Part of the objectives of the CIs was to encourage the participating teachers to reflect upon their own classroom practices through a critical lens. The teachers struggled with these reflections, preferring to focus on technical power in the classroom (i.e., their

own, the students', administrator's, and the system's). Their resistance, whether conscious or unconscious, to critical reflection on the power they held as white women will be further examined in a later section of this chapter. Three themes emerged from the data connected to the image of the white, urban teacher as tough: 1) maintaining technical control (a.k.a. "I've got the power!"), 2) giving up (some) control, and 3) contextual limitations of power.

Maintaining technical control. In chapter two, I described the image of the white, female urban teacher as tough by describing a teacher who rules over the classroom through fear and intimidation. While neither of the participants envisioned their practice in exactly this way, they both perceived themselves as tough, "no-nonsense" teachers. They each described, on several occasions, how their individual classrooms reflected "dictatorships," in that students were expected to "do what I say when I say to do it" (Mandy, third CI, May 13, 2013). They were comfortable using the often shared quote, "If I say jump, you say how high?" when considering how their students should react to their unquestioned power in the classroom. Their initial understandings of power were centralized on technical power, in other words, power related to controlling students and navigating issues of classroom management. There was no critique of the location of power in terms of teachers' and students' identities. My observations upheld the teachers' perspectives in that the instruction in each classroom was largely teacher-driven, positioning the teacher as the dispenser of knowledge. Several times I observed the teachers acting as disciplinarians in the classroom. Both teachers, as is typical in classrooms across the U.S., were responsible

for judging student behaviors as either acceptable or unacceptable, leaving the teachers securely in the role of unquestioned leader of the classroom. In the following excerpt, Mandy describes her own technical power in the classroom.

I control what's gonna happen in my room. I control how they're gonna behave when they walk in the door. If they don't do it right, then I march them back out and 'we're doing this again.' I feel I have most of the power into what they're gonna learn, what we're gonna talk about, what we're gonna do, how we're gonna do it. I think teaching ends up being that way (Mandy's initial interview, February 21, 2013).

This excerpt exemplifies the unquestioned view of technical power held by the teachers. Neither of the participants were troubled by the centralized role of the teacher. They believed the teacher *should* have all the power, and in fact, *needed it* in order to complete the daily tasks of the classroom. Mandy says, "I think teaching ends up being this way," alluding to the larger community of teaching and the rules of participation therein.

Giving up (some) control. Over the course of the teachers' participation in the CIs, I attempted to challenge them in considering the power students possess and engage in the classroom. It was apparent this was a difficult journey for Mandy and Vivian because it was in direct conflict with the greater narrative present in images of the white, urban teacher. However, it was also evident that they saw value in, and were willing to consider, alternative power differentials in the classroom.

Researcher: Do you think there are ways that you set up your classroom that kind of releases some of that power, or do you think it is mostly centralized on you?

Mandy: I think in the beginning of a concept, it's more me, but then as we understand the vocabulary for it and what it sounds like, what it feels like, then I give them an assignment...they love that. They love that they're getting to say, 'Okay, we're gonna do it this way. We're gonna do this line, now we're gonna do this, and we're gonna add this movement to it.' It becomes their thing that they finally get to, within the parameters, say 'okay, I'm creating this for my group.' (Third CI, May 13, 2013).

It is important to note Mandy's phrase "within the parameters," as it signifies the power she maintains even as she empowers students to engage in the classroom in more student-driven ways. The idea of empowering students has been criticized (Freire, 1970/1993; Inglis, 1997; Archibald & Wilson, 2011) in that "empowerment" still carries with it implications that the power is the teachers' for the giving (and taking).

Empowerment, without critiquing the location of power in the first place, does not actually empower students. Rather, it serves to maintain the status quo in terms of power differentials in the classroom. Archibald and Wilson (2011) call for teachers to move from empowerment toward acts of "emancipatory praxis," which includes challenging the status quo and striving for equity in the larger community on the part of students. The teachers' definition of empowerment did not include transformative, emancipatory elements.

Images of white, urban teachers contain many contradictions, which I frame as “both/and” (Reddy, 1994) as opposed to “either/or” constructs, further complicating white, urban teachers and their learning. There are connections between the white, urban teacher as tough and student empowerment. Additionally, student empowerment and the idea of teacher kindness are similarly connected. By being “kind,” or in other words, allowing the students nominal power within specific parameters, teachers are more able to retain comfortable perceptions of the technical power they wield in the classroom, as well as the power that comes along with whiteness. Consequently, these acts of kindness absolve white, urban teachers from having to consider the role of race in power differentials playing out in classrooms full of students from historically marginalized populations.

Mandy’s reference to the “parameters” in which students are expected to perform also harkens to the culture of power described by Lisa Delpit (1995). In considering the culture of power, Delpit wrote about five aspects of power that influence interactions between teachers from dominant cultural backgrounds and students from typically marginalized populations. In particular, she described the rules that govern power, stating:

- 1) There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a “culture of power,”
- 2) the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power, and
- 3) if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier (Delpit, 1995; p. 282).

Mandy may be alluding to the culture of power in her comments about the parameters in which she is willing to relinquish power to students. However, the teachers did not examine their own power as it relates to whiteness in the context of this study. Their conscious/unconscious resistance to this type of reflection will be discussed in a later section.

Contextual limitations of power. The power the teachers have and enact in the classroom is complicated by a variety of structural and systemic forces (Kozleski & Smith, 2009). While the teachers admitted to having the “majority of power in a classroom” (Mandy’s initial interview, February 21, 2013), they described a number of structural constraints that had marked impact on their practice. Over the course of the study, the teachers discussed structural tensions that included state assessments, curriculum and programmatic policies at the school level, as well as parents’ and community members’ influence. The complex nature of teacher learning leads to challenges in organizing this manuscript. While it is important to note this overlap, each of these contextual limitations will be further explored in the Context section of this chapter. However, the most frustrating limitation on the teachers’ own power was their perception of the school principal’s passivity and lack of support for classroom teachers. Below, Mandy describes a meeting with a parent.

...we’ve been in a meeting with the principal and the parents, and the parents are calling you every F-ing thing in the book, and the principal just sits there silently and never says a word. I just sat there going, oh, my god. Really? You’re

gonna allow this to continue? And to continue for over 45 minutes with me not saying one word (Second CI, April 19, 2013).

Even though the teachers described their own power in the classroom as seemingly undeterred, they expressed a clear tension (another both/and construct) that described their perceived lack of power when it came to interactions with the principal regarding behavioral issues in the classroom. The teachers actively discredited the administrator's decision-making in terms of disciplining "out of control" students and instructional choices in the classroom.

I think what happens in my classroom, I'm in control of that. Even if the principal came in the room and told me, well, I would rather you do it this way, I'd be like, okay. Yeah. Then when she left, I'd go back to doing it the way I know is successful (Mandy, second CI, April 19, 2013).

Even though the participants each described this limitation on their power as problematic, they each had come to the decision to ignore the perceived limitation on their power in order to maintain what they viewed as necessary power for an effective classroom. They neglected to critique their own perceived need for power in the classroom, nor did they consider the power associated with whiteness. This need for technical power was a given. It was a necessity for them in order to maintain control and create a successful learning environment. In the following excerpt, Mandy describes her stance on maintaining control over students' behavior:

For me, I expect everybody's gonna do what I tell 'em to do. That's the kind of house I grew up in. That's the kind of educational environment I had. When I get

the kid, 'I don't feel like doing this today.' I didn't feel like getting outta bed either, kid, but I'm here [laughter]. If I'm here and doing, you're here and doing (Mandy, First CI, March 18, 2013).

White Urban Teacher as Woman

In her germinal piece, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) offered the concept of intersectionality to the discourses of feminism and racial equity. She wrote, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (p. 140). Intersectionality, further elucidated by other black feminist scholars, (e.g., hooks, 1984; Collins, 2000), offers a lens through which we can more deeply understand the complexities inherent in teacher learning regarding issues of equity in the school and classroom.

Thornton Dill and Kohlman (2012) describe intersectionality as a tool that "emphasizes the interlocking effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which categories of identity and structures of inequality are mutually constituted and defy separation into discrete categories of analysis" (p. 154). The teachers in this study, as with all people, carry multiple identities that impact the ways they engage the work of teaching. We are all influenced by our racial identities, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, among other identities. These scholars remind us that we cannot interrogate discrete categories of difference. In other words, teachers must be aware of how their own identifiers, as well as those of students, converge, conflict, and amalgamate to impact teaching and learning.

The participants in this study brought multiple cultural identities that differentiated from what are generally considered stereotypical white experiences. While they both identify as white women, they also had lived experiences that offered a small window into the experienced marginalization of people of color (e.g., as women married to men of color and mothers of biracial children). Their simultaneous lived privilege and oppression was fertile ground for examination. In the excerpt below, Vivian described the oppression she experienced as child who spoke a language other than English.

There's Spanish going on all day long in my room. I don't speak Spanish. Teachers are like, 'Why are you letting them do that?' I'm like, 'Well, because when I was a kid, I sat in a classroom and did not understand a thing all day long. It was the most miserable six hours of my life. (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013).

Vivian draws a strong connection between her lived experiences as an English Language Learner and the experiences of her students. She recalls the oppression she felt as a young child learning English in school. While the teachers never used the word "oppression", they often drew connections between their own experiences with oppression and those of their students. Yet, neither teacher readily identified parts of their identities that resulted in privilege, specifically the privileges associated with whiteness. For example, Vivian came to school speaking French fluently, a language perceived differently than Spanish in the current sociopolitical climate (see Johnson, 2011 for a discussion). The relatively positive perception of French is one example of the simultaneous privilege and oppression experienced by Vivian.

Feminist scholars warn against the hierarchical ranking of oppressions (e.g., Moraga, 1981a; Lorde, 1983). In her chapter, *La Güera*, Moraga (1981b) described an interaction with a gay male friend regarding the trust between them. She revealed to him that she didn't entirely trust him because he was male. She challenged him to imagine being a woman for a day. What resulted from this conversation was Moraga's revelation that in order to create a true alliance, "he must deal with the primary source of his own sense of oppression...with what it feels like to be a victim" (p. 30). She further argued that once an individual understands this, it would be impossible to further oppress others, unless the oppression the individual has experienced is once again forgotten. "Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place" (p. 29).

Black feminist scholars have discussed how mothers of color deliberately work to foster a meaningful racial identity for their children, teaching them to navigate a system in which children of color are devalued (Collins, 1990; 1994). Additionally, other feminist scholars such as Maureen Reddy (1994), a white feminist scholar and mother of two black children, have grappled with the challenges white mothers face in teaching their own children of color to navigate racist systems without having been racially oppressed themselves. In the following excerpt, she describes how her husband, Doug, a black man, is prepared for this challenge.

Despite social changes, in the thirty years since Doug was Sean's age, the elements of educating a black child to live in a racist society have not changed

much at all. Doug, then, can pass onto Sean (and soon, our daughter Ailis) what his family taught him about resistance and survival and what he has learned through experience; there is a tradition for him to draw upon. There is no parallel tradition for me, the white mother of black children. For the most part, I'm making it up as I go along, becoming a bridge for my children between the white and black sides of the color line (Reddy, 1994; p. 16).

One need not dig deeply to see connections between motherhood and teaching. Noddings (1988) wrote "Teachers, like mothers, want to produce acceptable persons – persons who will support worthy institutions, live compassionately, work productively but not obsessively, care for older and younger generations, be admired, trusted, and respected" (p. 221). Women are viewed as "inherently caring nurturers" (hooks, 1984, p. 137). Teaching places teachers squarely in this nurturing role. While teaching is generally viewed as a female-oriented profession, little attention is paid to how femaleness might impact learning as it relates to practices in the classroom (e.g. Grumet, 1988; Casey, 1993). The intersection of the participants' racial identity and gender is in need of exploration. Both participants described their identity as "mother" to be central in how they saw themselves as people, as well as teachers. For example, in response to a general question about who she is, Mandy responded, "Gosh. I'm a 41-year-old single mother with four children" (Mandy's initial interview, February 21, 2013).

At the start of this chapter, I described how the lived experiences and histories of Vivian and Mandy differed from assumptions about "typical" white women. In many ways, these two women exemplified the idea of within group differences in shared

cultural identities. Both women told family immigration stories. Both had married Hispanic men and had biracial children. The participants' identities as mothers contributed to the ways they thought about privilege and marginalization in schools. In the excerpt below, Vivian describes how her own children experience privilege or marginalization as a result of their skin color.

One thing I thought of is with my boys, one is lighter complected than the other one. People always comment on the lighter one's eyes... The other one's eyes are brown and they're really not all that unique. People always comment how beautiful of a child he is, and then there's Ernesto (*pseudonym*). I'm like, "Well, I think they're both beautiful personally." It's just really interesting that the lighter one gets the compliments more often than the darker one does. Even though they're brothers and they both have bad days, and those days where I don't like either one of them [*laughter*] (Vivian, fourth CI, June 14, 2013).

Mandy built on Vivian's reflections even further when recounting an experience she had at a "diversity training" she attended at a previous school.

We went through a diversity thing, and a guy came in – and said, 'How many of you have been pulled over for being brown?' I'm sitting there going, 'What the heck is this man talking about?' I have no idea. He started giving the example of what happened and I'm sitting there going, 'Oh, my god, my son is 14 years old.' I've never thought about that this could be an issue for him in his life. I was just totally taken aback cuz I'm like, that just shows my sheltered upbringing that to

me if you're following the speed limit, and you're doing what you need to be doing, nothing bad's gonna happen to you. (Mandy, Fourth CI, June 14, 2013).

Additionally, each woman spoke of the challenges fostering a meaningful racial identity for their own children. Mandy and Vivian both described the challenge in the following excerpt.

Mandy: I remember when I had my first daughter, and it was Christmas, and she wanted a baby doll for Christmas. We traveled to New York. I went to the store, and you had the white baby dolls or you had the black baby dolls. There was no little Mexican baby doll. And of course, no little half and half baby doll. I bought the black baby doll because I figure my daughter's half Mexican. At least then she sees that there's more than just white baby dolls in the world. My parents were just beside themselves that I would choose to do that. I didn't understand it at the time cuz to me I'm thinking, well, I'm trying to find a way for her to see that there are other things in the world besides just white little baby dolls. It was a big deal to my parents: "Well, why didn't you choose the white one? What was wrong with the white one?"

Vivian: They all were white, blond and blue-eyed. (Fourth CI, June 14, 2013).

The participants in this study experienced simultaneous privilege and marginalization through their identities as mothers. They struggled in trying to foster positive racial identities for their own children through their own "sheltered" upbringing. Thus, the racial privilege experienced by white teachers means they may not be able to teach their students about racial, gender, and class equity given their relative lack of

experience with such injustices. Moraga (1981) writes, “I think this phenomenon is indicative of our failure to seriously address ourselves to some very frightening questions: How have I internalized my own oppression? How have I oppressed?” (p. 30). Teachers must engage in the critical work of naming and describing their own oppressions, so that they may connect to the students in their classrooms through this medium. This is highly emotional work. While feminist scholars encourage a non-hierarchical analysis of oppressions between groups, white female teachers should be wary of privileging their own oppressions over those of students of color in their classrooms.

Navigating Overlapping Activity Systems

In applying CHAT to the analysis of this data, it is important to recall the connection between the rules of participation, which dictate how participants engage in activity systems, and the context(s) in which they are engaging. As we begin to consider the rules of participation the teachers engaged as they worked through the CIs, I am reminded of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model, in which systems are represented by the various layers through which they are built. Additionally, the systemic change framework (Kozleski, Thorius, & Smith, 2014; Kozleski & Thorius, 2014; Kozleski & Huber, 2010) offers a lens through which we can unpack the complex nature of the teachers’ participation in the CIs. Rules of participation are influenced and determined by context. Earlier in this chapter, I referenced the multiple activity systems through which teachers move and participate. Over the course of this study, the teachers engaged rules of participation from various contexts, ranging from national and state policy

regimes to hidden curriculum issues in their schools. The three layers of context particularly important to this discussion are; 1) the climate of standardization and accountability, 2) the school climate, and 3) the classroom climates. Teachers participate in and draw from contexts beyond those listed above; however, these three contexts had the most profound impact on the teachers' participation in the CIs, particularly in light of the tensions and contradictions arising from their participation.

Climate of standardization and accountability. With the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2001 and its subsequent reauthorization by the Obama administration in 2011, standardization and accountability remain the focus of U.S. public schools. However, little is being done to address issues of inequity in terms of access and quality instruction (Kozleski, Artiles, McCray, & Lacy, in press). In 2000, the state in which Dragonwood is located passed legislation known as an "English-Only" law, which required schools across the state to educate all students using English; subsequently banning bilingual education and other methods of teaching students English. Schools across the state struggled with interpretation, which resulted in myriad strategies for enacting and implementing the policy (Lillie, et al, 2010). In 2004 the state passed and in 2008 implemented a mandate dictating that four-hours a day be dedicated to teaching students English according to specific guidelines. Many schools across the state have implemented this requirement in different ways, one of which is by creating ELL classrooms, which are populated by all students required to participate in the four hour a day English instruction. Vivian, as mentioned earlier, is a teacher this kind of ELL classroom. All but two of her students were in the process of learning English.

Vivian often referenced legislation as an important aspect of context that influenced her practice, as well as her interactions with students and colleagues alike. In the following quote, she discussed how her colleagues' perception of the law was, in her opinion, misguided.

‘Well, this is America. You’re supposed to speak English. The law says’ – Well, the law does not say they’re not allowed to speak Spanish in class. The law says you must teach in English...I’m a big law person. I really believe...if they never hear their native tongue while they’re learning English, it actually makes them not want to try (Vivian’s initial interview, February 20, 2013).

While the participating teachers’ interpretation and implementation of language policy is beyond the scope of this study, the centrality of policy interpretation raises important questions for future research, which will be discussed in chapter five. However, Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer (2002) wrote, “What policy means for implementing agents is constituted in the interaction of their existing cognitive structures (including knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), their situation, and the policy signals” (p. 388). Vivian’s interpretation of the legislation regarding English instruction, her identity as a former English Language Learner, and her position as the ELL teacher all combined to influence the way she thought about language in the classroom. In the excerpt below, she empathizes with the students’ experiences with marginalization related to their primary language.

I always try to encourage them, and never be ashamed that you speak two languages. Like last year, I had a student who came right from Mexico. The kids

rotated who translated. There's Spanish going on all day long in my room. I don't speak Spanish. Teachers are like, 'Why are you letting them do that?' I'm like, 'Well, because when I was a kid, I sat in a classroom and did not understand a thing all day long. It was the most miserable six hours of my life.' So if he can hear Spanish and they're showing him what to do, to me that's education (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013).

Further, she sought to develop empathy among the students in her class by encouraging them to consider their own experiences with language in relation to new students in their class. "I'm like, 'Think about how you felt.' They're like – a lot of them started in kindergarten with no English, but here he is [in] fifth grade. They were just like, 'I remember. I remember.'” (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013).

In this case, Vivian's identities as mother of biracial children and as an English language learner as a child also impacted the way she engaged in the collaborative interviews. Over the course of the study, Vivian began making connections between power, privilege, and the English language, which is highly valued globally, as well as in legislative actions in her state.

I think the children who only speak English feel empowered, and kinda feel like they're better than the children who are learning English. Like in my classroom, I think I've reversed it...made the children who speak two languages more empowered than the children who only speak one (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013).

In the above passage, Vivian begins making connections between her own concepts of power (i.e. empowerment) and her classroom practices. Many of the above quotes are from Vivian's initial interview, which was conducted at the very beginning of the study. Therefore, these mark her initial attempts at verbalizing issues of power and privilege to me, the researcher, in the context of the study.

Another important aspect of the political context of the state that impacted Vivian's participation was the ever-looming presence of the required state test, the SIMS (State Instrument to Measure Standards, a pseudonym). While the participants did not often refer to the test or the pressures associated with it, their feelings about the test emerged as the test date approached. We began the study in January and continued through the end of the school year. In fact, the testing schedule prevented me from observing at the school for two weeks, due to security of the testing materials on campus. As we continued with the study, references to the test during classroom observations and the CIs indicated that it was on the forefront of the teachers' minds. During one visit to Vivian's classroom, I observed her ask a student, "Why do you bring up random stuff that doesn't have anything to do with the SIMS?" (Vivian classroom observation, March 6, 2013). In her own reflections during the CIs, Vivian was discussing the purpose of the lesson we had just watched on video.

It was really just focusing on details, and maybe slowing down your reading to actually look at the details. A lot of them, because we do the lovely DIBELS, think it's okay to just quickly read through things and not comprehend what

you're reading. If that's the case, I'm like, 'go back and read that,' especially with SIMS (Vivian, first CI, March, 18, 2013).

Vivian's reference to DIBELS is yet another structural tension discussed in the context of the CIs, which further illustrates the overlap among contexts within which the teachers engage. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), is a set of assessments given to students in the elementary grades for the purpose of measuring literacy skills including phonemic awareness, accuracy, and fluency. On one of the measures, students have a targeted number of words based on grade level and they are encouraged to read as quickly as they can. Vivian's comment indicates her belief that this actually backfires in promoting students consideration of comprehending the material at hand.

These tensions speak to a larger issue related to teacher learning, that is: what type of learning is valued in professional learning opportunities for teachers? For example, federal and state policies that focus on increasing student achievement often serve to focus the attention of educators on practice based, or technical, learning experiences for teachers. In other words, the focus on achievement creates a climate in which instructional strategies, implementing curricula, and assessment are highly valued. When are teachers encouraged to examine their own practices using a critical lens; thinking about power, privilege, and race as they play out in the classroom? Common sense may dictate that in order to improve achievement for all students, we must be primarily concerned with the technical practices of teachers. This intense focus on technical practices actually creates tension as teachers engage in critical examinations of

power and privilege in schools, as they are broadening the focus of their learning beyond the technical. It seems they are fighting against the rules of participation that have been laid out in an assessment driven learning space. Sleeter (1992) described a similar perspective in her book, *Keepers of the American Dream*, in which teachers participating in multicultural professional development questioned the value of such learning.

Unsurprisingly, Mandy rarely mentioned the formal state assessment as a structural barrier to her own teaching. She stated that as a music teacher, she has little to do with the assessment and even mentioned the extended amount of free time she enjoyed during the actual week of assessment. However, she did equate the assessment driven climate to the students' musical performances she is often asked to organize.

...for me it's performances. It's, 'Hey, we want you to have a choir get up there next week and do something.' Okay, let me shove a song down their mouths here. And just the pressure of always making the next performance better than the one they just had...(Fourth CI, June 14, 2013).

School climate. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the majority of teachers at Dragonwood were reluctant to participate in the current study. While many regret emails cited reasons about availability of time and tight schedules, I believe the school climate also contributed to the difficulty I experienced. I can only hypothesize that part of the reason I struggled to recruit willing participants for the study was that they were skeptical of having guests observing them in the classroom. As I got to know the two participants over the course of the study, they verbalized a perceived lack of administrative support as they worked in their classrooms every day. They did not feel that the administrator of

Dragonwood “had their back,” meaning that they did not feel they had a significant level of support as they worked through challenging curricular, behavioral, and parental issues. One such example of their perception came out in relation to their emerging understanding of privilege:

Researcher: Talk to me a little bit more about that, the idea of certain students being privileged.

Mandy: Here’s what I’ve experienced. From what I’ve seen is when they do get sent to the office because their behavior is out of control, to the point of knocking over bookshelves in the classroom, and send them up there, and I come up after my class. They’re in the principal’s office coloring.

Vivian: Eating candy.

Mandy: Yeah.

Vivian: On the computer.

Mandy: Yeah. I’m like, okay. So we’ve just rewarded this kid for the chaos he created in my class. I’m told that you can’t have these rules with this kid because it pushes his buttons. Then he goes off. I feel like if the rules are working for 99 percent of the population, then it’s not an unreasonable rule because they’re able to follow it, it’s age-appropriate. But we have that one or two kids across each grade level that can’t handle any kind of structure. (Second CI, April 19, 2013).

This understanding of privilege is reminiscent of an uncritical definition of the word; one that simply reflects the “haves” and “have nots.” The teachers believed that some students were provided leniency for certain behaviors. These students were the

repeat offenders who caused the largest distraction within the school community, but, in the eyes of the participants, received preferential treatment from the principal. Once again, the teachers' reflection stayed comfortably in the technical realm of practice, neglecting a critical view of privileges, or lack thereof, associated with their own complex identities or the complex identities of their students.

Another important aspect of the school climate pertinent to the current conversation is about how leadership conveyed what is valued in terms of teacher learning. My informal observations of the principal coincided with the perceptions of the participating teachers. Over the course of the six months I observed at Dragonwood, I observed the principal in her office on all occasions but one. As noted earlier, the principal demonstrated a "hands-off" leadership style, which was exemplified by her almost constant presence in her own office. I never observed her leave the office area and head into classrooms, the cafeteria, or the library, which served as a "main hub" of activity for the school. The participating teachers were critical of Dragonwood's principal in terms of parent interactions and behavior issues among students. They struggled with a perceived lack of administrative support as they worked in their classrooms every day.

It is important to note the perceptions the participating teachers brought with them to the study. Kelly, Thornton, and Daughtry (2005) drew a connection between the ways teachers perceive school leaders and the subsequent climate at a school. Given the fact that only two teachers participated in the current study, it is problematic for me to hypothesize too much about the overall climate of Dragonwood. However, the perceived

school climate of the two participating teachers contributed to the learning that occurred within the context of this study. The teachers often described having to just “make it through” the day, week, or year. Given the various structural barriers they experienced, it is unsurprising they maintained a focus on technical issues related to practice. While the principal of Dragonwood did invite me to conduct the study on the school site, she did little to promote an environment in which critical reflection on power, privilege, and whiteness were encouraged and valued. This may represent a typical stance of a principal toward such learning, since it is typically devalued. This presents a significant barrier to teacher learning related to critical praxis. Transformation efforts must focus on the multiple levels of the system simultaneously if any progress toward revolutionary praxis is to be achieved (Sleeter, 1992; Kozleski & Thorius, 2014).

Classroom climate. Both teachers, having experience in their own backgrounds with languages other than English, professed that they worked to “encourage bilingualism” and “lessen” the power of English in their own classrooms. They were both aware of my research interests as well, which may have impacted the type of lessons I was invited to observe. For example, the first two lessons I recorded could be described as what is typically deemed as “multiculturalism” in U.S. schools. The first was a reading lesson in Vivian’s classroom during which the students read and completed a worksheet on an immigration story from the adopted basal reading series. The second lesson was from Vivian’s classroom during which students were preparing songs for an upcoming school-wide Multicultural Fair. I briefly described my research interests to the participants during the recruitment phase of this study. They knew I was interested in

understanding how their own identities as white women impacted their interactions with students of color in their classrooms. The fact that the teachers knew my research interests might have unintentionally encouraged them to conduct such lessons.

As described earlier in this chapter, Vivian in particular was persistent about her own attitudes toward language in the classroom. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including her own status as an English Language Learner in her youth and her role as the designated English Language teacher at Dragonwood. In the excerpt below, Vivian described her attitudes toward language development in her students.

I can just see them sometimes get frustrated. They'll say, 'I wish my parents didn't speak Spanish.' I really try to help them with that, cuz I know. As a child, I was told, 'You're in America. Speak English.' That just hurt so much that I try to make them be proud. Be proud of your heritage. We talk about things a lot. I'm real honest with them. I'm like, 'When I was in school, they did this.' It's not okay...I think that I really try to help them stand up for themselves (Vivian, First CI, March 18, 2013).

Vivian shared a specific story describing an instance where one of her students stood up for themselves to another teacher.

I was teaching and a teacher walked by and made some sarcastic comment. My kids kinda looked at her like, what are you doing? Our teacher's teaching. She goes, 'Wait, lemme translate since you're ELL.' One kid said, 'Just cuz we speak two languages, doesn't mean we're stupid.' The teacher looked at me. I was just like, 'He has a point.' At that moment...I was just so proud of him that he stood

up for all of them and said, ‘No you don’t get to talk to us, because you think the people who speak Spanish are not smart. (First CI, March 18, 2013).

Each participant conveyed the idea of modeling accepting behavior as integral to the students gaining appreciation for “other” cultures and languages. Unsurprisingly, the teachers did not question the centering of English as the bar against which other languages are measured. Nor did the teachers consider the complex, multi-faceted identities the students brought with them to the classrooms. Even the way Vivian’s classroom is labeled as the “ELL class” centralizes the language, forsaking the complexity of the students’ intersectional identities.

Although the vast majority of students in Vivian’s class spoke Spanish as their primary language, the “other” languages represented were Vietnamese and Pakistani. She often spoke of empowering the kids in her class by praising their bilingual status. She told the students things like, “you’re more likely to get hired” because of your ability in two languages. She also (a bit rebelliously) spoke of allowing the students to speak Spanish to one another in the classroom. The teachers both believed that this led students to be more accepting toward differences in language.

The teachers’ reflections stop short of interrogating ways their assumptions inform interactions with students and their families. In preparation for the Multicultural Fair, Mandy was responsible for preparing students across Dragonwood to sing several songs in different languages. I observed the students sing songs from Russia, France, Mexico, and Pakistan, among others. The song from Pakistan happened to be contributed by the mother of one of the students in Vivian’s class (one of the two students who do not

speak Spanish as their primary language). The student, Raja (a pseudonym), had asked if she could bring in a song. In describing the interaction, Mandy and Vivian revealed an interesting perception they held for the parents of this particular student.

Mandy: I told her [the student] I don't read your language. I don't know how.

So I need – this mom was wonderful because she wrote it out all phonetically for me.

Vivian: This mom is very educated.

Researcher: Meaning...she's gone to school? To college?

Mandy: Yeah. But they immigrated here, she can't get a job. I think she used to work at a university or something. Whenever I talk to her and her husband, they're very educated people. She works in a dress shop of something 'cause that's what she can get (Second CI, April 19, 2013).

Thus, questions are raised regarding the perceptions of certain nationalities, languages, and even skin color. It is easy for the teachers to imagine Raja's parents as "educated," given their willingness to contribute to the school experience in ways that reflect dominant culture valued in schools. Yet the participants' perceptions are not challenged. This is an example of privilege related to whiteness at play in teacher learning. They are privileged in the sense that they have no reason to question their own perceptions. In fact, their own identities as wives and mothers in bicultural families may serve to excuse them from this interrogation.

Mediational Tools and Practices

According to Cole (1996; 1998), human beings mediate all activity with artifacts. These mediational tools are organized into three levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary artifacts. In the context of this study, primary artifacts include classroom videos, protocols, and the free write strategy, among a handful of others. Secondary artifacts represent action using primary artifacts; in this case, reflection, collaboration, observation, and dialogue. These mediational tools are typical in the context of teacher learning opportunities. In chapter two of this dissertation, I positioned whiteness as not only a tertiary artifact, but an invisible artifact that white teachers engage unknowingly in the context of teaching and learning. Whiteness is but one invisible artifact employed by the teachers in this learning opportunity. Analysis of the data revealed three mediational tools the participating teachers used to engage in critical opportunities to learn. The three mediational tools included colorblindness, inhabited silence, and appropriation of oppressions. Each of these will be described and discussed in the following sections.

Colorblindness. Like many white teachers, she spoke about the fact that she “doesn’t see color when she looks at children” (Vivian’s initial interview, February 20, 2013). Colorblindness is certainly reflected in the literature, (Pollack, 2008) however, Vivian referenced the “spirit” of children, once again connecting her own experiences as a student in the process of becoming bilingual with the experiences of the students in her ELL classroom.

I look at their spirits more than their color, like who they are in the inside, and try to help them become better people from the inside. To me when people ask how

many-well, my class is mostly Mexican-American, but you know, ‘How many Caucasians do you have?’ I’m like, ‘I don’t really know.’ ‘How many African-Americans?’ I don’t know. (Vivian’s initial interview, February 20, 2013).

There is nothing colorblind about the way Vivian labels her students. While Vivian states that she doesn’t see color when looking at her students, she is hyper-aware that her class is made up of mostly Mexican American students. This may be connected to Vivian’s own personal history and her familial connection to Mexico. After all, her husband and his extended family are all Mexican. That she believes she is colorblind is an interesting tension displayed throughout the study, this example being the most salient. Vivian denies something that is woven throughout all of her experiences and she lives comfortably within this contradiction.

Many who grew up in the US with white skin were taught not to notice or to mention one’s skin color for fear of being impolite or racist. I was carefully taught this by parents who did not wish for their children to perpetuate much of what they had experienced as whites growing up long before civil rights and integration. (Mazzei, 2008, p. 1126).

This quote reflects my own experience as a white child of caring parents who raised me to be “respectful” and “tolerant” of diversity and difference. Mazzei’s experience resonates with many white people who have been taught to be, according to Pollock (2004), colorblind or colormute. While the teachers in this study each had unique experiences related to their own race, as well as the racial identities of immediate

family, they employed many strategies that helped them talk “around” race, including language, socioeconomic status, and immigration status.

Colorblindness was ever present in the conversations with Mandy and Vivian. Perhaps due to their own life experiences, they were slightly more inclined toward *some* discussions about race and ethnicity. However, their participation was still measured and guarded. They would focus their commentary on other identities enacted by the students, such as socio-economic status, gender, or language, avoiding commentary on racial markers of difference. Vivian often referenced the students’ “spirit” during our conversations.

I don’t see color when I look at children. I never have. I look at their spirits more than their color, like who they are in the inside, and I try to help them become better people from the inside (Vivian’s initial interview, February 20, 2013).

Interestingly, the teachers’ efforts to avoid talking directly about race often exposed interesting tensions and contradictions that contributed to teachers’ meaning making in the collaborative interviews, revealing that the teachers indeed noticed race in the classroom. For example, this excerpt from Vivian’s initial interview shows a strong contradiction between being colorblind and talking directly about race.

To me when people ask how many-well, my class is mostly Mexican-American, but you know, "How many Caucasians do you have?" I’m like, "I don’t really know." "How many African-Americans?" "I don’t know." ‘Cause I don’t. I know most of my kids have brown eyes. [*Laughter*]. I don’t know-I would

seriously have to go down the list and think about what are they (Vivian's initial interview, February 20, 2013).

Vivian frames the racial identities of her students within her argument about being colorblind. She lives comfortably within this contradiction, in fact, does not recognize it as such. This contradiction can be seen in the following excerpt from a conversation she had with one of her own children.

My children, they don't see color, either. They heard someone say black and my little one [said], "Mom, why do they call them black? They're dark brown. They're not black." [*Laughs*]. I'm like, "Oh, honey, that's the term." He goes, "That's just stupid." I go, "Well, people are stupid, honey." He goes, "You're right, Mom. They are stupid."

She is comfortable with her son recognizing skin color ("They're dark brown.") as opposed to recognizing "black" as an identity that carries with it stigma and marginalization in society. Again, she is comfortable in the contradiction of colorblindness and talking directly about race and skin color.

Inhabited silence. Mazzei (2008) drew attention to the "inhabited silence in classes with pre-service teachers, particularly as it arises in conversations regarding issues of diversity" (p. 1127). Her work sought to focus the researchers' attention on spaces between language in which her students, mostly white females, struggled to "see" their personal experiences as racialized (Mazzei, 2004; 2008). She wrote:

They [preservice teachers] will talk about difference and acknowledge that we must incorporate diversity into education classes, but when asked to specifically

discuss their perceptions or experiences based on race and ethnicity, it is as if I have asked them to divulge the password of a secret society. In the words of one student, ‘Why do we need to talk about it? Isn’t it best if we don’t notice it? Isn’t it an issue because we...keep making it an issue? (Mazzei, 2008, 1127).

The participants talked around race, leaving spaces in between their discourse that indicated the power and privilege they experienced as white women. An example of this is Vivian’s description of her role as a “consistent adult” in the lives of her students.

I think, as teachers...cuz some kids...we’re the most consistent adult in their life...I mean, they’ll pick up things that you say cuz they want to be like you, regardless. They’re like, oh, here’s a consistent person who, especially if you have helped them grow and haven’t been always on their case about everything (Fourth CI, June 14, 2013).

Vivian’s identity as a white woman contributes to her perception that students want to “be like you” because you are a “consistent person” in their lives. Vivian’s participation in a “non-traditional” white experience, (e.g. her status as an immigrant, being married to a Mexican man, having biracial children, etc.) the privilege and power she enjoyed as a white female teacher impacted her interpretation of student behaviors.

Another example of inhabited silences enacted by the participants was their discussion on the metaphor of the “melting pot.” As described earlier, the first classroom video was of a lesson Vivian implemented in her classroom, which was a reading lesson using an immigration story. Upon watching the classroom video, Mandy wrote in her free write, “It kinda shows them that America is a melting pot. Once they’re like, ‘Wow.

There's a lotta people.' (Free write, March 18, 2013). The imagery of the melting pot is synonymous with making the various identities of people less important, especially in the case of ethnicity, in order to forward the "American" identity. Incorporating that imagery into the conversation reinforced the teachers' ability to talk around race, rather than addressing it as a viable topic for conversation.

Appropriating oppressions. The concept of appropriating oppressions is a continuation of the previous concept of inhabited silence. The teachers often intercepted ideas presented in the conversations to change the course of the dialogue, with the intention of connecting their own experiences of oppression with those of the students. In sporting events, an interception occurs when a player steals a pass meant for an opposing player, thereby changing the path of the ball. The idea of interceptions provides a means for examining the strategies the participating teachers used in building dialogue in the collaborative interviews. As discussed previously, frank conversations about emotional and volatile concepts such as race and ethnicity are challenging to navigate. In the current study, the participating teachers intercepted ideas in the conversations so as to appropriate oppression as a means to avoid talking about race. I conceptualize appropriating oppressions as a mediational tool the teachers used while participating in the collaborative interviews.

One example of the appropriation of oppressions was the way they perceived connections between racial identity and other identifying markers of difference. It was as if they attempted to lessen the importance of race in the conversations by commenting on other forms of difference they perceived as marginalizing them in some ways. In the

excerpt below, Mandy intercepts a conversation about privileges associated to racial identity by relating it to other forms of marginalization, effectively centering her own experiences in the process as “marginalized:”

Well, you get that in the work place too, cuz I know in years...walking around the building I've heard, 'oh well, you know, the young blond one, the tall skinny ones-they get whatever they want. I guess if I were a size two and I wore...I was like, oh my gosh, okay. But that's always been – they think there's favoritism for the younger, the prettier...(Fourth CI, June 14, 2013).

Mandy shifts the focus of inquiry toward the experiences of older teachers relating to young, novice teachers entering the field. She attempted to connect the experiences of students from marginalized populations to her own and in the process, appropriated the oppression. She used it as a means to steer the conversation toward less challenging topics. Rather than continuing a challenging conversation about skin color she diverts attention toward her own perceived oppressions. Actions like this set the stage for the appropriation of oppressions, which will be discussed further in the following section.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by describing the participants' histories which emerged over the course of the study and proved to be important in considering their participation in the collaborative interviews. My original intention was to recruit white, female teachers to this study, and while that was a successful endeavor, their lived experiences and personal histories proved to demonstrate the complexity of intersecting identities. Both teachers

have experiences that differ from what may be considered typical white women, as wives and mothers of people of color, as well as having close familial connections with immigration and learning English. Their background experiences simultaneously offered them opportunities for further reflection, while also presenting barriers to other critical reflections. Their participation exemplifies the complexity inherent in teacher learning.

The findings and discussion within this chapter focused on three broad topics, including: 1) embodying and problematizing the image of the white, urban teacher, 2) navigating overlapping activity systems, and 3) mediational tools and practices. The image of the white urban teacher offered opportunities to explore white, urban teachers as technical strategists, as tough, and as women. Each identity, embodied and challenged by the teachers, allow insight into how identities and the various roles of teachers converge to afford opportunities for teachers to further critically interrogate their practices. Teachers are simultaneously navigating overlapping activity systems, which also complicates teacher learning as process and product. The overlapping activity systems discussed here include the climate of standardization and accountability, the school climate, and classroom climate. Finally, the participating teachers implemented mediational tools as they participated in the collaborative interviews. The tools discussed here include colorblindness, inhabited silences, and appropriating oppressions.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS

Teachers are not often provided the opportunity to examine classroom practices and school context from a critical perspective, yet these individuals offer an important entry point for addressing inequitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized populations. Scholars have documented the challenges, barriers, pitfalls, and triumphs of teachers engaging in this important work (Paley, 1979; Sleeter, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In this study, I sought to document the learning trajectories of two white, female teachers as they engaged in reflection on their classroom interactions with students of color in terms of power, privilege, and whiteness. Teacher learning was positioned as both process and product (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). In other words, the act of engaging in an activity system is, in and of itself, learning and represents teacher learning as process. Additionally, learning is evidenced through changes in participation in an activity system (Rogoff, 2003), which represents teacher learning as product. Others have positioned teacher learning as a complex system as opposed to an event (Collins & Clark, 2008). When thinking about teacher learning, Opfer and Pedder (2011) wrote, “there are various dynamics at work in social behavior and these interact and combine in different ways such that even the simplest decision can have multiple causal pathways” (p. 378). This definition of teacher learning takes into account the product and process of learning, while also accounting for contextual (e.g., time and space), and individual factors (e.g., dispositions and identity) that are in play. Critical reflection on power, privilege, and whiteness is challenging and rewarding work. In this final chapter, I draw connections between the findings and discussion provided in chapter

four with implications and suggestions for future research in the preparation and continuous support of teachers, particularly related to understanding power, privilege, and whiteness in the classroom.

This chapter also includes newly relevant literature that emerged over the course of the study and is helpful in drawing deeper connections to teacher learning. At the outset, I knew from both personal experience and reading broadly in the literature, that teacher learning related to issues of race, power, and privilege was complex, and at times, overwhelming for those who engage in such work. However, prior to completing this study and subsequent manuscript, I was unaware *how* complex. I begin by making more nuanced meaning of my findings and describing implications related to each of the two research questions. The sections below include; 1) positivism and teacher learning, 2) dispositions and lived experiences, and 3) the plea for absolution of white teachers. These implications are written with teachers and teacher educators in mind as the primary audience. Following these sections, I discuss the “what’s next?” implications for researchers and scholars in the field of teacher learning. Next, I discuss limitations and parameters of the study and conclude with a brief researcher reflection.

Teacher Talk about Power, Privilege, Race, and Gender

The first research question guiding this study was: How do white, female, urban elementary school teachers describe their beliefs, values, and assumptions related to power, privilege, race, and gender in terms of classroom interactions with students of color? Based on my findings, one answer to this question is, “In highly positivistic ways.” As the teachers participated in the collaborative interviews; watching classroom

videos, discussing and learning about power, privilege, and whiteness, they were confident in their own perspectives and how their lived experiences influenced participation in the classroom context. Their participation in the collaborative interviews was descriptive and factual. It felt as though they were telling me about what they knew, as opposed to collaboratively building meaning through their experiences and understandings. However, as the collaborative interviews continued, their assuredness was slightly challenged in that they began to consider multiple realities related to experiences of the less privileged and less powerful students and families they served at Dragonwood. I begin below by defining positivism and connecting it to teacher learning and whiteness. Following that section, I explore “what’s next?” by elucidating what positivism means for teacher learning, and I offer suggestions for future research.

Positivism and Teacher Learning

Positivism is the idea that truth can only be learned through objective observation and sense experience (Edgar & Sedgewick, 1999). In other words, emotion, lived experience, and context are removed from the equation in determining “truth.” In describing dominant culture’s reverence for positivism, Dantley (2002) wrote, “positivism has been embraced by the dominant culture as the primary mode of operating simply because the rational, predictable, and empirical are more highly favored than the intuitive and hermeneutical” (p. 336). Originally a function of scientific research, the concept has come to have a broader definition. Giroux (1997a) offered three central tenets of positivism: 1) explanation, 2) prediction, and 3) technical control. He further argues that the wider culture of positivism “with its limited focus on objectivity,

efficiency, and technique, is both embedded and reproduced in the form and content of public school curricula” (p. 4).

Students who attend U.S. public schools are certainly exposed to positivist epistemologies (Sprague, 2005). One example is the implementation of the Common Core, meant to standardize learning across contexts throughout the United States. Another is the climate of accountability, described in chapter four, that permeates public schools in the form of standardized tests, as well as abundant preparation for those tests. Learning, in this climate of positivism, is achieved when students have chosen correct answers on multiple choices exams. This is a stagnant view of learning; one that discounts the importance of critical thinking, problem solving, and reflection upon lived histories and contexts.

Even as I write this manuscript, I realize the impact positivistic epistemologies have had on my own trajectory as a scholar. I feel a tension as I write in the first person, (*does that even belong in this dissertation?*) and share my reflections as a researcher. Positivism is steeped in the U.S. education context, especially academia. I recognize it in my own reflections as a student, as well as a teacher.

Positivism permeates aspects of U.S. public schools for teachers, as well. Standardization of instructional strategies, curriculum, and programs all support the notion of “one best way” to effectively teach students. Additionally, teachers are encountering more evaluations on their classroom practices, meant to further standardize teaching across classrooms and schools. While the push toward standardization was evident in the transcripts of the collaborative interviews, as well as classroom

observations, the teachers also perceived their own experiences through positivistic lenses. Both participants highly valued and reflected upon the lived experiences they brought with them to their teaching. Their standard for “Truth” was tightly tied to the experiences they reflected on in relation to their teaching. This is not surprising, but does present a barrier that makes understanding whiteness, power, and privilege more challenging. As discussed in chapter two, whiteness “runs like a mainstream through the heart of our classrooms, schools, and U.S. society” (Lea & Sims, 2008, p. 186).

Whiteness is represented in the ways the teachers centered their own beliefs and ways of thinking, while discounting, and subsequently marginalizing, the experiences of the students and families with whom they worked. Understanding positivism and whiteness as historical processes is paramount, especially when considering race relations in the United States.

There are parallels between positivism and whiteness. Both positivism and whiteness are normalized so deeply in schools that other ways of thinking and being are marginalized in the process. This occurs through curriculum (Kinchloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998; Sleeter, 2001), policy (Orozco, 2011), as well as instructional strategies and decisions (Sprague, 2005). Further, consider the implications on school practices as white people, in this case teachers, tend to think of themselves as without culture (Mahoney, 1997; Florio-Ruane, 2001). This further centralizes the beliefs and ways of thinking and knowing that are embedded within and reified through whiteness. The normalcy embedded within whiteness, while “othering” those from populations outside this norm, creates a barrier for encouraging white teachers to

challenge the ways schooling is organized and delivered. Positivism is inherent in this perspective in that it centers one perspective (whiteness) while decentering others. Smith (2004) writes, “Whiteness becomes basic to positivism – whiteness is the only way in which the world can be understood” (<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/491/668>). Just as positivism places value on rationality and objectivity at the expense of lived experience, intuition, and hermeneutics, so too does whiteness. Certain types of knowledge and ways of acquiring that knowledge are considered invalid.

The teachers’ participation and membership in the dominant culture (i.e., whiteness, privilege, and power) appeared to contribute to their reliance on positivist approaches to reflection. They often closed comments with the phrase, “that’s the way it is,” calling out, yet not naming, the perceived normalcy or common sense assumptions embedded within their reflections. Simultaneously, they positioned themselves with racial and linguistic identities that were marginalized in a variety of ways, given their status as wives and mothers to men and children of color. The contradiction here played into the positivistic stance they promoted during our conversations in that it seemed to provide an “out” for them in critiquing their membership of the dominant culture.

One such example of the positivistic stance the teachers forwarded was reflected in their perspectives on power in the classroom. More specifically, the teachers viewed the concept of power as a technical one and focused their attention on issues related to maintaining physical control of the students in the classroom. The assumption that teachers must maintain a high level of technical power was largely unchallenged, and all subsequent reflections were built upon that assumption. Virtually no attention was paid

to the ways their whiteness served as a power source in the classroom, from the centering of their own privileged experiences to the ways they shared their own experiences with marginalization with students. Ultimately, the teachers did not see themselves as enactors of the dominant culture. Mandy and Vivian were open to discussing their own experiences as they related to the classroom, including their own stories of immigration and family structures, as well as the fact that their own children attended Dragonwood. However, they were simultaneously less open to decentering their own experiences in order to incorporate the lived experiences of the students and families they served into the classroom. Little attention was paid to how the experiences of students and their families might provide another “lived reality” that would influence practice in the classroom, including the types of knowledge and experiences valued in that setting. Even though there were similarities between the experiences they brought with them to the classroom and those of the students, they often made assumptions, based on their own (white) perspectives about what families valued, what resources they had, and what they had experienced.

Another such example is the LACK of critique the teachers forwarded in terms of examining and challenging the policies, curriculum, and instructional strategies at work in Dragonwood. While they each verbally critiqued how the principal engaged in her work at the school, the teachers did so from a relatively superficial place. In other words, they did not seek to challenge or upend the policies and curriculum that served to maintain the status quo of inequitable school outcomes for students from marginalized populations. Rather, their critiques stemmed from a place that *re-centered* their own ways

of knowing and understanding the business of “school.” In other words, critiques of the administrator focused on the teachers’ perceptions that her decisions regarding interactions with parents and students went against how we “do” school, how schools should be organized, and students’ place within the system.

Earlier, I positioned whiteness as a tertiary artifact teachers used as they engaged in learning opportunities. Tertiary artifacts are the culturally and contextually bound objects related to a mediational artifact (Cole, 1996). Further, Cole (1996) related tertiary artifacts to notions of schemas and scripts connected to activities. Tertiary artifacts “come to color the way we see the ‘actual’ world” (Cole, 1996). Whiteness is an *invisible* tertiary artifact, one that mediates action in a system without subjects being particularly cognizant of its presence and impact. The teachers in this study unconsciously and uncritically engaged elements of whiteness in their proclivity toward positivistic binaries of understanding (i.e., right/wrong, good/bad, etc.). Through the introduction of additional readings, resources, and discussion, the teachers were provided a foothold for building meaning in the conversations about whiteness, power, and privilege, which were challenging the positivistic views of their experiences. Through the readings and collaborative interviews, the teachers came to “see” whiteness, power, and privilege in more nuanced ways, thereby making it possible for them to draw preliminary connections between these concepts and their own teaching practices. *Making visible* this invisible artifact enabled the teachers to work toward more critical reflections on their practice.

The prevalence of positivism is reflected in U.S. public schools, thus, it is important to consider its effects on teacher learning. The search for “Truth” or the one right answer leads teachers down a slippery slope, preventing them from considering the myriad cultural, historical, contextual, or individual factors that impact teaching and learning. Yet, reform efforts are centered on the implementation of programs without consideration of context and other factors that will inevitably promote or inhibit effectiveness. Teacher educators should support pre-service and in-service teachers in challenging the status quo by critiquing positivistic stances built into their learning experiences, and subsequently decentering the beliefs, experiences, and ways of knowing put forth by teachers, as well as curricula and policies within the school setting. Challenging the way things are allows teachers an opportunity to explore and critique identity, context, and curriculum (among others) in an intellectually and emotionally safe space. This type of learning environment must be cultivated by teacher educators in deliberate ways, as without *deliberate* action, the status quo will be maintained, thereby leaving perspectives on difference (i.e., deficit perspectives) intact.

What’s next?: Expanding hermeneutics and heuristics in teacher learning.

Inclusivity has often been confused with the idea of inclusion from Special Education research. Inclusion has often been reduced to the placement of students with special needs into general education settings (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Inclusive education has primarily been focused on creating learning spaces in which all students can access content and achieve success, while questioning power differentials at play (Artiles, Kozleski & Gonzalez, 2011). The same can be said of teachers’ opportunities to learn.

Teachers must have ample opportunity and support in critiquing the “way things are,” thereby challenging the existence of one answer for any multitude of questions asked. It is relatively simple to challenge things like the adopted reading program or the discipline policy enacted at a school. In fact, it is probable that this type of critique happens almost daily in any teachers’ lounge in the United States. Rather, teachers must be encouraged to critique their own experiences as “truth,” exposing the assumptions of normalcy and whiteness. Additionally, they must be provided tools for inquiry, reflection, and action that forward inclusive stances toward learning. This is challenging and emotional work because it may constitute an upheaval of power in the classroom (i.e., shifting power toward students and families), as well as personal upheaval in terms of the ways teachers view the world around them.

Perhaps most importantly, findings confirm the notion that teachers must have access to the knowledge, strategies, and support that will assist them in engaging in critical reflection on issues of race, class, gender, power, and privilege. These may include, but are not limited to, readings, videos, and other resources that will first, decenter their own experiences and beliefs, while also providing them footing in order to effectively engage in this work. The facilitator of teacher learning opportunities must be skilled at de-centering their own participation, in terms of their lived experiences, while simultaneously supporting dialogic conversations in which participants expand their understanding and application of ideas around power and privilege. At first, this may seem problematic, given the demographics of the teaching population. Having a bunch of white folks sitting around talking about what it means to be white may actually serve

to further entrench stereotypical perspectives, rather than challenge them (Pailliotet, 1995; Florio-Ruane, 2001). However, Leonardo (2004) reminds us that white people, in this case, teachers, need to interrogate their own whiteness and membership of that privileged group. Complexity once again bubbles to the surface, as white teachers are called to challenge and decenter their own experiences as a means toward more deeply understanding how power, privilege, and whiteness impact interactions with students of color in the classroom. Broadening the hermeneutics of teacher learning involves encouraging and valuing introspection, intuition, and interpretation within learning opportunities. Cultivating such a space would also require a shift in the ways teacher learning is defined in the school setting, which will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. Teachers should have the opportunity to delve deeply into their own lived experiences as foundational work toward being open to learning about the students and families with whom they work, while simultaneously being encouraged and supported in shifting perspectives on their own experiences toward more critical stances. In other words, introspection may serve to further centralize the experiences white teachers bring with them to the classroom. Facilitators must be skilled in challenging the ways teachers discuss and share their experiences to demonstrate the variation and differences within and between groups of people, particularly those who are pushed to the margins of society because of cultural characteristics and identities that are devalued.

In writing about research pertaining to inclusive practices, Artiles and Kozleski (2007) offered questions that have long been neglected in the research, focusing on questions of benefit, including, “*Who* benefits from inclusion? *Where* are these students

included? *What* are the consequences of *who* benefits and *where* inclusion is enacted?” (italics in original, p. 352). These questions offer an important launching point from which research on inclusive education can expand. These same questions, slightly modified, can offer important insights into teacher learning related to whiteness, power, and privilege in the classroom. In other words, *Who* benefits from the way teacher learning opportunities are designed? *What* are the consequences of *who* benefits? I hypothesize that designing and implementing teacher learning opportunities on inclusive hermeneutics and deliberately challenging the air of positivism in schools will have encouraging effects on teachers’ engagement with students of color in the classroom.

Tensions and Contradictions in Teacher Talk

The second research question guiding this study was, “What do tensions and contradictions that arise in the context of the collaborative interviews reveal about teacher learning related to issues of race, power, and privilege?” Teacher learning, in general, is fraught with contradictions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Loughran, 2002) and this study was no different. The teachers grappled with challenging concepts that they had little to no experience with prior to the study. In many ways, the site of the tension or contradiction was fertile ground for learning on the part of the teachers. In this section, I describe what was learned through the tensions and contradictions voiced by the teachers in this study. I direct my writing toward teacher educators and those who strive to influence the daily work of teachers in public schools. I have divided the responses into three sections, including; 1) dispositions, 2) lived experiences, and 2) the plea for absolution of white teachers.

Dispositions

Dispositions are defined as “the personal qualities or characteristics that are possessed by individuals, including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values, and modes of adjustment” (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000). Literature in the field of psychology positions the study of dispositions as a means of predicting participation in some activity. For example, research has explored the connection between dispositions and cardiovascular disease (Suls & Bunde, 2005) as well as dispositions and smoking (Chapman, Fiscella, Duberstein, & Kawachi, 2009). In teacher learning literature, dispositions research has explored predictors of technology usage in the classroom (Vannatta & Fordham, 2004) and attitudes toward learning (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000). This research describes dispositions as static, unchanging phenomena found within people. In the current study, I utilize a more dynamic conceptualization of dispositions. Teachers may have experiences, values, and outlooks that make critical reflection more accessible while simultaneously presenting barriers. Does this mean that teachers who do not have such characteristics are incapable of critically reflecting in order to become effective teachers for students from historically marginalized populations? I argue that this is not the case. Teachers’ dispositions are dynamic and ever-changing, based on accumulated experiences and reflection upon those experiences. Teacher learning opportunities can be designed in such a way as to explore, uncover, and challenge teacher dispositions in order to facilitate critical learning. Thus learning opportunities can be designed in ways that cultivate teachers’ dispositions that serve to

forward critical reflection on issues of power, privilege, and whiteness related to teaching and learning.

In the study, Mandy and Vivian expressed that, given the stated purpose of the research, they were “not the best examples” (Field notes, March 25, 2013) of white teachers. As described in chapter four, their lived experiences varied from what might be considered “typical” or “traditional” white experiences. Yet, their lived experiences positioned them to be willing to take on the challenging and emotionally consuming task of critically reflecting in the collaborative interviews. It was as if their experiences predisposed them to some of the ideas reflected in the study. As described in chapter four, the teachers readily connected many constructs to their personal experiences of marginalization and membership in pertinent cultural communities.

The idea of assessing and developing dispositions in teacher education has been debated (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007), yet the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) included the development of dispositions in the Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education (NCATE, 2002).

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging

standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment (NCATE, 2002, p. 53; 2006, p. 53).

Those who advocate for including dispositions in the NCATE standards claim that “dispositions are essential to effective teaching” (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007, p. 361). Concepts like those described in the excerpt above (e.g. caring, fairness, honesty, socially just, etc.) are interpreted and implemented differently by teachers. Consider the potentially problematic ways teachers incorporate kindness into the classroom discussed earlier in chapter four. Kindness, while intended to be a positive experience for students, may serve to inadvertently lower academic and behavioral expectations for students from historically marginalized populations. The concept of kindness will be explored more deeply in a subsequent section of this chapter. The participants in the current study had life experiences that allowed them more openness to explore the research topics. However, their lived experiences limited them from fully interrogating the power and privilege they experienced as white teachers. As they engaged in the study, their participation changed which signified new ways of thinking about how their own identities impacted classroom practices.

Dispositions of educators not only influence their practice in the classroom, but also impact their participation in learning opportunities focused on critical interrogations of power, privilege, and whiteness. Researchers should look to challenge the notion of stable, unchanging dispositions by documenting the ways teachers change as they move through learning opportunities focused on issues of equity within the classroom. Future research would benefit from deeper analysis of teacher dispositions and participation in

teacher learning opportunities. I wish to restate that the current discussion on dispositions does not imply that some teachers might be excluded from this type of learning because they are not “pre-disposed” to it in some way. Again, I forward a more dynamic view of teacher dispositions, in that researchers must explore the ways dispositions impact and change within complex learning opportunities. Researchers, as well as teacher educators, must come to a deeper understanding of the ways teachers’ dispositions influence and change through their participation in critical learning opportunities.

What’s next?: Building relationships. There is an extensive literature on the importance of relationships in schools; including relationships between students, between teachers and students, and between colleagues, among others. However, little attention has been paid toward positive relationships in the context of teacher learning opportunities focused on critical examinations of power, privilege, and whiteness. The reality is that the two participants came to this study as friends. They often spoke of shared experiences with their children and families and generally enjoyed one another’s company outside of the school day. It was not my intention to recruit participants who had already established friendships. In fact, prior to the study, little attention was paid to the relationship between the participants. However, it was fortunate these two women participated in this study. Their friendship, as well as the multiple life experiences and identities they shared, created a climate in the collaborative interviews that allowed them to be comfortable during emotionally charged conversations about power, privilege, and

whiteness. In some ways, their friendship provided a degree of security for them as their own experiences were decentered over the course of the study.

Wyngaard (2005) offers the “4 Rs Theory,” defining African American students’ perspectives on culturally relevant pedagogy, which include: Relationship, Respect, Responsibility, and Relevancy. The relationships piece of the theory is focused on the ways students engage with teachers; what type of personal and professional relationships students value, namely, are the teachers “bein’ real” with the students. “Bein’ real” was the students’ description for teachers who cared for the students’ lives outside the classroom, appreciated the influences of student ethnicity on their identity, and showed flexibility in instructional practices. While Wyngaard’s work is centered on the experiences of students, the concept of “bein’ real” in a relationship can certainly be applied in teacher learning contexts. Given the emotionally charged nature of the teacher learning concerning whiteness, power, and privilege in the classroom, teacher educators would be advised to cultivate positive relationships among colleagues within learning opportunities. This moves beyond attitudes of “tolerance” and “acceptance” for diversity and divergent viewpoints. Rather, learning spaces must be set up with collaboration, cooperation, and emotional support in mind. Perhaps, most importantly, honesty within these types of learning opportunities offers teachers the chance to uncover dispositions that aid in or inhibit critical reflections. These expectations stem from the teacher educator him/herself, in strategies used for facilitating conversations and activities.

Most teachers know the challenges associated with getting school-age children to build positive relationships with one another and the issues that arise when students do

not get along. Bullying is recognized as a national epidemic related to the experiences of students in K-12 schools in the U.S. However, little attention has been paid to the ways teacher educators can work to cultivate positive relationships between colleagues in a classroom or school setting. It is clear that positive collegial relationships are beneficial in terms of teacher learning opportunities. Scholars and researchers in the field of teacher education with equity objectives would well serve the larger community by investigating positive relationships between colleagues with the objective of effective learning toward equity in mind.

Lived Experiences

Thornton Dill and Kohlman (2012) offer a clear definition of intersectionality, from which I draw in thinking about the lived experiences of teachers and their relation to learning opportunities.

This conceptual tool [intersectionality] has become integral to both theory and research endeavors, as it emphasizes the interlocking effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which categories of identity and structures of inequality are mutually constituted and defy separation into discrete categories of analysis (p. 154).

Intersectionality, which has its roots in the struggle between black and white feminist scholars at the earliest stages of the feminist movement, offers a lens through which teachers and teacher educators might consider how identities inform theory and practice. Identities we carry intersect and connect to construct and re-construct the context in which we participate. This means that different people may experience the

same space in very different ways, as their identities influence their participation in a contextual space. This idea is supported in the teacher education literature through the experiences of students of color participating in teacher education classes and programs (Cochran-Smith, 1991; 2000; Gay & Kirkland, 2003) as well as the experiences of teachers of color navigating the profession (Delpit, 1995).

As described in earlier chapters, while the participating teachers each identified as white women, their experiences were far from those that might be considered “traditional” white experiences. They each had lived experiences that offered them a window into the marginalization and oppression experienced by students in their classrooms. For instance, both women had married men of Mexican descent, had biracial children, and had experiences with immigration in their immediate family. Their lived experiences stood out as a stark reminder that all teachers bring with them varied lived experiences that greatly influence the ways they engage in the work of the classroom, as well as how they participated in the learning opportunities presented within the context of this study. Even though I had considered the varied experiences of my own students and had prepared for several months to conduct this research, I was still surprised by the variation I found in my two participants.

Hill Collins (1990) offered the construct of the “matrix of domination,” which is structured into three levels: the level of personal biography; the group of community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions. The level of personal biography speaks to what women experience at the individual level, while accounting for the myriad identities (race, class, sexual

orientation, etc.) they carry with them. In thinking about teacher learning, it is necessary for teachers to engage in reflections regarding their own experiences however such reflection is insufficient alone, as it may serve to reinforce negative stereotypes of the “other.” Social constructions such as race, gender, sexual orientation and the like are thought of as real things, in an objective sense. However, the second level of the matrix of domination affords a lens through which we might come to better understand the intersection of such identities, as well as *what they mean in the world*. Therefore, critical reflection on the ways teachers’ identities as they relate to and create contextual meaning will provide deeper understanding on the role such identities play in schools. Further, consideration of the third level of the matrix of domination, the systemic and social institutions, may provide teachers an opportunity to serve as elements of change from within the system. However, teachers must be supported in critiquing their lived experiences through an intersectional lens that incorporates consideration of the three levels of the matrix of domination.

Teachers are often warned against essentializing the experiences of students of color. Essentializing, according to Erickson (2010) is our tendency to assume “that all persons in a given social category are culturally similar” (p. 43). The essentialization of people of color plays out in schools and classrooms, as well as larger society, on a daily basis. Consider the stereotypes about African American boys needing lots of movement in the classroom or Latinas being loud and gregarious. Even though I have worked to heed this warning for many years, I was still taken aback by the varied lived experiences of the participating teachers. Their shared ethnicity included some shared experiences

with each other, as well as other white teachers. They brought valuable experiences with oppression and marginalization that afforded them opportunities to connect on a deeper level with the students in their classrooms. This provides a glimmer of hope for changing the inequitable outcomes experienced by students of color.

All teachers, including white female teachers, may have experiences with marginalization and oppression related to cultural identities they carry. Hill Collins (1990) wrote:

Although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major system of oppression – whether it be by race, social class, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or gender – they typically fail to see how their own thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination (p. 229).

In terms of teacher learning, findings from this study reinforce the idea that teachers must have continuous support in interrogating their own experiences as they relate to the classroom. Not only must this be supported by administration and the teachers themselves, but the very introspective reflection must be *viewed and articulated* in and of itself as “teacher learning.” The value of this type of support can come in many forms, including allowing teachers time and resources necessary for this type of emotional work, as well as tangibly valuing this learning within the confines of the current structure (e.g., providing credit hours for participation). The challenge of this type of learning is that it may not have immediate impact on the achievement scores of

students, which may invalidate its worth in the current school climate. This relates to the contextual and structural barriers teachers experience in their efforts to improve practice.

What's next?: (Re)cognizing teacher learning. The call for (re)cognizing teacher learning has two important aspects: re-cognizing (re-imagining), and recognizing (seeing clearly). The findings of this study suggest that re-cognizing or re-imagining what counts as teacher learning is an important endeavor that must be taken up by researchers. Teacher learning is a complex, iterative process that belies simple definitions. Yet, as described in chapter two, the focus of teacher learning is often on the acquisition of technical content (e.g., instructional strategies for teaching reading). Teacher educators, specifically those in positions of power within schools, must re-cognize or re-imagine broadened conceptions of teacher learning so that more complex and rich experiences can be included in opportunities to learn for teachers. Future research would benefit from teacher educators, administrators, and teachers describing their own processes for engaging in teacher learning opportunities around issues of equity. Such case studies and action research studies would incorporate important contextual factors that are often downplayed in traditional research about teacher learning.

As noted in chapter two, much of the research on teacher collaboration has been focused on teacher benefit. In other words, researchers seek answers to questions like, “How will collaboration positively impact teacher efficacy?” While there is value in determining the benefits of teacher learning on *teachers*, there is a paucity of research that demonstrates a strong connection between teacher collaboration and increased

student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Findings of this study suggest that researchers should seek to *recognize* the connections between collaboration toward critical reflection and the accountability measures that are presently in place in U.S. public schools. Long-term studies should be conducted providing teachers with sustained opportunities for collaborative critical reflection and subsequent impact on their classroom practices and outcomes. Given the tendency of larger society to gravitate more toward quantitative research, it would be beneficial if studies done in a qualitative tradition would incorporate mixed methodologies. The entire system will not change overnight. Therefore, by drawing connections between critical reflection on power, privilege, and whiteness and achievement of students, the value of such work might be more justified by those educators in the K-12 setting.

The “plea for absolution” of white women

The work of attending to and dismantling biases, both individualized and institutionalized, is emotionally challenging. Dominant discourse has promoted colorblindness as a means for addressing issues of race and ethnicity. If race or ethnicity is brought up in conversation, white people have been taught to navigate the conversation by talking *around* color, lest they appear racist or discriminatory in some way. This strategy forwards the premise that we, as a society, have “moved past” having to talk about the privileges and discrimination inherently associated with skin color. Within the context of this study, the teachers implemented mediational tools that helped them navigate tough conversations about whiteness, power, and privilege, including: colorblindness, inhabited silences, and appropriating oppressions. In many ways, this

reluctance to have frank, honest conversations about race, ethnicity, and other forms of difference have had lasting effects on society as a whole, as well as on the school experiences of students from historically marginalized populations.

The notion of “white guilt” has been described in the literature (Steele, 1990) as whites’ propensity toward seeking forgiveness and acceptance, rather than working to challenge and subsequently change racist or discriminatory behaviors. It is attempting to avoid appearing racist in discussions focused on racism and discrimination, thereby allowing white people to stay comfortably unaware of individualized and institutionalized instances of discrimination (see Appendix H for an additional resource). The title of this section was chosen to serve as a reminder that we cannot erase histories that have marginalized people from specific racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as any other countless cultural identifying markers individuals carry with them (e.g., gender, sexuality, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, etc.). In other words, seeking absolution (i.e., confirmation that “you are not racist”) actually serves to re-center the white individual’s experiences, thereby reifying whiteness. I am not claiming that either participant shared racist perspectives in the context of any aspect of this study. Contrarily, as stated before, their life experiences provided them small windows into the marginalizations and oppressions experienced by students of color. Yet, fear of appearing racist or exposing our biases creates a challenging climate for teacher learning opportunities.

What's next?: Interrogating kindness. Kindness is an important part of teaching. It is common sense that all students should have access to teachers who care deeply about their well-being and exhibit kindness on a daily basis, among other important socio-emotional attributes. Students readily perceive teachers who are “kind” as effective teachers (Rowland, 2009). As a parent, I hope my own child gets to work with teachers who love and care for her. Love, care, and kindness however, can only go so far in creating positive, equitable learning opportunities for all students. Kindness toward students from historically marginalized backgrounds cannot replace the hard work of critiquing the power and privileges whiteness affords teachers. In other words, kindness cannot let us off the hook in thinking about privilege and oppression in the classroom.

Kindness, particularly in schools, is a commonsensical concept that seems to leave little room for debate about its definition. However, kindness may be one way teachers unintentionally seek absolution. Kindness left uncritiqued has potentially deleterious ramifications for students of color in the classroom (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Given the power structures present in schools, with teachers squarely and comfortably in control over students in classrooms, kindness is a complex and murky concept with various interpretations that must be uncovered and interrogated. One teacher may think it kind to push students to their academic limits through high expectations and demanding curricula, while another teacher may think it kind to not challenge some students for fear of negatively impacting their self-esteem. These

represent only two of the multiple ways teachers may implement kindness in the classroom.

Earlier in this manuscript, I wrote about teacher kindness and teachers positioning themselves (or being positioned) as saviors, present in schools to save students of color from themselves and, seemingly, their cultural and historical backgrounds. Giroux (1997b) writes, "...whites can come into such schools and teach without theory, ignore the histories and narratives that students bring to schools, and perform miracles in children's lives by mere acts of kindness" (p. 306). An important consideration in teacher learning opportunities would be to encourage teachers to interrogate concepts such as kindness to determine what they mean in terms of eradicating inequitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized populations. Kindness to some teachers may mean inadvertently lowering academic standards to ensure self-esteem of students of color remains high. This actually serves to greater disadvantage these students, causing them to fall further behind their peers.

There is a paucity of research exploring the ways teachers interpret and enact kindness in the classroom. Certainly, student perceptions of kindness are important, yet beyond the scope of this project. Rather, attention should be paid to how teachers see kindness in the classroom through the lenses of whiteness, power, and privilege. This exploration would serve the teacher learning community greatly in terms of addressing inequitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized populations.

Additionally, teachers would benefit from continued interrogation of these constructs, as

we know singular attempts at understanding and implementing such critical reflections would do little to create long-term, sustainable change for students.

What's next?: Appropriation of oppressions. The teachers in this study enlisted a few different mediational tools that allowed them to navigate challenging conversations around whiteness, power, and privilege in the classroom. One of the tools discussed earlier, appropriation of oppressions, is an important one for researchers to explore to assist teacher educators in designing effective learning opportunities for teachers focused on issues of equity in schools and classrooms. The concept of appropriating oppressions stems from hierarchical ranking of oppressions, which has its roots in the struggle between black and white feminist scholars at the earliest stages of the movement. The way toward alliance between the two groups was through the path of intersectionality; understanding that all individuals (in this case, women) carry with them multiple oppressed identifiers.

The participants in this study, as well as many other teachers across the U.S., personally experienced different oppressions based on their membership in certain groups (e.g., as a child entering school learning English). It is obvious that teachers should consider their own lived experiences, including experienced oppressions, as compared to the oppressions experienced by students in their classrooms. However, such explorations should be conducted while *also* interrogating power and privilege associated with other cultural identifiers. What would happen if, while investigating their own oppressions, teachers minimized the lived experiences of the students and families they serve? This may happen because of the power inherent within the role of teacher or the power that is

associated with cultural identities the teachers carry with them. Teachers are coming from a position of power. Non-hierarchical ranking of oppressions leaves intact the privileged position from which teachers are examining their own oppressions, and those of their students. This may provide teachers an “out” or an excuse for not examining their own white privilege and power. The power teachers experience through membership in cultural groups may be increased, or at the very least, maintained.

Certainly, I myself have experienced degrees of oppression (as a woman, as a lesbian), but none that outweighs the privilege I experience because of my whiteness (and as a result, my class). It feels ignorant to agree with these feminist scholars from the comfortable privilege of my own racial identity. What carries more oppression in the U.S. context? Being black? Being an immigrant? Being an English Language Learner? Being a lesbian? Being disabled? Being a woman? Being two of the above? Or three? While I cannot hide my own womanhood, I can choose not to disclose my sexual orientation. The way I dress, the way I wear my hair, the places I go can all be interpreted through the lens of the lesbian stereotype, and I can consciously avoid many of these categories. Can a woman of color? More importantly for the current conversation, can a student of color?

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) can offer a way for teachers to consider the complex experiences and identities they themselves bring to the classroom, as well as the multiple cultural identifiers students and families bring. While Crenshaw’s work focused on the intersection of race and gender in terms of violence against women, others have expanded the framework to include various cultural identifiers, including sexuality (Sue,

2010) and dis/ability (Sullivan & Thorius, 2010). Intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability, among other identifiers, converge to create and influence the context in which individuals participate (Crenshaw, 1991). The intersection of the participating teachers' identities, as white women, mothers of biracial children, and familial backgrounds that include immigration stories and experiences with learning English as a second language all converged, in comfortable and conflicting ways, to deeply influence the context in which this study occurred, specifically, the collaborative interviews. Additionally, contextual factors of the school itself, including the hands-off leadership style of the principal and the structure of the classroom designated specifically for students in the process of learning English, also converged to impact the work of the collaborative interviews. Finally, my own participation, as the researcher and facilitator, served to change and influence the context in which we conducted our work.

All teachers bring with them multiple identities that intersect in influential ways. Women experience marginalization based on gender and sexism, African Americans experience marginalization based on skin color; the list goes on. As the teachers were reflecting upon relatively new concepts (i.e., power, privilege, whiteness, marginalization, etc.) they sought to connect their own experiences to the new ideas. An example of this is in chapter four, when Mandy silences the discussion about race by shifting the conversation toward her own experiences with marginalization related to age and perception of beauty. Teacher educators would benefit from considering what I am terming the "appropriation of oppressions." In other words, negating individuals' experiences with marginalization using tactics to draw connections between perceived

“shared” marginalization may cause white teachers, in particular, to actually discount the importance, or worse, the validity, of students’ experiences with marginalization and oppressions. Teachers might unwittingly appropriate the oppressions experienced by students, thus leaving intact power structures within the classroom.

The call to avoid ranking oppressions (Lorde, 1983; Moraga, 1981) may be a slippery slope for white teachers working with students of color in urban schools. While they should not be encouraged to adopt a fixed hierarchy of oppressions with racism on top, teachers should be wary of positioning their own oppressions as equal to, or greater than, those experienced by students. *Appropriation of oppression* on the part of teachers may serve to maintain existing injustices. It is as if teachers are saying, “My students are oppressed and so am I. Therefore, we can ignore the oppressions (and subsequent privileges on the part of teachers) that we face.” This further entrenches the idea that U.S. society and the schools within it, have somehow “moved past” having to address issues of race, power, and privilege. A critical component of some models of ally work (Arnold & Swadener, 1993) is recognizing that everyone is both a target and perpetrator of oppressions, depending on multiple identities individuals embody. The privilege or power identity can be reappropriated for ally action and one can realize that nobody is a fulltime “victim” or “perpetrator.” Patricia Hill Collins (1990) wrote, “Oppression is filled with such contradictions because...a matrix of domination contains few pure victims or oppressors. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives” (p. 229).

Researchers must explore questions such as, “In what ways do experiences with marginalization and oppression influence how individuals perceive other people’s experiences with marginalization and oppression? How might experiences with marginalization and oppression influence interrogation of privileges?” Additionally, the teacher education community would benefit from exploration of how teachers view students’ experiences with marginalization and oppression, as compared to their own. By documenting how teachers make connections between perceived shared oppressions would provide teacher educators important insights into nuances and complexities connected to teacher learning.

Implications for Researchers and Scholars

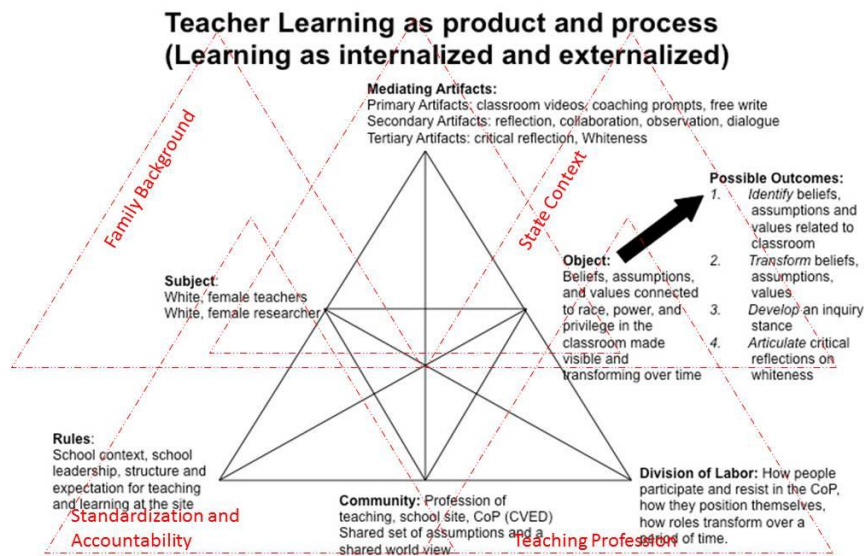
Cultural Historical Activity Theory served as the main theoretical framework for the current study. CHAT focuses the attention of researchers on the various elements of any activity system (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström, 1987; Engeström, 2001). While newer generations of CHAT have expanded the unit of analysis to include more than a singular activity system (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larsen, 1995; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999), a deeper investigation of ways in which activity systems overlap is warranted. The activity in question in this study was the collaborative interviews, yet, the teachers were simultaneously navigating multiple activity systems which all converged in complex ways to impact their participation in the interviews. In this section, I posit additional considerations for the CHAT framework, which are intended to push researchers and scholars to consider multiple activity systems at the same time.

All teachers participate in and move through multiple, overlapping activity systems at the same time (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larsen, 1995), carrying with them ways of mediating their participation, the rules of various contexts (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström, 1987), as well as their own cultural beliefs, values, and dispositions (Cole, 1996). *Simultaneous* participation in multiple activity systems changes, modifies, and influences their participation in *each* activity system (Engeström, 2001). The teachers carried with them rules of participation and goals for successfully engaging in specific activities. Each of the above is nuanced and can be traced to any number of activity systems in which they engage, including family structures, the teaching profession as a whole, and district or federal mandates. Much like the invisible knapsack of privileges (McIntosh, 1988) teachers carry tools, rules, and shared sets of assumptions and world views gathered from participation in multiple activity systems. The concept of third space (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2008), in which conflicting mediational tools converge to expand learning, offers a glimpse into the convergence of activities as sites of learning. I suggest this notion can be expanded by more deeply researching the mediational tools and rules of participation teachers carry and enact in teacher learning opportunities.

In the image below (see figure 4 below), the black writing indicates my original conceptual framework, relying heavily on CHAT. The black triangle in the center represents teacher learning as an activity system. The outline of the triangle is solid, indicating its centrality to this study, as the unit of analysis. The red font indicates the revisions I propose. Each red triangle represents a different activity system in which

teachers engage. These are dotted lines, indicating the movement of teachers in and through the multiple activity systems simultaneously. Note four of the red triangles are labeled (Family background, state context, standardization and accountability, and teaching profession). The fifth triangle is *not* labeled because it represents any number of *other* activity systems in which teachers may participate (e.g., a union, teacher organization, church, etc.).

(Figure four: Revised CHAT triangle.)



Engstrom (1999, 2001) offers the concept of expansive transformation in activity systems. Expansive transformation is the idea that change, or transformation, within an activity occurs through contradictions within the activity. In other words, as individuals enact rules of participation that conflict with existing rules for the activity, the activity is transformed to “embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous

mode of the activity” (Engestrom, 2001, p. 137). As described earlier, the teachers carried with them rules of participation from multiple pertinent activity systems that influenced their participation in the collaborative interviews. The research questions driving this study focused on the beliefs, values, and assumptions teachers brought with them to learning opportunities. The teachers’ beliefs were tied tightly to the lived experiences and personal histories they brought with them. However, the teachers also engaged rules of participation from varying activity systems, which complicated and transformed the collaborative interviews over the course of the study.

Invisible artifacts. All human beings mediate activity systems with artifacts or tools (Cole, 1996; 1998). These mediational tools are organized into three levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary artifacts. The teachers enacted three mediational tools including, colorblindness, whiteness, and appropriating oppressions, which I position as invisible artifacts. These are positioned as invisible artifacts because the teachers were largely unaware and uncritical of the ideas, while simultaneously implementing them as tools of meaning-making and sharing. Colorblindness, whiteness, and the appropriation of oppressions are *enacted by* and *acted upon* individuals, in this case, teachers participating in a learning opportunity. Each invisible artifact comes to “color” the way participants see the world. However, the invisibility of each is a result of subjects’ lack of (re)cognition. Future research should focus on the invisible artifacts discussed here and seek to uncover others that mediate the participation of teachers within learning opportunities.

Multi-vocal, video-cued methods and teacher learning. When I first began imagining this study, I was intrigued by the work of *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989; Tobin, Hsueh, Karasawa, 2009), in which the research team used multi-vocal video-cued methods to assist teachers in uncovering deeply held cultural beliefs that were embedded within their classroom practices. The teachers participating in the *Preschool in Three Cultures* project were able to uncover deeply held cultural values about self-esteem, conflict in the classroom, and cultivating empathy by watching preschool classrooms other than their own. Actions of teachers in one country seemed foreign to the teachers from the other countries. Teachers could see taken-for-granted beliefs and values *in action* by identifying activities in the videos that produced tension for them. This powerful methodology provided important insights into deeply held cultural beliefs of teachers across the world.

The intention of this study was to simulate such reflection. I was hoping that teachers would, in watching their colleagues teach, be able to identify actions in the classroom videos that did not make sense to them or seemed foreign in some way. This seemed like an entry point into conversations about taken-for-granted practices that are used every day in classrooms across the U.S. This hypothesis was confirmed from my own experiences as a teacher observing colleagues and learning about different ways of instructing, thinking, and communicating in the classroom.

The first three collaborative interviews were centered on the classroom videos I collected during my observations. Yet, while the teachers watched videos and used them as a starting point for reflection, most of their reflections were sparked by their own

background experiences. Many times over the course of the study, the teachers cited lessons they had done in years past, students they had previously, as well as their own backgrounds and familial experiences. I hypothesize that the length of the videos for this study, at 5-7 minutes, may have been too short for them to be invested in the observation. Additionally, time constraints for each collaborative interview presented another barrier that prevented us from deeply engaging with the videos for extended periods of time.

At the start of this study, I intended on focusing attention solely on classroom videos as a stimulus for the collaborative interviews. However, it was necessary to introduce readings as a strategy to help the teachers consider power, privilege, and whiteness in different ways. This proved to be a good decision because it allowed for the teachers to engage in deeper reflection that solely relying on the classroom videos. In the future, I hope to continue refining and utilizing classroom video recordings as prompts for further investigations of the cultural schemas and identities that inform classroom practices. I am very interested in the benefits and limitations this method poses with regard to teacher learning and I view it as a promising entry point for conversations with teachers around issues of power, privilege, and whiteness in the classroom.

Parameters of the Study

Interesting patterns occurred as the study progressed through the four collaborative interviews. The first two, in particular, felt less collaborative and more like an interview. The feeling during those conversations was that the participants had things to tell me, about their experiences, background, teaching, etc. The third and fourth CIs were different, potentially because of the timing (we had spent several hours with one

another and had developed a comfortable, collegial relationship), but also as a result of the readings I had shared with the participants. The final interviews felt more like a shared space, in which we may have flirted with Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, a space in which true co-construction of knowledge and collaborative sharing occurs. There were contextual factors that prevented us from reaching such a space, one of which is certainly the time available for the overall study, as well as each collaborative interview. For example, each CI was approximately one hour, with about twenty to thirty minutes of follow-up via email. The final CI was conducted in June, after school had been let out for summer. However, perhaps the factor most pertinent here is my own inexperience as a researcher. In reflecting on the CIs, I often found places in the transcripts where I might have asked something differently or brought up a different point, potentially leading the participants toward a more shared space. I look forward to opportunities to hone my skills in interviewing and facilitating critical conversations around power, privilege, and whiteness.

A series of questions were raised as data was analyzed and the writing process began. My original intent for this study was to recruit teachers who were already on the journey toward understanding how their own whiteness, power, and privilege impacted the classroom. Ideally, these teachers would be at a school where this learning was valued in tangible and intangible ways. Unfortunately, I was unable to find such a school or such teachers. Additional future research I find myself drawn to is documenting teacher learning related to these issues in a space where this learning is happening more organically and is more teacher-driven. How might findings have changed if

participating teachers had taken on such reflections on their own, as opposed to volunteering for this study? How might they have changed if the school site had taken up this work, valuing it in formal ways? These questions, and others, expose the complex and nuanced nature of teacher learning documented in this study.

Conclusion

Aside from students, teachers are truly at the center of the education system. For better or worse, they are often the focus of heightened standardization and accountability reforms meant to address disparate outcomes from students from historically marginalized populations. They each carry with them important histories, experiences, beliefs, and values that flow through and come up against contextual factors that deeply influence interactions with students of color in classrooms. Teacher learning, therefore, is complex, nuanced, and resists categorization by “one-size-fits-all” programs. Qualitative studies offer important insights into the nuances and complexities that come with designing and delivering learning opportunities for teachers that seek to disrupt the inequitable outcomes experienced by students of color in U.S. public schools.

Epilogue

In my own journey toward recognizing whiteness, power, and privilege in the world and schools around me, I was often wracked with guilt...guilt over my privilege, guilt about how I may be perceived by friends, colleagues, and acquaintances of color. I wanted to be assured that I was not racist; that I was free from having to wrestle with concepts I had been blinded from because of my privilege. In exposing myself and being introduced to critical perspectives about the world around me, I have learned that in many

ways, I am racist – I do benefit from white privilege and do not always interrupt racism, sometimes colluding with it. It is scary to write after much reflection and introspection. I may not be racist in the way of white men in sheets, burning crosses, but I carry with me biases that are deeply engrained, and have been since I began interacting with the world around me. I will work every day to learn and grow more by challenging my assumptions and biases. I have had the great privilege (I use that word deliberately) in working closely with friends, colleagues, and mentors who have opened my eyes to injustices and inequities to which I had previously been blind. One example of this support comes in the form of my committee members, each of whom has instrumentally guided, nurtured, and pushed my learning. Another example is the friends and colleagues I gained during my time at the Equity Alliance (www.equityallianceatasu.org), a place where problematizing whiteness, power, and privilege is not only encouraged, but expected.

One of the struggles I came up against in completing this dissertation was avoiding villainizing the participating teachers. Not only did I have the privilege of support from colleagues and mentors, but I was also participating in a context in which learning around privilege and power was deeply valued. My expectations for their growth and understanding were unreasonable as the ideas were largely unfamiliar to them. My own journey has been so life-changing for me that I wanted to share the experience with others, and thought this study would be a starting point for doing so. It was unrealistic to expect them to complete a journey in four sessions that has taken me eight years, so far. Could I fairly evaluate their progress when I knew how challenging

and on-going this journey is? Why did I expect an accelerated journey for practicing teachers who are working against institutional barriers to their learning? If I portrayed the participating teachers in an unflattering light at any point in this study, it was not my intention. I have scoured this document, asked colleagues (both researchers and teachers) to read it to help me identify if there are any remnants of disappointment. I greatly value the time and emotional gift the teachers bestowed by participating in the study. In retrospect, they exceeded my expectations, and I am grateful for knowing and growing with them.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Appendix A



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Elizabeth Swadener
EDUCATION

From: Mark Roosa, Chair 
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/08/2013

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 02/08/2013

IRB Protocol #: 1301008680

Study Title: Critical Reflections of White Teachers: Documenting the Journey

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Critical Reflections of White Female Teachers: Documenting the Journey

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHERS

Cynthia Mruczek has invited your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE

In the current proposal, white, female teachers will reflect on the ways their own beliefs, assumptions, and values impact classroom interactions with students of color, as well as the ways power and privilege manifest in the classroom. Teacher learning is a complex and important notion, given the centralized role these individuals have in eradicating the inequitable school outcomes for students of color. It is necessary that researchers document the complex trajectory of learning that occurs as teachers engage in critical reflection on their practice.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, then you will join the study, which involves meeting with me for an individual interview that will be digitally recorded. Additionally, I will spend approximately 1-2 hours a week in your classroom for three months, during which time I will record aspects of your interactions with students. Once a month (three times), I will ask all participants to meet as a group to watch compiled videos and discuss their own reflections in a focus group setting. This will also be recorded. You are allowed to refuse to answer any question or drop out of the study at any time.

If you say YES, your first interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The three focus group meetings will take approximately one hour. All meetings will take place at school, unless requested by the participant.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS

Possible benefits of participating in this study include increased reflection and understanding about the ways beliefs, assumptions, and values impact the classroom. Documenting this journey will inform the research literature on teacher learning as well

as teacher preparation, so that teachers can be supported in creating equitable classroom spaces, in which all students can be successful.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researcher will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, you will be asked to refrain from using your name, the names of colleagues, the names of students or the name of your school during the interviews and I will only use pseudonyms in any reports, publications, or presentations. All digital copies of the interviews will be kept on a password-protected computer in my locked office. Any hard copies of any identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet. After the study is over, all data will be destroyed. If you chose to participate in the focus group portion of this study, it should be known that due to the nature of focus groups, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. If you do withdraw, any information previously gathered will immediately be destroyed. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by:

Cynthia Mruczek: 480-965-0657; 480-686-1490 (cell) or Cynthia.mruczek@asu.edu
Elizabeth Swadener: 480-965-1452; 480-232-1253 (cell), or Beth.Swadener@asu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

Participant's Signature Printed Name Date

Your signature below indicates that you consent to being videotaped in your classroom.

Participant's Signature Printed Name Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Appendix C

Recruitment and Self-Assessment for Potential Participants

My name is Cynthia Mruczek and I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I am seeking participants for a study I will conduct over the next few months. I have been on my own journey learning about how my identity impacts my teaching and research. I am interested in understanding the ways white, female teachers come to understand how their deeply held beliefs, values, and assumptions impact their classroom interactions with students of color. I am seeking participants who are willing to participate in this study in the following ways:

1. Allow me to observe in your classroom once a week.
2. Allow me to collect video of your teaching approximately once a month.
3. Meet with the other participating teachers and me to watch and discuss classroom videos.
4. Share your honest reflections about the process and your own learning.

I hope to set up a small collaborative community of participants that support teacher learning and critical reflection.

If you are interested, please complete the following short self-assessment. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

1. Do you identify as a white, female teacher?
2. In what ways do you think your identity may impact your classroom interactions?
3. In what ways do power and privilege play out in the classroom?
4. Please include your name and email address if you are interested in participating in this project.

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INITIAL PARTICIPANT
INTERVIEW

Appendix D

Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Initial Participant Interview

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this research. I am interested in documenting the journey of white, female teachers as they engage in critical reflection on their practice. Before we can begin, I need to know about you as an individual. The following questions will serve as a guide for this interview. We may not answer all of them and what you want to talk about will largely drive this interview.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How did you come to teaching?
3. Tell me about your own experiences in school as a child.
4. Tell me about teaching in this school.
5. How is your own schooling experience similar to your current experiences as a teacher?
6. How is your own schooling experience different than your current experiences as a teacher?
7. Talk to me about students who are really successful in your classroom.
8. Talk to me about students who struggle in your classroom.
9. What do you know about power and privilege related to the classroom?
10. What is enjoyable about reflecting on your classroom and teaching?
11. What is challenging about reflecting on your classroom and teaching?
12. What is your role as a teacher?

APPENDIX E
CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TEACHING ARTICLE

Appendix E

Cultural Identity and Teaching Article

Link for the article shared with the participants as a stimulus for the third collaborative interview.

http://www.niusileadscape.org/docs/FINAL_PRODUCTS/LearningCarousel/Cultural_Identity_&Teaching.pdf

APPENDIX F

WHITE PRIVILEGE: UNPACKING THE INVISIBLE KNAPSACK ARTICLE

Appendix F

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Article

I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group.

Through work to bring materials from women's studies into the rest of the curriculum, I have often noticed men's unwillingness to grant that they are overprivileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged. They may say they will work to improve women's status, in the society, the university, or the curriculum, but they can't or won't support the idea of lessening men's. Denials that amount to taboos surround the subject of advantages that men gain from women's disadvantages. These denials protect male privilege from being fully acknowledged, lessened, or ended.

Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege that was similarly denied and protected. As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.

Describing white privilege makes one newly accountable. As we in women's studies work to reveal male privilege and ask men to give up some of their power, so one who writes about having white privilege must ask, "Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?"

After I realized the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of color that white women whom they encounter are oppressive. I began to understand why we are justly seen as oppressive, even when we don't see ourselves that way. I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence.

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as

an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow "them" to be more like "us."

Daily effects of white privilege

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place, and line of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
10. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
12. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
14. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

15. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color, who constitute the world's majority, without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
17. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
18. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge" I will be facing a person of my race.
18. If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
19. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
20. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
21. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
22. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
23. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.
24. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
25. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color that more or less match my skin.

Elusive and fugitive

I repeatedly forgot each of the realizations on this list until I wrote it down. For me white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own.

In unpacking this invisible knapsack of white privilege, I have listed conditions of daily experience that I once took for granted. Nor did I think of any of these perquisites as bad for the holder. I now think that we need a more finely differentiated taxonomy of privilege, for some of these varieties are only what one would want for everyone in a just society, and others give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant, and destructive.

I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege, a pattern of assumptions that were passed on to me as a white person. There was one main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turf, and I was among those who could control the turf. My skin color was an asset for any more I was educated to want to make. I could think of myself as belonging in major ways and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear,

neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely.

In proportion as my racial group was being made confident, comfortable, and oblivious, other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated. Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress, and violence, which I was being subtly trained to visit, in turn, upon people of color.

For this reason, the word "privilege" now seems to me misleading. We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Yet some of the conditions I have described here work systematically to overempower certain groups. Such privilege simply confers dominance because of one's race or sex.

[Earned strength, unearned power](#)

I want, then, to distinguish between earned strength and unearned power conferred systemically. Power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate. But not all of the privileges on my list are inevitably damaging. Some, like the expectation that neighbors will be decent to you, or that your race will not count against you in court, should be the norm in a just society. Others, like the privilege to ignore less powerful people, distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups.

We might at least start by distinguishing between positive advantages, which we can work to spread, and negative types of advantage, which unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchies. For example, the feeling that one belongs within the human circle, as Native Americans say, should not be seen as privilege for a few. Ideally it is an unearned entitlement. At present, since only a few have it, it is an unearned advantage for them. This paper results from a process of coming to see that some of the power that I originally saw as attendant on being a human being in the United States consisted in unearned advantage and conferred dominance.

I have met very few men who are truly distressed about systemic, unearned male advantage and conferred dominance. And so one question for me and others like me is whether we will be like them, or whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance, and, if so, what we will do to lessen them. In any case, we need to do more work in identifying how they actually affect our daily lives. Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the United States think that racism doesn't affect them because they are not people of color; they do not see "whiteness" as a racial identity. In addition, since race and sex are not the only advantaging systems at work, we need similarly to examine the daily experience of having age advantage, or ethnic advantage, or physical ability, or advantage related to nationality, religion, or sexual orientation.

Difficulties and dangers surrounding the task of finding parallels are many. Since racism, sexism, and heterosexism are not the same, the advantages associated with them should not be seen as the same. In addition, it is hard to disentangle aspects of unearned advantage that rest more on social class, economic class, race, religion, sex, and ethnic identity than on other factors. Still, all of the oppressions are interlocking, as the members of the Combahee River Collective pointed out in their "Black Feminist Statement" of 1977.

One factor seems clear about all of the interlocking oppressions. They take both active forms, which we can see, and embedded forms, which as a member of the dominant group one is taught not to see. In my class and place, I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth.

Disapproving of the systems won't be enough to change them. I was taught to think that racism could end if white individuals changed their attitudes. But a "white" skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us. Individual acts can palliate, but cannot end, these problems.

To redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these subjects taboo. Most talk by whites about equal opportunity seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that systems of dominance exist.

It seems to me that obliviousness about white advantage, like obliviousness about male advantage, is kept strongly inculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all. Keeping most people unaware that freedom of confident action is there for just a small number of people props up those in power and serves to keep power in the hands of the same groups that have most of it already.

Although systemic change takes many decades, there are pressing questions for me and, I imagine, for some others like me if we raise our daily consciousness on the perquisites of being light-skinned. What will we do with such knowledge? As we know from watching men, it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base.

Permission to reprint this excerpt must be obtained from Peggy McIntosh at the address above or by calling her at 617-431-1453.

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By Peggy McIntosh

Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181. The working paper contains a longer list of privileges.

APPENDIX G  
ZEUS LEONARDO BLOG

## Appendix G

### ZEUS LEONARDO BLOG



Sep  
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## Whiteness Studies and Education: Making the Familiar Strange by Zeus Leonardo

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*Zeus Leonardo is an Associate Professor of Social and Cultural Studies in Education at University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Leonardo's work is guided by an attempt to capture "the real experiences of race, both by whites and people of color." He argues that whiteness has not been historically marked by a certain sense of rigidity, but instead, has the ability to flex, change, and morph in order to ensure its survival. Moreover, Dr. Leonardo argues, the construct of whiteness continues to shape global cultural identities even as it fragments our total understanding of race. By embracing a new, if not uncomfortable understanding of race and race relations, Dr. Leonardo believes that a more genuine sense of multiculturalism can be fostered.*

Since the late 1980s, education has witnessed the creation of a new subfield of study called "Whiteness Studies." Since the arrival of Peggy McIntosh's (1989) essay on white privilege, David Roediger's (1991) documentation of the history of the white working class in the U.S., and Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) interviews showcasing white women's vacillation between evading and recognizing race, a veritable explosion of writings centering whiteness gives educators a new arsenal for analyzing schooling. Overall, the innovation of Whiteness Studies has helped educators focus on the contours of racial privilege, or the other side of the race question that has long been neglected. Rather than the usual, "What does it mean to be a person of color?" it asks, "What does it mean to be White in U.S. society?"

Traditionally, race analysis focused on the experiences and developments of communities of color, their struggles with racism, and hopes of one day ending it. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1904/1989) posed the question to African Americans: “How does it feel to be a problem?” Partly ironic in the sense that African Americans were on the receiving end of racism, the question was nonetheless profound in extrapolating what life is like when you are *perceived* to be a problem within the audacious assumptions of American democracy. The turn to whiteness, which is now in full swing only two decades after the initial works, perhaps asks Whites the same question without the implicit irony: “How does it feel to be *the* problem?” This time and coming mainly from White scholars writing about whiteness, the tone is more literal, even accusatory. How do we scaffold educational leaders to adopt the study of whiteness in a critical way?

There are some immediate challenges to implementing a “pedagogy of whiteness.” Immersed in multiculturalism, many school leaders have taken minority studies seriously. We can hardly find a school that does not, in some form or another, take up the cultures and histories of people of color, from additive approaches that incorporate a teaspoon of ethnic studies and stirs the pot, to more transformative approaches that revamp the curriculum and entire school culture. In a word, multiculturalism has become hegemonic; it is the common sense. It does not suggest that we are somehow “doing it right” but that most educational initiatives now have to contend with diversity even superficially. These victories notwithstanding, it is problematic to focus solely on the margins, which negates a critical look at the center, reinforces the ostensive invisibility of whiteness, including Whites’ racial investments and general process of racialization in schools. Once again, they escape critical scrutiny, historical accountability, and moral culpability.

The turn to whiteness disrupts the focus on minorities, indeed re-centers Whites once again. Certainly educational leaders might do well to suspect that whiteness is up to its old tricks again. In fact, Whiteness Studies arrives on the scene precisely at the moment when minorities have gained a legitimate foothold in curricular, instructional, and cultural reform of education. There are workshops on raising race consciousness for Whites, videos showcasing the White mindset, and conferences on White privilege. In short, Whiteness Studies has become an industry. That said, if Whiteness Studies centers whiteness, it places it in an atypical, even uncomfortable position. It puts whiteness on trial without indicting White people as individual embodiments of an ideology called whiteness. When Roediger writes that whiteness is *nothing but* false and oppressive, he was careful to distinguish between whiteness and Whites. A focus on whiteness surely centers Whites in an analysis of racism, but this is not the same as saying that Whites themselves are only false and oppressive. There have been examples of Whites who fought and continue to fight on the side of justice, the abolitionist John Brown being an obvious instance, but as an ideology whiteness has no redeeming characteristics because it has functioned primarily to stratify society. This leads David Roediger to suggest that it is nothing but false.

What does it mean to be critical of whiteness? In schools, first this means that leaders would encourage locating whiteness. Passing as unremarkable and even unmarked, – from which books count as “the canon,” to whose perspectives are legitimated and whose voice is relegated to “special interests,” to the hidden racial referents of policies like NCLB, to the implicit norms of “safety” (whose safety?) in public dialogue about race – the ideology of whiteness must become familiar and



then made strange. Familiarizing students and educators on the codes of whiteness allows them to understand the taken-for-granted, or whiteness passing as simply good values or a universal human nature, when in fact it is particular and partial. It is partial in two senses of the word: part of the whole and a form of investment.

Once whiteness is made familiar, then it must be made strange. No longer able to disguise itself as normative, whiteness becomes peculiar once it is located. However, unlike ideologies of color, which are not only false and whose history has produced rich legacies of resistance to educational inequality, whiteness has had a bad track record. As Roediger said, it is a bad idea. It has no cultural content other than the enforcement of racial hierarchies. Students would learn that the strange machinations of whiteness include the law, which rejected Takao Ozawa's 1922 plea for citizenship on the basis that he may have claims to be White through culture (defined as "American") but in no way is he Caucasian based on scientific evidence of the time that traces whiteness to the Caucasus Mountains (see Lopez, 2006). A mere three months later, the same Justice wrote the decision against Bhagat Thind who claimed Caucasian status based on his origins in the Caucasus region of Indo-Asia. This time, the court ruled that Thind may be Caucasian but common sense says he is not White. Where the court ruled on the side of science in the first and thwarted Ozawa, it rules on the side of common sense in the second and frustrates Thind. Strange indeed. The upshot is that "White" is whatever Whites and whiteness say it is. Whiteness has no essence and shape shifts according to the whims of whiteness as long as its overall interests remain intact. Education that takes whiteness seriously is a schooling worth the name.

Dialogue is key in moving toward this type of education; these dialogues can be the first steps in building trust and openness among White and non-White colleagues, and ideally broadening consciousness of the legacy of White privilege. Here are some examples of dialogue "starters" that can open the door to critical examinations of Whiteness.

- Why do so many Whites find it uncomfortable to talk or think about their own racial identity?
- What would change about Whites' lived experience if they recognized their own racial conditioning?

APPENDIX H

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE FOR UNDERSTANDING WHITE GUILT

## Appendix H

Additional resource for understanding white guilt.

