Black, White, or Whatever:
Examining Racial Identity and Profession with White Pre-service Teachers

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

White educators comprise between 85-92% of the current teaching force in the United States. Often contemporary research in education investigates aspects of education without examining the nature of those who do the work of educating the nation’s public school children. When educational researchers examine teachers, the research is often related to the pedagogical practices of teachers, and is void of earnest discussion of the identity of the teachers, how that identity impacts teacher beliefs about students and families, and ultimately how teachers frame their work educating students. Far less research exists that attempts to look at pre-service teachers’ identity, although pre-service teachers go on to do the work of teachers after their training.

This study explores the nature of pre-service teacher’s narratives as a means of understanding teachers’ identity in general, and the nature of teacher White Racial Identity specifically. I conducted a series of interviews with nine white pre-service teachers to understand the nature of their identity and beliefs and I also examined my auto-ethnographic self. Findings were derived from layered data analysis that included transcription, open coding, case writing, and cross-case coding.

Findings revealed that participants in the study used semantic moves and discourse structures to present beliefs about race, have underdeveloped understandings of their choice to be teachers, and used a variety of techniques in explaining their own white
racial development; the techniques included linking diversity to race, attaching identity to racial “others,” and exhibiting a lack of coherence with respect to discussing their own white racial identity. Findings and their respective sub-findings are presented with discussion. Implications of the research focus on how to help white pre-service educators better understand their whiteness and the implications of white supremacy and racism. The aim of the implications is to help teacher educators and pre-service teacher candidates work against the privileges of whiteness and to engage students in culturally relevant ways.
Dedication

To the nation’s children who suffer greatly at the hands of adults;

do not replicate the nonsense to which we socialize you.
Acknowledgements

I humbly acknowledge the nearly 80 million school-aged children in the United States, and especially children of color. This dissertation does little to change the hundreds of years of antiquated, under-funded, and racist education that you have received from a white supremacist educational system, but I hope that this dissertation study changes some pedagogical practices in teacher education. My hope is that you receive better, more competent, and socially just teachers who will better serve your needs.

Dr. Cynthia Tyson, your scholarship taught me neither to fear critique nor to shy away from saying the hard things that need to be said. Your scholarship model helped me to think carefully about the analysis of my data, ensuring that I was fair and just in my standpoint, even when what I have to say might not be popular amongst those I critique. Thank you for your patience with me through my process and being a part of my work from before generals all the way through this dissertation. Asante Sana!

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Dr. Adrienne D. Dixson - You stood up and helped grab a hold of the pieces in my hands and forced me to ask fundamental questions to myself about who I am, where I have been, and most importantly where I am going. You have supported the honesty in the work with a generosity of spirit, and you have been the first to tell me where the limits of the work are. You are one of few people who accepts me for me without conditions and rules, yet you never let that acceptance prevent you from telling me what I need to hear and learn. Your Sunday e-mails kept me focused and ready, and our conversations always affirm the necessity of the work. I have enjoyed all of our "moments" from Pedro’s quizitos, to the sharing meal appointments, and to being a part of your family. All of that aside, your scholarship is truly a model of goodness and discipline, and while I will never live up to that in the same way, the model keeps me working. I am happy to be a plant in mother’s garden and learn from the infinite wisdom of you and the women who socialized you to the profession and the women who socialized them. Tita esta muy agradecido a Ud. para siempre.
Vita

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Education

Language, Education, and Society

Critical Race Theory

Multicultural Education

Language, Literacy and Culture
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ II
DEDICATION ....................................................................................................... IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................. V
VITA .................................................................................................................... VIII
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................... XV

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ................. 1

Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1
Statement of the problem .................................................................................... 2
Purpose of the study ........................................................................................... 4
Theoretical frameworks ......................................................................................... 6
Critical Race Theory ........................................................................................... 7
(Counter)stories ................................................................................................. 7
Whiteness as property ......................................................................................... 8
Expansive and restrictive views of anti-discrimination ..................................... 9
White Racial Identity Theory (WRIT) ............................................................... 11
Significance of the study ..................................................................................... 17

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .............................................. 20

Introduction ....................................................................................................... 20
Racial Identity models in theoretical literature ................................................. 20
Helms’ early critiques of identity models ........................................................ 22
White privilege and color blind approaches as significant premises to WRI .... 22
White privilege .................................................................................................. 23
Color blind approaches ...................................................................................... 24
Perspectives on White Racial Identity in General and in Education ............... 25
Edited volumes on white racial identity and whiteness .................................. 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial identity and counseling</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial identity and education</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical studies of white racial identity in education</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature on pre-service teachers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic studies</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies with Pre-service Teachers and Initiatives</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes on Racial Identity</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher educator reflections on practice</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in the literature</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher positionality</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological approach</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample selection</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto-ethnographic data</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenny</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Credibility........................................................................................................................................61

* A note of the presentation of findings .................................................................62

* On Findings and Discussion ...............................................................................64

CHAPTER 4 - SEMANTIC MOVES RELATIVE TO RACE ........................................67

* White racial bonding ..........................................................................................67

* Color-blind orientations to race .........................................................................72

  Abstract Liberalism ...............................................................................................73

  Establishment of non-racist, color-blind, expansive standpoints .......................76

  Conflicts to the abstract liberal, non-judgmental, and expansive narrative .........79

  Kenny in the non-judgmental judgment conundrum .........................................87

  Naturalization ........................................................................................................89

  Minimization .........................................................................................................94

  Lack of coherence in racialized narratives ..........................................................98

CHAPTER 5: NIÄVETÉ IN RATIONALES FOR BEING TEACHERS .....................113

CHAPTER 6: WRI identity, the WRI model and its limitations .........................128

* Amalgamated Findings About White Racial Identity ........................................128

  A) Diversity as race ...............................................................................................128

  B) White Identity and its link to “others” .........................................................135

  C) Incoherent and underdeveloped White Racial Identity Narratives .............141

  Kenny and White Racial Identity .......................................................................150

* White Racial Identity of Participants Within the Helm’s model .......................160

  The contact status – “I’m innocent” .................................................................161

  Disintegration Status – How can I be white? .....................................................163

  Reintegration status – We have the best because we are the best ....................166

  Pseudo Independence - “Let’s help them become more like whites” ...............167

  Immersion / Emersion Status – “I’m white!” ....................................................169

* Critique of WRI Model .......................................................................................173

  It’s just a point of reference ...............................................................................173

  Linear or Circular? – either way it still lives outside of whites .........................175

  So what? Who Cares? .........................................................................................177

  And, anyway what I told you is not all of me anyhow! .....................................178
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving beyond the critiques</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A different model</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in the model</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7 – IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Findings and Implications</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Summary of Findings</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications and Recommendations</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the rationales for being teachers</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the nature of discourse</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On white racial identity</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications in concert</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Directions for Researchers</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: FASCHING-VARNER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 4.1 - WRI in the Helm’s Model – Participant Location........................171

Table 4.2 - Fasching-Varner Suggested Model of WRI.................................184

Table 4.3 - Expansion of WRI Model with Specific Example............................185

Table 4.4 - The WRI model’s traditional interaction at the societal level.............188

Table 4.5 - What a rethought human experience could look like........................189
Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

“SE wo were fin a wosankofa a yenkyi”
“It is no taboo to return and fetch it when you forget.
You can always undo your mistakes.”

Introduction

I am a white teacher educator committed to issues of multiculturalism, social justice, and equitable education. I most recently taught at an institution with a student body of approximately 98% white pre-service teachers and often found myself in a paradoxical situation of being a white male socialized to be white, yet believing that I work to disrupt the dominance of whiteness. My daily struggle was, and is, how to move white educators forward, myself included in a way that disrupts whiteness rather than masking or ignoring the power of whiteness. Children are taught both explicit and implicit lessons about whiteness from teachers, highlighting the importance of disrupting whiteness’ privileged status.

Over the past three years I interacted with approximately 250 teacher candidates at the graduate and undergraduate level when teaching a “diversity and social justice” course. An often repeated refrain was, “Tell me how to teach ____ students,” whereas the desire is most often to learn about how to deal with ‘others’ as opposed to self. In my teaching I continually and consciously attempt to balance my own personal narrative of
being both white and male, the most dominant and oppressive group in the landscape of the United States, while pushing for teachers to challenge their own whiteness and the benefits we reap as whites. In balancing who I am with what I believe about teaching and preparing teacher educators, I am struck by the resistance many white educators exhibit when asked to pivot the focus from how to work with others to a focus on how to learn about self. Resistance comes from many angles; often pre-service teachers attempt to represent an explicitly politically correct, progressive, and evolved view of difference while inserting “buts” and “wells” that serve to imbed a more implicit perspective on those whom the teacher candidates feel are not like them.

Teacher educators can learn from the narratives of white pre-service teachers both about white racial identity development, and how a teacher’s sense of whiteness informs pedagogical beliefs. Narratives, moreover, provide insight into how teachers serve as agents of socialization to students from both marginalized and dominant groups. Narratives have the potential to help us understand the ways in which teachers’ beliefs about race perpetuate racial stratification and maintain white supremacy through the socializing nature of public education.

**Statement of the problem**

According to the Pew Center for Research (Fry, 2007), 74% of white students attend schools whereas less than 5% of students come from historically underrepresented groups such as Black/African American or Latino/a. Nearly 60% of students from historically underrepresented groups attend schools that are defined as “all or nearly all minority,” whereby less than 5% of the student body is white (Fry, 2007). Teacher
demographics provide an equally disturbing perspective; the National Center for Education Information (2005) estimates that over the last 20 years, 85% to 92% of the teaching force is white.

The explicit messages derived from these statistics about students and teachers is that students in the United States receive increasingly stratified and segregated learning experiences while being taught by a predominance of white teachers. Inherent to these messages are the idea that whites continue to have the opportunity to socialize white, black, and brown students. Through varied foci researchers have explored the effects, implications, and contradictions of a schooling system dominated and overseen by white educators (Haviland, 2008; Sheets, 2001; Carter and Goodwin, 1994; Sleeter, 2001; 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006a). Rodgers, Marshall, and Tyson (2002) and Ball (2002) have explored the narratives inherent to the claim of preparing teachers for “diverse settings” and “at risk students” respectively. Gee (2001) and Cook-Gumperz (1993) are among scholars who have looked at the importance of identity with respect to education and educational research. Finally, sociologist Bonilla-Silva (2003, 2006) has examined the impact of racism in general whereas educational scholars DeCuir and Dixson (2004) have examined the impact of racism with a focus on education.

The intersectional nature of the above scholarship, and the racialized makeup of the teaching force suggests three questions regarding teacher educators. First, to what extent are white educators’ racial narratives problematic? Second, how do narratives of pre-service teachers inform said pre-service teachers’ pedagogical beliefs? Finally, what do the narratives reveal both about the public and private articulation of the teachers’ own
white racial identity? These questions have implications for not only teacher education, but also for how we understand the perpetuation of the achievement gaps in education (Ladson-Billings, 2006b).

**Purpose of the study**

The overall purposes of this dissertation study were to examine the racial narratives of white educators, to contribute to the scholarly writing on whiteness, and to examine the effects of whiteness in education. Inherent in the purpose was my desire to examine white teachers’ presentations of their white racial narratives and the white racial identity expressed within said identities. This study is premised on three inter-related notions about race, and more specifically on white people’s conceptions of and experiences with race.

Given that white teachers make up a significant portion of the teaching force in the United States, any effort at reforming the performance of students must trace back to the teachers who both educate and socialize the nation’s student body. Much attention has been paid to the idea of the achievement gap for US students (Ladson-Billings, 2006b). Ladson-Billings’ (2006b) proposed the idea of “debt” as a different way to better understand the long term and systemic nature of the achievement gap and educational disparity. I argue that the unexamined racial narratives, and, consequently, unexamined nature of white racial identity development for teachers, contribute to the historical, socio-political, and moral educational debts that Ladson-Billings (2006b) has discussed. Ladson-Billings (2006b) has argued that educational debts work in tandem with economic debts to create inequity in our nation’s public schools. As such, redressing the
achievement gap might begin with an examination of white teacher narratives, the first purpose of the study.

With teachers serving as one of the primary socializing forces in student lives, the teacher’s racialized identity is an important component to better understanding how students become socialized to beliefs about race. Woods and Demerath (2001) suggest that teaching is an “act of persuasion,” and, if this proposition is true, the act of persuasion is necessarily steeped in the identity(ies) of the teachers themselves. A rigorous study of the narratives of whites appears as one way to address the problem of how the pedagogical beliefs and practices of teachers are shaped. Gay (1984) suggests that there are implications of identity development for educators, and such implications would be embedded in the narratives of teachers (Gee, 2001; Cook-Gumperz, 1993).

The third purpose of conducting this research relates to the value of the narratives themselves. Critical Race theorists (Harris, 1995; Bell, 1995a; 1995b; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado, 1989; 1990; Delgado & Stefanic, 1997; 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) suggest that whiteness holds certain value as property. Given the nature of whiteness as property, the narratives of whites have the potential of serving as instruments that denote value. Thus, how does the narrative, or the value of whiteness, socialize children to the meaning of whiteness? More importantly, how are narratives negotiated into the pedagogical practices of teachers? An understanding of how whites link the value of whiteness, as exhibited in their narratives, to their ideas about teaching and learning, can give teacher educators considerable insight into
addressing the preparation of teachers, and how teacher educators might approach dismantling whiteness’ deleterious effects.

The purposes of this study link to Sankofa, or the Asanta Adinka notion of go back and take (Campbell, 2001). In her keynote presidential address to the American Educational Research Association, Ladson-Billings (2006b) suggested that much effort in education is spent on programs and ideas to service a so called achievement gap between students of color and non-students of color in the United States. Ladson-Billings highlights that such efforts are akin to paying interest on debt – one makes continual payment to servicing interest but the principle is never redressed. My research reflects on my narrative and the narratives of white teachers in an attempt to gain clarity on what informs the worldviews and identities of white teachers. To move forward in redressing educational inequity, teacher educators should understand the racial narratives of teacher candidates to prepare teacher candidates to recognize and to disrupt the totalizing effects that teacher narratives have on pedagogical beliefs. Delgado (1989) argues that it is critically important for whites to understand their own racial narratives as they often serve as the basis for what we do with/to others.

**Theoretical frameworks**

This dissertation project is conceptually informed both by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and White Racial Identity Theory (WRIT). As such, the theoretical frameworks of CRT and WRIT will be explored as they each give shape to the direction of the study and will inform the data analysis of the dissertation.
Critical Race Theory

Since Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education, a number of educational scholars and researchers have used CRT to analyze the ways in which race impacts educational outcomes and opportunities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1994; 1997; Taylor, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Villapando, 2002; Duncan, 2006; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Tate & Rousseau, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Three concepts steeped in CRT are useful as theoretical lenses by which to explore the narratives of white educators; (counter)story telling, whiteness as property, and expansive/restrictive views of racism.

(Counter)stories

(Counter)story telling is an important aspect of Critical Race Theory (Delgado, 1989; 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). According to Dixson & Rousseau, (2006), counterstories serve “to counteract the stories of the dominant group providing scholars with both a voice and a structure to interrupt irrational discourses about race currently held as rational among whites.” The use of stories in CRT literature helps to unpack racism in terms of how race privileges some while hegemonizing others (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Solorzano and Yosso’s (2002) call for methods that utilize stories as a base to bring forward the ways in which racial privilege operates; thus the use of counterstories may prove useful in helping white researchers examine our own racial narratives, stories, and identities that are often unexamined. Examining racial narratives makes visible the ways in which whites create and maintain racism and
privilege. The interrogation of ‘life’ narratives and experiences serves to disrupt what whites historically hold to be normative and raceless or colorblind (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

Whiteness as property

Harris (1995) outlines the conditions by which society constructs whiteness as property. The notion of whiteness as property implies that there is a certain absoluteness or inalienability to whiteness. According to Harris (1995), although this absoluteness traditionally precludes something as having value as property, people vested in the value of whiteness experience a high sense of value. Paradoxically, Harris (1995) contends that whiteness is infinitely an absolute; one drop of white blood can never make one white, yet one drop of black blood can strip one of whiteness, and thus decrease her/his value.

Often falsely understood at the level of phenotype (Hall, 1997; Montague, 1997; Winant, 2000), to possess whiteness is an absolute that garners a higher value as property. Harris (1995) cites that whites capitalize on their whiteness for purposes of enjoyment, placing high value on the reputation of whiteness. For example, calling a white person black, can cause harm to his/her reputation and thus devalue one’s whiteness. Conversely, calling a black person white causes no harm and gives the ‘absolute and inherent goodness’ of being white. Finally whiteness excludes in so far as whites never have to define whiteness is, but rather are continually defining what it is not. In defining what whiteness is not, whites exclude all whom they deem to not possess whiteness. In conjunction, the nature of how whiteness is not defined along with the

1 See DeCuir-Gunby (2006) for a discussion how the courts have protected and maintained whiteness.
absolute nature of whiteness, provide a space whereby whiteness serves a property function (Harris, 1995; Morrison, 1992).

Expansive and restrictive views of anti-discrimination

In examining CRT as a theoretical framework, it is important to note that CRT scholars examine the distinctions between an expansive and a restrictive view of anti-discrimination and anti-discrimination law (Crenshaw, 1995; Tate & Rousseau, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Crenshaw (1995) believes that an expansive view of the law stresses equality as a result. In the expansive view, a broad net is cast with full recognition that racism, discrimination, and subjugation work in concert not isolation. Thus expansive views of anti-discrimination policies conceive of ending the conditions and circumstances by which the subordination of blacks exists and working with the courts and governmental agencies “to further the national goal for eradicating the effects of racial oppression” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 105).

Those arguing for expansive understandings recognize discriminatory acts and practices as systemic and not isolated individualized targets against people of color. Expansive views of race most align with a narrative where a white teacher, in the case of this research project, moves beyond her/himself, and begins to understand the complexities of race and her/his own implication as an overt and covert racist. Such a narrative would necessarily prompt a change in practice toward redressing racist, discriminatory, and subjugating pedagogical practices.
Conversely, restrictive legal views on anti-discrimination are oriented and focused on the process rather than the outcomes of the process (Crenshaw, 1995; Tate & Rousseau, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). The restrictive view values a look toward the future, toward what anti-discrimination policies can do in potential cases and circumstances, making no effort to “redress present manifestations of past injustice” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 105). Restrictionists pose that discriminatory acts take place in isolation, are targeted at individuals, and are not representative of a social policy against an entire group; such an orientation protects restrictionists from dealing with race outside of very narrowly constructed, localized, and ahistorical experiences or contexts.

The restrictionist view consequently supports Bell’s (1995b) notion of interest convergence. Whites’ interests in redressing discrimination are always set against the “competing interests of whites, even when those interests were actually created by the subordination of blacks” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 105). Bell (1995b) states that the “interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites,” highlighting that whites who engage in restrictive notions of anti-discrimination also value laws that support restrictive ideals (p. 22). Engaging with expansionist views oriented beyond process and toward actual outcomes is in conflict with white interests (Bell, 1995b).

The narratives of white teachers align with the restrictive view of CRT, whereby the teacher espouses color-blind rhetoric and other stances to discredit the epidemic nature of racism. Narratives of such teachers might indicate that the teacher does not take into account the historical implications of race, or see how her/his racial trajectory both in
narrative and identity is influenced by the problematic nature of race in the United States. Teachers expressing such restrictive narratives might believe that race is not significant, and place the onus of learning directly on the student, as opposed to looking at the student as part of a racialized, gendered, sexualized, (dis)abled group and thinking about the implications of her/his own narrative as shaping her/his pedagogical beliefs (Dixson & Fasching-Varner, 2008).

White Racial Identity Theory (WRIT)

Racial Identity has been explored as a process of coming to know one’s self as an individual (Erikson, 1963; 1968) coupled with “one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1990, p. 3 as well as Cross, 1978, Cross, Paraham, & Helms, 1991, i.a.). Racial identity, accordingly, “refers mainly to the subjective understanding of oneself as a racialized person [with] sic the recognition that one is both similar to and different from other people” (Rockquemore & Arend, 2003, p. 51 [emphasis theirs]). Across races, the concept and development of racial identity has looked significantly different. For many people of color, sense and understanding of identity has been predicated on the hegemony of white supremacy (West, 1990). For white people, white supremacy has created spaces for white racial identity to remain invisible and unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993).

The scholarship of Frankenberg (1993; 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2005) and Helms (1984; 1990; 1992a; 1992b; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1997) is significant and contributory to the development of the study of white racial identity. As such, it is
imperative to outline WRIT from the perspective of both Frankenberg and Helms in understanding WRIT as a theoretical tool.

Frankenberg (1993) concluded that whiteness is an ever-changing construct, a “product of local, regional, national and global relations” across time (p. 236). Frankenberg (2005) asserts that in order to understand the experience of being white, whites must work towards “transforming the meaning of whiteness and to transforming the relations of race in general” (p. 242). As such, Frankenberg (2005) suggests that to explore whiteness and white racial identity, whites must explore how whiteness serves as a marker to “the production and reproduction of dominance, subordination, and normativity, marginality, and privilege” (pp. 236-237). Furthermore Frankenberg (2005) asserts that:

Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, or race privilege. Second it is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, “whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (p.1)

Throughout her work, Frankenberg (1993; 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 1999; 2003; 2005) revisits the notion that whiteness, as an operating hegemonic force, confers privilege along lines of race. Ironically the greatest recipients of this privilege have refused to acknowledge whiteness both as a race and as a source of privilege. While Frankenberg does not directly explore white racial identity as such, Howard (2000) highlighted that Frankenberg’s work is among the most used paradigms for thinking about white racial consciousness. Frankenberg’s work contributes to white racial identity research in that
the examination of white racial narratives provides a potential link to pedagogical practices to which educators ascribe.

While other models of white identity exist (see for example Kovel, 1970; Jones 1972; Gaertner, 1976; Ganter, 1977; Terry 1977), it is the work of Helms (1984; 1990; 1992a; 1992b; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1997; 1998; 2003) that has served a critical role in the discourse of white racial identity. Helms developed White Racial Identity Theory (WRIT) out of the Nigresence Racial Identity Development models of the 70’s and 80’s (Banks, 1981; Akbar, 1974; Dizzard, 1971; Gay, 1984; Cross 1971; 1978). Helms believed that a model of white racial identity theory must necessarily recognize that whites move through, between, and circularly through stages or statuses of development. Helms furthermore posited that the model must not be disconnected from a focus on the self and one’s “unresolved racial development issues” (Helms, 1990, p. 53). Thus, Helms (1984; 1990; 1992a; 1992b; 2003) developed and refined a model of racial identity for whites that could productively engage white people in coming to terms with their own identity.

The Helms’ model of white racial identity asserts that there are six racial identity statuses. In the first stage, the contact status, a great deal of naïveté exists as the person “does not consciously think of herself/himself as white” (Helms, 1992, p. 37). Whites may know that racial groups exist in the contact stage, but they exert great effort on using a color-blind discourse to “minimize differences in treatment due to race” (Helms, 1992, p. 38). In the contact status, a white person might articulate an “I am innocent” or “It’s not my fault” approach. The white person in the contact status, moreover, may have
limited experiences with people of color, and may use these experiences to teach him/her about “race” or “diversity.”

In the disintegration status, whites move to a “how can I be white” approach that revolves around “guilt and confusion” (Helms, 2003, p. 50). In this status, one might attempt to balance relationships with whites and blacks, often turning to whites to seek resolution of guilt feelings, and learning that “when interacting with people of color, if he or she wants to be accepted by other Whites, then he or she must violate moral and ethical principles” (Helms, 1992, p. 46). At this point in the racial identity model, confusion often forces the white person to move back toward contact status or firmly internalize racist beliefs (Helms, 2003).

The third status, known as reintegration, encompasses both convert and overt racist beliefs, with “hostility and anger directed toward people of color (Helms, 1992, p. 53). Negative stereotypes, claims of reverse racism, and a total denial of racism generally characterize this status (Helms, 1984; 1990; 2003). Whites in the reintegration status believe they are more successful than people of color because they are better and work harder than people of color. In this status either a firm resistance to alternate models of thinking is established to reinforce white supremacist thought or whites “gain a firmer conscious hold on their Whiteness” (Helms, 1992, p. 55). These first three status’ are part of what Helms (1984; 1990; 1992a; 2003) calls the abandonment of racism phase. The other three statuses move into a phase of evolution toward a non-racist identity.
The first status in the evolution of a non-racist identity is the pseudo-independence status where what had been once comfortable racist beliefs are no longer as comfortable (Helms, 2003). A white in this status begins “to acknowledge the responsibility of Whites for racism and how he or she willingly and unwillingly perpetrates racism” (Helms, 1990, p. 61). Whites in the pseudo-independence status are marked as race traitors and non-whites are suspicious of their intentions (Helms, 1990). The pseudo-independent white works towards “convincing other Whites that racism has virtually vanished and defining for people of color how they should think, feel, and behave in order” to end racism (Helms, 1990, p. 61).

The fifth status is immersion/emersion and the white person is searching “for a personally meaningful definition of whiteness and re-education of other White people about race and racism” (Helms, 2003, p. 52). Immersion/Emersion requires that the white person “replace White and Black myths and stereotypes” and reflect on the meaning of history of both whiteness and Blackness in the context of the United States (Helms, 1990, p. 62). Immersion/Emersion is thought to be difficult to engage with because it requires a white person to “assume personal responsibility for racism and to understand one’s role in perpetuating it” (Helms, 1992, p. 74).

In the last status of the WRIT model, the autonomy stage, the white reflects on “a lifelong process of discovery in which the person truly values diversity” (Helms, 1992, p. 87). Crucial to autonomy is that whites discover self and others through authentic engagement by being “continually open to new information and new ways of thinking about racial and cultural variables” (Helms, 1990, p. 66). Helms believes that autonomy
is a lifelong process (1992; 1990; 2003) and as such whites may move back and forth through other previous statuses as they continue working toward developing a healthy racial identity as characterized by the autonomy status. While autonomy is presented as the last status, it does not necessarily indicate the end or ideal white racial identity. Given the fluid nature of WRIT it seems unlikely that racial nirvana, where whites ‘get it’ and then the work of racial identity ‘done,’ is extant (Dixson, 2009).

The premise of Helms’ work with WRIT is that whites benefit from and are privileged by race. Despite the benefits and privilege of whiteness, whites often enact a color blind approach to understanding race so as to rebuff, warp, and suppress minds (Helms, 2003). Helms (2003) believes the white racial identity model could provide a means to help whites develop a “healthy racial identity” (p. 241). Helms’ model also recognizes that white privilege as explored by a number of scholars in the social sciences and humanities provides some complexity to examining whites’ belief systems. In addition, WRIT scholarship illuminates the ways in which whites engage in color-blind discourses in their public narratives to mask their private beliefs about people of color.

To that extent, research that looks to gather narratives from white teachers about their experiences, lives, and teaching beliefs, could contribute to understanding how pedagogical practices are shaped by belief systems informed by one’s racial identity. As a theoretical framework, WRIT can help to position what might be the private narratives of race when teachers are interviewed about their teaching experiences. Initially using “race neutral” interview questions may differentiate the public and politically correct
narratives that may surface when race is visible, present, and on record in the narratives obtained in other interviews.

**Significance of the study**

Studying the racial narratives of white teachers and their relevance to the particular pedagogical belief systems of the teachers is significant in at least three ways. First, children of color are not performing well in school, a schooling system that is dominated by whites. The success of students of color from any historically underrepresented group is crucial as we navigate through the 21st century given the changing nature of demographics and a desire for our society to continue being both literate and productive; all children need to have equitable access to the education requisite in being literate and productive.

Second, the demographic composition of the U.S. teaching force has remained largely stable with an overwhelming majority of white teachers. Over the last twenty years the teaching force has been comprised of 85% to 92% white teachers, signaling that white teachers essentially control educational opportunities for all students. Teacher decisions about where to work, how to teach, and how to socialize children is not a theoretical discussion. The makeup of the teaching force, and the relatively low number of teachers of color, represents an urgency as we think about how to provide successful experiences for all children. 53% of white students are likely to have a K-12 school experience with less than 5% of their peers coming from historically underrepresented groups (Fry, 2007). This data suggests that whites too, are learning important messages about what it means to be white. White educators teach white children as much about the
experience of being white as do they teach these messages to students of color. Thus, understanding the narratives of teachers and how these narratives translate into teaching practices is vital as we look to the types of socialization experiences children will have.

Finally, as reported by CNN in 2003, many white teachers are fleeing predominately Black schools. In the 1999-2000 school year for example, 31% of white teachers quit their jobs where the student population was 70% or more Black. Those teachers who remained in the profession “went to schools that served lower proportions of Black and poor pupils.” Captured in narratives, teacher belief systems can inform how to staff schools and also how to find educators who can commit to the success of children attending schools with historically under-represented students. Evans, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People reported that he was not surprised that “young white teachers leave for the suburbs after a year or two. Many teachers, especially young women, are scared of black neighborhoods.”

This dissertation research may be of particular interest to teacher education programs, when considering how to work with teacher candidates. Moreover, this work will help teacher educators make sense of the narratives and how they might be useful to disrupt whiteness. Children of color are likely to continue being taught by predominately white teachers, and thus a concerted effort needs to be made to help teachers break through socialization cycles to provide more culturally responsive, congruent, and effect pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Dixson, 2005; Dixson & Fasching-Varner, 2008). White teachers, furthermore, can develop a better understanding of how to productively
and meaningfully work with students who are different from them in productive and meaningful ways (Fasching-Varner, 2006; 2009; Dixson & Fasching-Varner, 2008).
Chapter 2: Review of the literature

Introduction

In the review of literature I examine the extant theoretical and empirical scholarship relevant to the dissertation. To achieve this I examine literature on race and racial identity models, including a specific focus on models of white racial identity development relative to the previously discussed theoretical frameworks. Additionally, I will examine literature related to pre-service teachers with respect to race and identity as the participants in the dissertation study were all pre-service teachers.

Racial Identity models in theoretical literature

Since the early 1970’s, a variety of theorists have proposed that the study of racial identity is salient to the understanding of “various groups of color” (Helms, 1994, p. 21). While my the general study of race includes Asian, Latino/a, and Indigenous groups (see Sue & Sue, 1971; 1972; and Lowery, 1983 respectively), it has been Black groups that have received significant theoretical and empirical research relative to racial identity (Helms, 1994; Carter & Helms, 1988). From the 1970’s through the early 1980’s, a number of models were developed to explore Black racial identity, also referred to as Nigrescence (see Banks, 1981; Akbar, 1979; Dizzard, 1971; and Gay, 1984 as examples). According to Gay (1984), the models of Nigrescence Racial Identity
Development (NRID) each “accounts for an ideological metamorphosis” of identity which ultimately move individuals from negative to positive conceptualizations of self (p.44). The Nigrescence models of racial identity served as an important framework or base in the development of other racial identity models.

While various NRID’s have served in the larger discourse on identity development, Cross’ (1971, 1978) model of Nigrescence best sets the stage for Helms’s eventual creation of a white identity model in particular. Cross (1971) first proposed a model of racial identity. Nigrescence, that was positioned as a conversion from “Negro-to-Black” for Black liberation from white hegemony with the express goal of understanding how “Black people move from a stage of racial consciousness characterized by self-abasement and denial of their Blackness, to a stage characterized by self-esteem and acceptance of their Blackness” (Helms, 1984, p. 154). Specifically analyzing the awareness involved in converting from "Negro" to "Black" in racial identity, Cross (1978) developed a four stage model “characterized by self-concept issues concerning race and parallel attitudes about Blacks and Whites as reference groups” (Helms, 1990, p. 19).

Similarly, a number of white racial identity models began to formulate in the 1970’s and 1980’s (Kovel, 1970; Jones, 1972; Gaertner, 1976, Ganter, 1977; Terry, 1977, and ultimately Helms 1984). Prior to the development of the Helms’s model of white racial identity, other models had “focused on defining racism” through the creation of categories or typologies with the “implicit assumption that racism was only damaging to the victims of the resulting oppression” (Helms, 1990, p. 50). The early theories had not
aptly or consciously considered the effect of the racism “on the beneficiaries or perpetrators of racism” themselves (Helms, 1990, p. 50).

*Helms’ early critiques of identity models*

A threefold critique of the early models of white identity development surfaced in the literature. First, Helms (1990), did not believe that the theorists of the time had properly speculated “about the harmful consequences of racism on the perpetuators of racism,” given that they did not focus on the positive development of white racial identity (p. 50). Second, the extant models were limited by static categorizations, not recognizing that people probably move between stages (later renamed statuses) depending on life experiences (Helms, 1990; 1992; 1993). Finally, Helms believed that a model of white racial identity could not be disconnected from a focus on the self and one’s “unresolved racial development issues” if it was to move beyond using non-whites as the means for whites to understand their own racial issues (Helms, 2003). In other words, whites must acknowledge an “awareness of personal responsibility for racism” (Helms, 1990, p. 53).

To address these concerns, Helms (1984; 1990; 1992a; 1992b; 2003) developed and refined a model of racial identity that could productively engage white people in coming to terms with their own identity. The model, as previously discussed, moves through a variety of status from so called racial naïveté through some sort of racial nirvana.

*White privilege and color blind approaches as significant premises to WRI*

Two significant premises of white racial identity models are that 1) whites benefit from and are privileged by race and 2) despite benefits and privileges, whites often enact
colorblind approaches to understanding race. Colorblind approaches, along with white privilege, act “to deny, distort, and repress minds;” as such Helms (1990) believes that models of racial identity may help whites “to develop a healthy White racial identity” (p. 241).

White privilege

White privilege has been explored by a variety of researchers including Roediger (1991; 1994; 1997; 1998), Solomona, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell (2005), Lipsitz (1998; 2005; 2006), and Rothenberg (2004, a collection of essays on privilege by authors such as hooks, Tatum, and Roediger). Despite the number of authors who write on white privilege, it is McIntosh’s (1989) examination of white racial privilege that continually surfaces as dominating the discourse. McIntosh (1989) presents for educators a simplistic, yet easy to understand, vista into white privilege, conceptualizing white privilege as a knapsack full of privileges in the shape of “tools, maps, guides, codebooks” (p. 1) which whites carry even when whites “may not be consciously aware” of the privileges possessed (Helms, 1993, p. 241). The privilege of whiteness in part explains Helms’ (1993) concern that whites ignore the benefits gained from racism, and how benefits come at the expense of non-white racial groups. Feagin & Vera (1995) complement Helms’ thoughts conceptualize that ignoring racism and refusing to take responsibility for the ways in which whites perpetuate racism is further demonstrative of the white privilege manipulated to our benefit. An absence of the researchers personally working through the privileges whiteness has afforded what appears to be a hallmark feature of many of the studies on whiteness and white privilege; the works become
treatises that focus on what is wrong without critical examination of the researchers’ own level of complicit and implicit participation.

Color blind approaches

The work of Bonilla-Silva (2003; 2006), Williams (1997), Leonard (2004), Thompson (2003), and Ferber (2003) succinctly addresses Helms’ premise concerning colorblind approaches with which whites engage relative to race. In a color-blind approach whites assume that the playing field between people of color and non-people of color is equal and level (Williams, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). To demonstrate this stance whites often evoke the civil rights movement, professional athletes of color, entertainers of color, politicians and now a president of color, or cite a friend who is a person of color, to demonstrate equality amongst groups (Leonard, 2004; Ferber, 2003; Thompson, 2003; Thompson, 2004). The sense from whites that success is based on merit is central to the use of color-blind discourse and always implicit is the assumption that whites possess merit and non-whites do not. Consequently, the dominant group believes anyone whom they deem as not working hard enough or making bad choices should not rewarded. In colorblind thought, race is not believed to be the reason why inequities exist (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Williams, 1997). Cited by Bonilla-Silva (2003) as being part of new racism, colorblind racism distinguishes itself in that it is liberal sounding in nature, thus markedly distinct from the racism of the past. Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that:

contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through “New Racism” practices that are subtle, institutional, and apparently non-racial. In
contrast to the Jim Crow era, where racial inequality was enforced through overt means (e.g., signs saying “No Niggers Welcomed Here” or shotgun diplomacy at the voting booth), today racial practices operate in “now you see it, now you don’t” fashion (p. 3).

Color-blind racism works in tandem with white privilege, (re)inscribing each other’s presence and producing what Bonilla-Silva calls “racism lite,” which allows whites to avoid “naming those who it subjects and those who it rewards” (p. 3). The subtle nature of color-blind racism highlights the need for racial identity models that will help whites to name their racism and to work toward dismantling its scaffolding.

**Perspectives on White Racial Identity in General and in Education**

After the development of the Helms’s model, a number of researchers in the fields of counseling, anthropology, sociology and broadly conceived education applied the WRI model and examinations of whiteness to their own research. This section of the literature review is intended to provide a brief snapshot of the work on white racial identity and whiteness that has situated itself within Frankenbergian and Helmsian traditions.

the context of continually changing cultural environments. Hurtado (1999) summarizes the nature of the exploration of whiteness in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as necessary and important work given that “we have yet to chronicle how those who oppress make sense of their power in relationship to those they have injured” (p. 226).

By exploring whiteness from a variety of perspectives, as through the lenses “of literary and film critics, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists”, theories of whiteness are thought to be exploring the “powerful means of critiquing the reproduction and maintenance of systems of racial inequality” -- whether of not such critique has been met is squarely up for debate (Hartigan, 1999, p. 183). Similarly, Lipsitz (2005; 2006), affirms the necessity for the critical study of whiteness to ensure that whites do not “portray the victims of racism as the beneficiaries of unearned privileges ignoring the possessive investment in whiteness and invert the history of racial politics in the United States” (2005, p. 112).

Reason (2007) and Watt (2007) believe that critical examination of whiteness cannot be achieved without whites being able to rearticulate what whiteness means. Watts (2007) in particular believes that both the personal and political aspects of whiteness can be better understood once critical consciousness is developed and Reason (2007) suggests critical consciousness does not develop when whites maintain their already possessed articulations of whiteness. Reason (2007) in part suggests that many contemporary whites accept race as a social construction, yet use the nature of the social construction to dismiss the reality of race. The literature suggests that researchers must understand that “accepting race as a social and political construction must not imply that race does not exist” or worse yet that race does not matter (p. 128). For Reason (2007)
helping whites articulate their understandings, examining their narratives, and then re-articulating their understandings after learning experiences, is a method to help whites move beyond typical articulations of whiteness meaning.

Giroux (1997), conversely, attempts to locate the conversation on whiteness within historic frames as a means of helping whites to develop agency with respect to their whiteness. Giroux (1997) claims that “the politics of racial privilege is fraught with fear and anger that accompany having to rethink ones identity,” suggesting that when we “address the histories that shaped the normative space, practices and diverse relationships” we may be better able to temper whites’ fears of dealing with the nature of race (p. 313). Like Giroux, Philipsen (2003) believes examining race and whiteness in particular with a square focus on the historical nature of racial identity is necessary. Without situating the conversation on whiteness and race in historic terms, Philipsen (2003) believes that what is achieved is akin to “a disparate hodgepodge of things, one that is used routinely as a substitute for culture, place of origin, ethnicity, common traditions, and class, or as a convenient outlet for any number of prejudices and fears” (p. 199).

In a comprehensive examination of racial and ethnic identity, McDermott & Samson (2005) highlight that an “identification of whiteness with social responsibility is a frequent theme in current work on white racial identity” and whiteness (p. 249). Applebaum (2007) also explored the nature of social responsibility for whiteness in her study of white culpability and liability with respect to race and racism. Applebaum (2007) attempts to make sense of what it means when whites believe that they do not recognize or attach meaning to race, thus dismissing the importance of race. Applebaum
(2007) suggests that “before social justice educators can contemplate what to do to promote student engagement, they must consider what is supporting student disengagement” (p. 465). Once student racial disengagement is understood, white students’ discomfort can be addressed through the nature of their discomfort. Unfortunately the literature that examines social responsibility for whiteness often approaches the work from the idea that students need to feel comfortable in order to better deal with the social, political, and moral responsibilities whites have to race. The perspective of providing comfort appears rather limiting as it does the very thing Applebaum (2007) claims her work does not do – namely by addressing white students level of comfort with the topic of race, recenters white emotions” as that which matter (p. 467).

Edited volumes on white racial identity and whiteness

and transparent to readers through a combination of theoretical, empirical, autobiographical, and auto-ethnographic contributions.

Most volumes on whiteness and white identity examine the concept of whiteness in particularly neutral and/or disconnected ways from the volumes’ authors. Volumes on whiteness and white identity emphasize the problems with whiteness and use examples and ideas to help whites understand the historical meaning of whiteness, while also attempting to have whites work against the privilege that whiteness confers. The works, however, never situate the authors within their own experiences. Disconnected critical examinations of whiteness such as Hill’s (1997) *Whiteness: A critical reader*, a 21 chapter edited volume on whiteness, draw from 24 contemporary authors, many of whom, are considered well respected scholars like Roediger, Giroux, and Ignatiev. In Hill’s (1997) text, whiteness is presented from many perspectives attempting to outline and critique the nature of whiteness. The orientation, however, is achieved by looking at whiteness in abstract situations removed from the authors’ personal experiences. These edited volumes socialize readers to a mechanism whereby whiteness can be talked about yet simultaneously can be distanced from personal responsibility for one’s whiteness.

Each of the volumes differ in their examination and focus of significant areas of whiteness. Frankenberg (1997) cautions readers of edited volumes on whiteness to understand that such volumes, “trace the intermeshing of whiteness with other webs of relations,” and, as such, readers can get lost on understanding whiteness from so many disparate perspectives on the concept of whiteness (p. 21). Frankenberg also suggests that readers understand that “analyzing whiteness is inseparable from the critique of
racsism,” and therefore whiteness’ link to racism and racist orientations should not be far from the reader’s mind, despite the directions the volumes on identity take (p. 21).

Works like Clark and O’Donnell’s (1999) *Becoming and Unbecoming White* can be linked to the ideas of Frankenberg and help give shape to the necessity of the work that examines the natures of whiteness and racism, asserting that “racism cannot simply be removed from the cultural, social, and political arenas by calling for its abolition or by appealing to calls for justice” (p. 3). Clark and O’Donnell present a variety of chapters edited by leading scholars in the field and examine both whiteness and whiteness relative to the conversation on racism. Of all the edited volumes on whiteness and white racial identity, the Clark and O’Donnell (1999) text purposefully solicited chapters in which white authors told and examined their stories against the theoretical literature, and focused on how whiteness and white racism operate both at individual and societal levels.

Racial identity and counseling

The works of Sue (1992; 1993), Sue & Sue (1971; 1972; 1990), Ponterotto (1989) and Reynolds & Baluch (2001) have been significant in examining the relationship between racial identity and counseling. Ponterotto (1989) argued that racial identity is important for incorporation into counseling research as it seeks to help counselors understand what it is that a particular person brings to his/her experience through whiteness; additionally the counselor’s own racial identity brings different meanings to the counseling interaction. The works of Sue (1992; 1993) and Sue & Sue (1971; 1972; 1990) are particularly invested in understanding racial identity for counselors when there appears to be a disconnect between the counselor and client. Sue (1992) and Sue & Sue
(1990) hope that racial understanding between counselor to client and back can be the foreground where trusting relationships are built. Sue (1993) has expressed particular concern, impatience, and age at the often slow process of relationship building and trust relative to race. Sue (1992) and Sue & Sue (1990) hope that racial understanding, from counselor to client and back, can be the foreground where trusting relationships are built.

Reynolds & Baluch (2001) are vocal critics of the current approach and understanding of racial identity counseling research, outlining that conversation on race has traditionally been limited in focus to white and Black racial identity. Sue & Sue (1999) challenge counseling researchers to extend beyond Black and white counseling models of racial identity to include Asian, Indigenous, and Latino/a groups and to more robustly address concerns of trust and relationship building in the work of counselors.

Racial identity and education

A number of researchers have undergone significant theoretical explorations of racial identity and education, among them Sleeter (2005), Hernandez Sheets (2001), Tatum (1994), Hallman (2007), Asher (2007), Chubbuck (2004), Johnson (2002), Cochran-Smith (2000), and Carter & Goodwin (1994). Sleeter (2005) theorizes that racial identity and “race matters because teachers bring to the classroom interpretations of students and their communities,” and these understandings that teachers bring must be mediated by the teacher’s very own racialized experiences (p. 243). Sleeter’s (2005) sentiments are echoed and extended by Johnson (2002) who cites that the high percentage of white teachers in the United States, most of whom are “increasingly teaching children racial, cultural, and class backgrounds different from their own,” necessitates the need for
teachers to understand the nature of the mediated interpretations their race brings to the table (p. 153).

Asher (2007) broadens the conversation to include a variety of social intersections of difference, but ultimately recognizes that whites need to be “implicated in extant relations of power that reinforce the mythic norm” that serves as a national orientation as “the central point of reference for and definition of all others” (p. 65). Hernandez Sheets (2001) argues for the importance of whiteness in education and the necessity for examining the whiteness, yet is skeptical of the current approach. According to Hernandez Sheets (2001) the current conversation too often locates conversations about whiteness, racism, and identity to single so called diversity or multiculturalism courses where all issues of difference must be taught. Hallman (2007), attempts to explore teacher identity in a reductionist approach of teacher e-portfolios, claiming that the portfolio in a single course would lead to transformative experiences with ones racial identity. Asher (2007) and Hernandez Sheets (2001) recognize the limited nature of such approaches to whiteness in education.

In her discussion of white allies and racism, Tatum (1994) further contributes to the critique of one time approaches to teaching white students. Tatum (1994) notes that such approaches reify vague understandings of race and encourage students to only cite typical or cliché examples of racist and non-racist whites, such as “past and present Klan leaders and conservative southern politicians” in the racist camp, and someone like “Viola Liuzzo” in the non-racist camp (p. 462). Tatum (1994), Asher (2007), and Hernandez Sheets (2001) all believe in the importance of getting whites to see themselves
as implicated in the conversation, not reducing the conversation on whiteness solely to national figures of race.

Carter & Goodwin (1994) explore racial identity from both historic locations and from the perspectives of school children examining the “racial identity theory and research with examination of educational literature using racial identity theory as a conceptual lens” (p. 292). Carter & Goodwin’s (1994) exploration provides a significant focus on children of color’s experiences in school regarding racial identity. Carter and Goodwin (1994), however, assert that researching theories of racial identity are also significant from the perspectives of teachers since “the educational treatment of children of color has typically been (a) framed by the basic principles of the inferiority and deprivation paradigms and (b) often implemented by individuals characterized by low levels of racial identity” (p. 315).

Empirical studies of white racial identity in education

Regarding empirical studies in education, the literature suggests there is a limited body of studies that address white racial identity directly. Sleeter’s (2001) description of the nature of professional development offered to teachers emphasizes the teachers’ constructions of race vis-à-vis the students. Catalogna, Green, & Zirkel’s (1981) study examines race and racial identity and, like Sleeter’s (2001) study, the focus of the research is on the teachers’ perceptions of student race. McAllister & Irvine (2000) examine white racial identity models relative to teacher behavior analyzing studies of teachers in schools. Studies conducted by Williams & Evans-Winter, (2005) and Vargas (1999) discuss white racial identity; the focus of both studies, however, is on how faculty
of color educate white adult students. The common thread among this body of literature is the relative decontextualization of issues of race, moving away from the teachers themselves, and focusing the conversation back to racialized others. Chubbuck (2004), however, examines whiteness differently, using a life history approach; in his work two teachers’ stories form the life history approach, suggesting that white racial identity is important because with the “external presence” of the research process it is often unlikely that dialogue on one’s whiteness and white identity would occur without an intentional use of life history (p. 330).

A number of pseudo-empirical studies of race and whiteness are reductionist in nature and place over focused emphasis on whiteness through pedagogical and methods-based approaches. Copenhaver-Johnson (2006) discusses an experience where she realized her daughter’s classroom library lacked texts that presented perspectives from a variety of races. Instead of critically examining the nature of whiteness and how whiteness, as a form white supremacist thinking, reifies the reasons why a classroom library would be so vacant of racial perspective, Copenhaver-Johnson redirects the focus of the conversation from adults onto the children; she suggests that the reading of diversity books and “modify[ing] the expectations and participant structures of read aloud” are avenues to addressing issues of race (p. 18). In a similar methods-based approach, McDermott (2002) suggests that teachers’ white racial identity could be addressed though the creation of collages with pre-service teachers, suggesting that “aesthetic representations of self, problematize discourses” (p. 65). Further McDermott argues that the collaging is helpful given her suggestion for “a move in educational practice away from epistemologies, away from ‘what’ and toward ‘when’ and ‘how’” (p.
Current scholarship and discourse places an overemphasis in the discussion of teacher white identity as being a conversation about methods. Such a methods-based approach missed the opportunity to understand the operating systems of the paradigm(s) in place, that is the nature of racial truths or ontologies, and the ways our systems of knowing, or epistemologies, become a vehicle for understanding ourselves as raced.

To highlight this “methods-based” approach, Brooks, Brown, and Hampton (2008), for example, steer considerations of race and teacher whiteness away from teachers and back to a reader-response pedagogical approach in working with novels and texts from Sharon Flake, for example. Brooks et. al (2008) suggest the power of the work is how it serves in “deliberately disrupting gender and race-based social inequities through literature.” By focusing on pedagogy and the practice of teacher, the teacher, her/his racial identity, and the implication of teacher whiteness is lost (p. 667).

Parsons (2001) provides perhaps the most connected study of education that directly links to models of white racial identity. Parsons’ (2001) work is with white male fourth graders and their use of racialized and gendered privilege. Although the teachers were also white, the focus is on children and so even in this work, the teachers’ white racial identity is lost. Overall, the literature that examines white racial identity and education is not particularly robust as most studies of whiteness have been situated in discourses beyond education and schooling and when the focus is in the realm of schooling and education the focus on teachers and teacher racial identity is lost.

**Literature on pre-service teachers**
Research has historically skirted the exploration of white racial identity of pre-service teachers. In searching for extant literature for this dissertation study there were no identifiable studies that examined pre-service teachers’ racial identity as such, and no exploration of how such an identity becomes operationalized in the daily experiences of ‘being teachers.’ Thus, I present the studies that most closely approach the topic, and loosely structure them into three groups: 1) ‘historic’ studies looking at race and prospective or in-service teachers (Caliver, 1936; Bearley, 1947; Stephenson, 1952; Catalogna, Green, & Zirkel, 1981), 2) examination of initiatives and studies with pre-service teachers (Tettegah, 1996; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007; Merseth, Sommer, & Dickstein, 2008; Cross, Wong, 2008; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Lee & Dallman, 2008; Adams, Bondy, & Kehel 2005; McIntyre , 2002; Cross, DeVaney, & Jones, 2001), and 3) ‘general’ theoretical pieces that look at instructors experiences addressing difference with pre-service teachers (Marx & Pennington, 2003; Gordon, 2005; Levine-Rasky, 1998; and Gay & Kirkland, 2003). A study by Montecinos & Nielson (2004) did not fit within the categories provided above and will be discussed separately.

Historic studies

In terms of historic studies, Caliver (1936) wrote in The Journal of Negro Education about the roles of teachers and teacher education in “the reorganization of education of Negroes” (p. 508), suggesting that teachers take an introspective examination of their own “complacency and vested interests” (p. 514). Caliver (1936) ultimately looked beyond white teachers, articulating his concern that Black students educated by primarily white teachers were subject to “intellectual slavery more serious
than the physical bondage of the past.” Caliver (1936) offered that white teachers were certainly welcome to help, but that the solutions will not be found in “a Lincoln, nor a New England missionary, but it will be [found with] Negro teachers themselves” (p. 516). Bearley (1947) offers a theoretical position that prospective educators would benefit from thorough examination of themselves and their knowledge, in addition to “the cultural resources of the community” (p. 75). The culturally responsive offering made by Bearley suggested that if teachers undertake the task of teaching, they must also challenge what they ‘know’ to be true if the prospective teachers hope to break from a euro/ethnocentric lens. Bearley (1947) offers that “ethnocentrism is based more upon tradition than upon experience; the skillful teacher may often effect a change by presenting a different interpretation of a familiar situation,” namely his/her racialized way of operating in the world (p. 76).

Catalogna, Green, & Zirkel (1981) conducted research with teachers; the focus of this research, however, was the teachers’ perceptions of students’ race, not on the teachers’ racial identity itself. While this research revealed interesting findings of what teachers conceptualize as being races, essentially a false association between ethnicity and race[1], it neither examines how teachers were socialized around their beliefs in racial categorization, nor does the study explore the teachers’ sense of racial identity.

Stephenson’s (1952) study most closely approached pre-service teachers as a population of research participants. Like the Catalogna, Green & Zirkel (1981),

[1] Teachers in Catalogna, Green, and Zirkel’s study classified students into 43 racial categorizations including oriental and Puerto Rican
Stephenson (1952) focused on teachers’ perceptions of students to determine racial identity, not on the teachers’ exploration of racial identity relative to their own lives.

*Studies with Pre-service Teachers and Initiatives*

Various studies examine particular initiatives and studies of pre-service teachers relative to said pre-service teacher’s whiteness. Merseth, Sommer, & Dickstein (2008), examine pre-service teacher identity narratives with Ivy League students who want to teach in urban areas; they suggest that investigating identities is important for how a pre-service teacher can think about teaching in diverse settings. Merseth et. al fail to really address the ways in which the white racial identity of the participants actually comes to bear, but rather focus more on how white teachers will approach teaching racial others. Wong (2008), on the other hand, suggests that her study of pre-service teachers’ experiences in multicultural courses necessitates the need for field components “providing the pre-service teachers with a culturally diverse experience” (p. 32). Like Merseth et al. (2008,) Wong (2008) talks about pre-service teacher identity in conceptualizing the project, but the work is a reduction away from examining pre-service teachers whiteness again toward using methods and experiences to help said teachers learn how to work with so-called racial others.

Lee & Dallman (2008) and Adams, Bondy, and Kuhel (2005) discuss how white teachers can work with students who are “racial others” relative to the teacher. Lee & Dallman (2008) explain that they believe “understanding is the most important thing in diversity” (p. 36), yet they use understanding with pre-service teachers to look at how to work with students when there is a race mis-match, rather than at the teachers’ lives and
whiteness. Lee & Dallman (2008) suggest that white pre-service teachers need to be better at “appreciating each child’s similarities and differences” (p. 38). Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel (2005) similarly examine identity through the frame of helping white pre-service teachers learn what to do in “an unfamiliar setting” (p. 41) the pre-service teachers’ growth with their whiteness was linked to how positive their experience was with students who were not white. While not critiquing the need for looking at similarities and differences, I take exception that the focus is always placed on students, and not on the white pre-service teachers about whom the work is based.

**Attitudes on Racial Identity**

Several studies examine attitudes about race and racial identity with mix-gendered participants. Tettegah (1996) examined attitudes of pre-service teachers relative to their white racial consciousness. Like the more historic research, Tettegah (1996) embedded research questions concerning pre-service teachers’ perceptions about teaching students from racial groups different than their own. While Tettegah (1996) attempted to address the teachers’ racial identities, the results were gathered through survey data that focused on ‘others’ rather than thinking about their own racial identity. Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly (2007) suggest that giving white pre-service teachers immersion experiences in communities of color for field placement will help to improve “the attitudes of these pre-service teachers” relative to race (p. 653). Like Tettegah (1996), Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly (2007) rely on survey data collected from pre-service teachers in order to analyze the pre-service teachers’ white racial identity. What is striking in both research studies is
the necessity of using racial ‘others’ to explore white racial identity supporting
Morrison’s (1992) thesis that whiteness always exists only with a dark other.

Cross, DeVaney, & Jones (2001) explored the attitudes of pre-service teachers as
those attitudes relate to various spoken dialects. Like Tettegah (1996) and Wiggins,
Follo, & Eberly (2007), Cross, DeVaney, & Jones (2001) used quantitative survey
research to understand how a group of pre-service teachers judge dialects of five different
speakers. This study sample was mixed gender and mixed race, ultimately producing
findings that demonstrated that the white participants favored white speakers over Black
speakers. Again, this research did not explore pre-service teachers’ sense of racial
identity, and used a variety of speakers across race to ascertain findings for the research.

*Teacher educator reflections on practice*

A final series of studies focuses on teacher educators making sense of working
with predominately white pre-service teachers. Gay & Kincaid (2003) present a theory
rich piece in exploration of the necessity for pre-service teachers[2], to develop “cultural
critical consciousness” (p. 181). Gay & Kincaid (2003) conclude that white pre-service
teachers benefit, in terms of examining white racial identity, when they are forced to
move beyond conversation and to “actually engaging [in] real life experiences” rather
than use conversations to escape from “the intellectual, emotional, psychological, moral,
and pedagogical challenges inherent” in the work of being a teacher (p. 186). Similarly
Levine-Rasky (1998) calls on teacher education programs to stop waiting for faculty of

[2] Pre-service teachers defined by Gay & Kincaid as predominately female and predominately European Americans.
color to magically appear to do the work of addressing pre-service teachers sense of white racial identity and understandings of multiculturalism; he states that all faculty bear responsibility in engaging “issues of equity and difference in a way that” helps teacher candidates understand “their [un]consciousness and motivations” relative to race and pre-service teachers white identity (p. 108).

Gordon (2005) does not rely on theory, but more on self-absorbed autobiography to examine her own particular experiences as a white female teacher educator, working with pre-service teachers. Gordon (2005) does not situate her work within the larger scholarly discussion on racial identity, a critical gap since her desire was that her research aid in understanding how race is operationalized in pre-service teacher education. Marx & Pennington (2003) craft work similar to Gordon (2005), however, they have positioned their work in the larger discussion of race; their racial identity research examines separate studies that they conducted while working with white pre-service teachers. Problematic in the Marx & Pennington research is that the narrative engages in a self-congratulatory discourse for being “brave enough to undertake this kind of controversial work” (p. 107), referencing the examination of whiteness and white racial identity. The bravery discourse reveals that both Marx & Pennington have not fully problematized the historic benefits and privileges associated with racism of which they have reaped the benefits. For people of color, living with race has never been a conversation of being brave enough; people of color live with race whether or not people of color want to have to engage with race. A final concern of Marx & Pennington’s work is the conceptualization that black children are ‘our children of color.’ Such a framing demonstrates a white liberal perspective that is consistent with Harris’s conceptualization of the property value
of whiteness and a liberal savior attitude. Marx & Pennington remove the focus from the pre-service teachers critically understanding their own race, as a means to transmogrify the way in which they engage pedagogy, and thus place the focus on becoming the champions and saviors of Black children.[3]

Finally, Montecinos & Nielsen (2004) presented a study unlike all the previous studies in its potential to address issues of racial identity for pre-service teachers. Unfortunately, despite a participant set of 40 white male teachers, Montecinos & Nielson (2004) explored only issues of gender in their research. While they position that race and class are important, the lens for analysis of the participants’ narratives was focused solely on gender.

Given the exploration of the extant literature that addresses pre-service educators, it becomes clear that currently there are no studies that directly examine white pre-service teachers’ racial identities. Consequently, there are no resulting studies that examine white racial identity as candidates reach the end of their program and begging considering the transition from pre-service education program into their first teaching job.

**Gaps in the literature**

To conclude I wish to suggest for consideration three gaps in education racial identity literature that could be addressed through qualitative oriented research as explored in this dissertation study. First, much of the extant literature speaks to the experiences and white racial identity of white educators by placing focus on how they

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come to know racialized others. While learning how to effectively work with students is in fact part of the mission of educators, there appears to be a lack of literature that examines how white pre-service teachers and white teacher educator researchers come to terms with their own whiteness. This gap leads to the second gap in the literature; there also appear to be no studies that examine the transition of teachers from pre- to in-service and educators' sense and understanding of white racial identity. As pre-service teachers leave their programs questions arise such as: How prepared are they to deal with themselves?; How prepared are whites to look at the ways in which their whiteness replicates white supremacy with negative affects for students?; How well do pre-service teachers even understand why it is that they are becoming teachers; and What are the connections or lack of connections between their rationales for employment in education and their understanding of selves as whites?

The literature is silent to about how white racial identity models can be used as a means analyze and explicate the nature of individual whites, both white individuals and individuals who are part of the larger group of whites connected through whiteness. While there are additional gaps in the scholarship of white racial identity, the issues presented seem to most saliently represent the gaps addressed in this dissertation research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

“CIRCUS, n. A place where horses, ponies, and elephants are permitted to see men, women, and children acting the fool.” Ambrose Bierce

Introduction

The concept of circus is an interesting, albeit limited, metaphor to approach what has been the vexing, privileged nature of research in education, and particularly research that looks to examine race and racial identity. Little (1993) argues that the circus has served the supposed purpose of creating a space “separated from the real world outside the tent by its appeal as a dazzling, monumental, and aggrandizing overflow of erotic and exotic representations of otherness” (p. 119). While not the explicit or named goal of qualitative research in education, the field has situated itself within the same tradition in which Little (1993) situates the circus; the research circus is a place where groups of spectators, or educators, comes to watch the ring leader, the teachers, educators, and researchers, manage the spectacle of the clowns, animals, and performers, loosely conceptualized as the over researched and underrepresented children of color in the United States, in a carefully rehearsed spectacle (Little, 1993). Education has always relied on an ‘other’ to perform. Inherent to how the circus audience enacts its gaze, Little (1993) asserts that the audience, and perhaps the ring master, view and understand “the self as a stable, coherent, and bounded entity” (p. 120).
In this dissertation research, I seek to shift or invert the focus of the gaze from ‘others’ in qualitative educational research to the gazers, ourselves. Little (2003) highlights that the more intent the focus is on the viewing the other, “the more spastic, contradictory, and humiliating [the spectators] actions become” in maintaining their othering gaze (p. 120). Little’s understanding that the fools of the circus are really the spectators, and not the animals or performers, captures the delicious irony of qualitative educational research on race. White researchers have been spastic in a commitment to focusing the gaze on others that we have ignored our own racial naïveté and arrogance, in an attempt to maintain, reify, and benefit from the white supremacist agenda created with the very first white invaders of the United States.

In this methodology I hope to illuminate the path of my research by first briefly exploring my own researcher positionality, as well as some basic epistemological considerations inherent in this work. I will discuss the specific approaches and methods that were undertaken in conducting the dissertation research and then will discuss three considerations that were central in my thinking throughout the dissertation process. Finally I will end with the presentation of cases or profiles of the participants for this study.

Researcher positionality
As a white male\textsuperscript{2} doctoral student, I have struggled to come to understand and make sense of myself both in terms of how I am raced and gendered as well as how I reify gender and race supremacy with my whiteness as a primary hegemonizing force. Throughout my program, the conceptualization of dissertation research has shifted significantly. Shift has come through my growing understandings of race and white racial identity, as well as understanding my role as a racist white supremacist male operating within a racist white supremacist male dominated field of study in a racist white supremacist male dominated institution, situated in a racist white supremacist male dominated nation, in a racist white supremacist male dominated global landscape. In this landscape being a white male has afforded white academics front row seats at the research circus (hooks, 1983; Little, 1993).

Through a combination of coursework, a shift in advisor, and a number of professional and personal experiences with race, racism, and privilege/supremacy I have come to understand the problematics of (my) whiteness (Fasching-Varner, 2009), and, more importantly, my express role as a hegemonizer in the larger and broader social landscape. When I started my doctoral program, I was convinced that my intent to conduct research with predominately white research participants in Germany, framed by Goldhagen as ordinary people, could make a difference in education by showing that individual white Germans, now in their 70’s, were not problematic, anti-Semitic, nor

\textsuperscript{2} Gender and race are visible markers; however, in understanding the construction of the white male, it is important to understand that the white male is generally read as a Christian, heterosexual, middle to upper class being. While white and male are true, the other markers may not hold for individuals. In my case, I am neither Christian nor heterosexual. I am, however, read as all of those things, and I consequently benefit from the privileges afforded to White Christian heterosexual middle class men through the franchise of white supremacy.
racist, but rather innocent bystanders of war. My initial research agenda derived from a necessity to protect the unnamed, perhaps unconscious, racial contract that had/has afforded me so many life privileges, and a malignant denial surrounding race that I share with the participants of this study (Mills, 1997). As an educator, I have a responsibility to know better, and to do better, with respect to the research I conduct and the role I choose to take as an educator. With time I have come to abandon the racist research agenda of which I was quite proud at one time.

According to Leonardo (2002), whites must begin “by naming whiteness and recognizing it as fundamental to their development” (p. 45). In order to name whiteness in this study I used methods that include oral history interviewing, semi-structured interviews, as well as some document analysis. Such methods help to build snapshots of participants and the researcher, and are situated in the actual language provided by the research constituents. The use of this language that developed as a result of the research helps to warrant and instantiate assertions made through the actual participants’ voices, as opposed to (dis)aggregated statistical information that may or may not help to get at the actual undergirding of the systems of knowing in place.

As the researcher I must be present not just to “harvest” data from participants, but to also make myself the object of study, examination, and interrogation in order to best capitalize on my own positionality and privilege as a white researcher examining race. Helms (1993) offers that:

if the researcher is unable to examine the effects of her or his own racial development on her or his research activities, then the researcher risks
contributing to the existing body of racially oppressive literature rather than offering illuminating scholarship (p. 242).

The implication in Helms’s words is that the researcher is not void of her/his own racial identity development, and that not only is the study of her/his own racial identity and experiences important, but the researcher becomes an epistemological analytical tool herself/himself. Thus it is paramount that I move beyond declaring what I believe to be my researcher subjectivity and positionality, to actually placing myself inside the focus of the study (Peshkin, 1988).

**Epistemological approach**

For white researchers to contribute to projects of research in education, we must actively reposition our approach away from a method fetish orientation of research toward projects that are within the realm of our epistemological capability, and align the research methodology with our systems of knowing (Toulmin & Leary, 1985). What does such an epistemological-methodological paradigmatic approach to qualitative research look like?

In linking considerations of epistemology to method, I begin with the premise that “language is by far the most powerful and versatile medium of communication” (Gumperz, 1972, p. 43). Therefore, to understand race, I chose to engage with methods that illuminate the ways in which language, what is said and not said, and what is written and not written, is a powerful epistemological tool in gathering data and consequently in forming an analysis.
Denzin & Lincoln (2003b) cautions researchers to enact research with “an attitude of engagement with a world that is ontologically absurd but always meaningful to those who live in it” (p. 139). To me, the limit of research engagement continues to be a disparity between researchers’ fetishes and overemphasized reliance on methods to make sense of truth and the absence of an overall guiding paradigm. The absurdity rests not with the nature of the truths of people – single truths are not capturable – but rather the absence of epistemological alignment to the subjective, partial, and situated truths we believe to exist. The ‘absurd’ and often profane use of method, rather than epistemology, to explore the nature of truth, ignores and disenfranchises the very peoples the researcher typically casts as ontologically absurd and ‘other.’ Denzin & Lincoln’s (2003b) recognition that the life and the truth of the life is meaningful to those who live it, calls for a greater paradigmatic responsibility in the construction of research agendas. With this concept in mind, I engaged three guiding principles that served as a metric to ensure that my work addressed problems that I was epistemologically capable of addressing in this research. The three guiding principles were:

1) A recognition that carefully orchestrated methods do not in and of themselves obtain ontologically rich understandings or “true results” (Lather, 1986, p. 259).

2) Epistemology, not ontology or method, provided the best entrance to the framing of the paradigm, given that the choice of method and path to ‘truths’ is highly dependent on the positioning of systems of knowing.
3) My status as a privileged white male necessitated a research agenda that cast a critical ‘othering’ gaze on myself and other privileged whites, and acknowledged that my epistemologies as a researcher have the propensity for being white supremacist in nature and come from a history of white supremacy.

These guiding principles served as the epistemological foundation for the dissertation research study and allowed me to address Geertz’s (1977) offering that “man is an animal suspended in the webs of significance he himself has spun” (p. 5). Enacting upon these three paradigmatic guidelines helped me to begin the act of disentangling the cobwebs within the scope of this dissertation. I am reminded by Fine (1997) that research has involved “acts of cumulative privileging quietly loaded up on whites,” and consequently the disentanglement of the privilege and significance we spin upon ourselves must be an open and transparent process involving a commitment to change now and over time (p. 57).

While my positionality and/or the epistemological considerations of the research methodology could in themselves be the subject of a study, I will now move to outlining the research conducted for this dissertation.

**Research Design**

*Sample selection*

The dissertation began with 10 participants, each of whom completed the first phase of research; nine participants completed the series of interviews for the study. The
students were drawn from a Bachelor of Education pre-service teacher education program at Righteous College in the Northeast area of the United States. Righteous College has approximately 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students and is located in a socioeconomically privileged suburb near the medium sized urban area of Lilac. The teacher education program at Righteous College prepares pre-service educators to work with students in grades one through twelve with specializations in childhood, adolescent, and special education.

Participants for this study represented what Patton (1990) has called a purposive sample. Specifically, choosing participants from this teacher education program allowed for both a criterion and homogenous sample (Patton, 1990). The criteria for this homogenous group was that the participants were white and candidates in the teacher preparation program. The sample of participants was convenient since the program’s white pre-service educators were completing their teacher education program and transitioning toward becoming in-service teachers. Also, the program articulated a commitment and purported explicit focus on diversity and equity; candidates were required to take a course in which they explored issues and concepts related to equity and diversity in education a further criteria of interest for this study.

After obtaining IRB permission, I distributed an IRB approved letter via e-mail to solicit volunteers to explain the nature of the proposed research study. Fifteen teacher candidates responded and were provided with more information about the project and potential interview times. Five females and five males agreed to participate in the research study initially; one male participant did not finish the study. I also was a
participant in the sample to juxtapose my own experiences within and against the
narratives of the pre-service teachers.

Data Collection Methods

With a concern that the research methods align with my systems of knowing I
engaged participants in a series of two interviews using the particular concept of
testimony to address the “importance of those who are historically invisible having a
public voice” (Wieder, 2004 p.23). Wieder (2004) situated his discussion of testimony in
the post-apartheid South African context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
and the power of the testimony from the “2,000 people [who] publically testified and the
20,000 written statements” (p. 23). Testimony as a form of oral life history rejects
“modernist notions of rational autonomous subjects, totalizing discourses, and
foundationalist epistemologies” and as such creates space to move past the privileging of
whiteness and towards the act of deconstructing whiteness (Tierney, 2003, p. 294).

Testimony has been characterized as “any retrospective account by the individual
of his life in whole or part, in written or oral form, that has been elicited or prompted by
another person” (Watson & Watson-Franke, 1985, p. 2). Testimonial interview research
is not intended to establish absolute truths or make overgeneralized claims from the
testimony of one respondent, but rather becomes a living history by which the person
giving testimony and the reader can use their own knowledge and experiences to evaluate
the substance of the testimony.
In the case of whiteness, white racial identity has largely remained a theoretical construct. While Bonilla-Silva (2006) has given empirical understanding to some aspects of white racial identity theory, and particularly color-blindness, little empirical research exists. The method of testimonial research provided necessary empirical data by which the theoretical framework of white racial identity can be examined, particularly for educators. To this extent the analysis of data derived from testimony serves as one analytic lens of the data while simultaneously providing space for readers to make their own evaluations and judgments. Since “no two individuals engage time in the same manner,” and each individual’s interpretation of the testimony will be tempered against his or her own knowledge and history in time, and thus create conclusions based on the evidence provided in the testimony (Frank, 1995, p. 255). Similar to juror deliberations, each reader of the proposed work will have a unique interaction with the testimonial data. My analysis, findings, and discussion in Chapter 4 highlight beliefs about the testimonial data gathered in this study using the lenses by which I make sense of the world and based on my own experiences. To this extent the method of testimonial research used in this dissertation has potential to provide a text that will stand over time as the data can be analyzed continually against sets of different experiential lenses. Testimony as oral history creates an ‘on record’ space through the power of participants own language to better understand the epistemologies that either help or hinder participants own understandings of their white racial identity development (Tierney, 2003; Brown and Levinson, 1987).
Interviews

To achieve a testimonial interview approach research participants were interviewed twice using life history questions. The first interview (See Appendix A for interview protocol) explored the participants’ general life experiences including information about where they grew up, their family and friends, the types of schools they attended and teachers they encountered, their choices about school and career, questions about why they chose to be educators, and how what they believe is important in shaping their pedagogical decisions. The questions were designed to allow research participants to address areas of their identity without leading or prompting from the interviewer. The basic interview protocol (Appendix A) was followed, with flexibility allowed since life history takes unexpected directions with respect to follow up questions.

The overall purpose of the first interview was to help establish a base sense of each participants’ identity as s/he understood that identity and to help present each participants’ case. The interview questions were neutral with respect to language about race and identity difference. Follow up questions during the first interview were only asked to clarify information.

The second interview occurred two to three weeks after the first interview had been fully transcribed and had been shared with participants to ensure accuracy. One purpose of the second interview was to re-view the major life history events (i.e. school, friends, family, career choice, pedagogical decisions etc.) with overtly racialized language markers inserted into the questions. Again the participants were free to testify
and respond to the interview questions and follow up questions were asked to clarify information.

A secondary purpose of the subsequent interview was to look for both areas of consistency and discrepancy when racialized markers are present in the questions, and to understand then discursive dialogic positions taken by participants in the presence of race as opposed to its absence. The second interviews was fully transcribed and again shared with participants to check for accuracy.

Auto-ethnographic data

Jones (2006) calls for explicit making autoethnographic research and narratives explicit. In examining my own white racial identity, I am able to name the ways in which racism operates in my own life in a way that much of the scholarship on whiteness is unable to do. The critique of McIntosh’s famous knapsack of privilege has been the vagueness of what she identifies as privileges (McWhorter, 2005). To be specific, and create disturbance, I subscribe to Nudd, Schriver & Galloway’s (2001) call to “to be implicated” in the texts that I create, as opposed to minimizing my responsibility for racism.

To be clear, I do not suggest that I write autobiography, as autobiography presents simple narrative vistas of events and benchmarks in one’s life (Kreiger, 1996). By using autoethnographic data as an epistemologically connected method, I draw on Reed-Danahay’s (1997) conceptualization of autoethnography as a simultaneous questioning of the “realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography” and
engagement with questioning “the notion of [a] coherent, individual self” (p. 2). Inherent in this method is a critical gaze in which I use catalyst experiences and moments with race, racism, white supremacy, and racial identity in my own life to illuminate the standpoint by which I arrived at certain conclusions and analyses, and the way in which my life trajectory prohibits me from seeing and understanding a great deal about race. By engaging with autoethnography as a method, I argue that the larger analytical work of the research project has the potential to become more trustworthy (Denzin, 1989; 2000; 2003a, 2003b, 2003c) as I situate the way in which my angle of vision to the world is linked with my own epistemological undergirding.

Participants

The nine participants who completed the research process were second semester juniors at Righteous College. I provide here a very brief biological sketch of each participant as a means of introduction and to provide a sense of each participant. Listed alphabetically, participant names are pseudonyms to protect participant identity, except for myself as I use my given name throughout the dissertation.

Angela

Angela is a 20 year old who grew up in a rural agricultural community and attended a public K-12 school. Angela describes herself as having a small friendship group comprised of one best friend and other acquaintances. Angela is self described as shy and quiet, yet believes she is the most outgoing of her friends and was an active member of her high school drama club.
Barbara

When first asked about potential pseudonyms for this research project Barbara said, “Can I be called Fun Girl?” Barbara is 21 years old and spent most of her formative years moving around the country spending school aged time in an elite suburban area near Lilac, as well as an elite suburban area near Charleston, South Carolina, and in a suburban community in Mississippi; she attended public schools in all three states. Barbara returned to Lilac to complete her undergraduate education. Barbara moved around a lot and consequently she did not really articulate much about friendship circles or being close to peers.

Bob

Bob is a 20 year old who grew up in a rural community in the Northeast. Bob attended schools in his hometown public schooling system. Growing up, Bob was a student labeled with special needs and assigned to resource room support. Bob repeatedly reported throughout the interviews that his friends were the athletes in school, and he used narrative to create distance from kids who were not athletes, as if to be clear with me he was not like non-athletes.

Brian

Brian is a 20 year old who grew up in a middle-class suburb of the capitol in the state where Righteous College is located. Brian attended private elementary and middle schools and then went to a suburban public high school. Brian did not talk much about friendships but did share closeness with is brother.
Cathy

Cathy is 20 years old and grew up approximately three hours from Righteous College in the small, rural suburb of a small industrial city. Cathy attended public schools K-12. There are teachers in her extended family and her uncle as a principal. Cathy does not have great memories of school; one of her first memories of school was being retained a grade in elementary school.

Kenny

Kenny, the researcher for this project, is a 30-year-old gay male who grew up and taught in the Lilac area. I would describe myself as coming from a working class and low socio-economic background. I attended public schools for K-8 grade and then went to a private high school. I taught in public schools in both an urban and a suburban setting.

Pat

Pat is a 21 year old who comes from a medium-sized suburb near a small urban area about 75 miles from Righteous College. Pat attended public schools K-12, and she graduated from high school with a class of 800.

Sierra

Sierra is a 26 and in her 8th contiguous year of undergraduate education; she spent time at Righteous College, went to a technical university, and then returned to Righteous College. Sierra grew up in a small city that some 2 hours from the Righteous campus and is often characterized as socio-economically depressed. Sierra briefly attended a
suburban elementary school before moving into the city and attending public city schools in her area.

**Steven**

Steven is soon to be 20 years old. A large Ivy-League University is located in the small “university city” where Steven lived and attended public schools. Steven’s mother is an educator and President of the local teacher’s union.

**Todd**

Todd is 21 years old and comes from a suburban community approximately a 5 hour drive from Righteous College. Todd’s community is located about 30 minutes from the largest metropolitan area of the state and also one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country. Todd attended private Catholic schools for his entire K-12 schooling experience.

**Data Analysis**

As a qualitative researcher I am concerned with representation and attention to analysis that seeks to understand. Lincoln and Guba (1985) remind me that interpretations “are likely to be meaningful for different realties” (p. 42). Case study has often been falsely understood as a product of qualitative research as opposed to an analytical process distinct from a product (Stake, 2003). In other words case study has been commonly understood as the writing product of research itself, as opposed to a method of analyzing and ultimately writing data. My research approach and process is to
use cases to better reflect the testimonial nature of the participants’ interviews, rather than as a written research product with the analytical focus on each person.

Focus on the particular has historically been given “less than full regard” in qualitative research (Denzin, 1989; Yin, 1989). Despite an orientation in qualitative research that gives less regard to the particular, case study analyses of the particular in one’s testimony may serve to typify common occurrences over multiple sets or cases of testimony, leading up to generalization-producing analysis. To this extent a more glocal approach that honors the specific in each case (the local) then understood across cases (the more global) is achieved and the “case study can be seen as a small step toward grand generalization” (Stake, 2003, p. 141).

In approaching the interviews for this study with the case approach I am able to gather data from individuals while looking more holistically during the analysis phase, and also am able to propose findings that I believe capture cross-case coherence; my intent is to avoid Stake’s (2003) critique of case study as being framed all too often as a product of research and not the form of inquiry itself. The research data gathered from the testimonial interviews and the document analysis of each participant were analyzed first using the concept of case so that each case could be understood for what it had to offer.

Recognizing the case as a bounded system (Stake, 2003) whereby identity and explanation can be explored serves as the analytical base for the dissertation analysis and for the findings that result from the analysis (White, 1992). In addition to the cases of the participants, the case of the researcher was analyzed. To this extent the analysis provided
by case study, as well as phenomenon exhibited in the cases related to identity, serve as “cultural representation[s] and as sociological text” whereby narrative inquiry itself becomes a perspectival analytic tool (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 1996). In other words the cases represent my researcher analytic decision making so far; each case study captures a perspective of the partial story testified to by the participants with the goal of integrated cross-case findings. (Stake, 2003).

**Coding**

After the testimonial interviews were conducted, transcribed, and given an initial reading and analysis, an open coding system using colored pencils/markers was used to highlight constructs that were apparent across cases, or that seemed to typify constructs presented in the theoretical frameworks of white racial identity and critical race theory that guide this work. The colors were separated and analytical categories were developed based on consistencies with the data in particular color sets. The analytical categories, or emergent themes, that derived from the coding were explored, and are presented, explained, and instantiated with the data in the dissertation analysis in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1989) highlight the importance in qualitative research for the process and the product to reflect a sense of credibility to think of a work as trustworthy. While many approaches have been undertaken to ensure credibility in research, Denzin & Lincoln (2003a; 2003b; 2003c) as well as Lincoln & Guba (1985;
1989) propose the concept of member checking as a form of triangulation that helps give credibility to the research. Member checking involves participants in reviewing data to ensure that it accurately reflects what was said. In the case of the testimonial interviews for this study, the research participants received full transcriptions of their interviews and had the opportunity to read the transcripts and to query when they thought the transcription did not accurately reflect what was said. To further ensure credibility for any queries or discrepancies with the transcript, I played the audio recording of the interview for participants while we both looked at the transcription. This technique resulted in all participants agreeing that the transcription was an accurate and honest reflection of the testimony provided. The member checking provided in this study ensured credibility and that the data was not invented or added by the researcher/transcriber (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1989). Because the participants had the opportunity to correct errors in the testimonial record, the basis by which the analysis was conducted and the findings generated were from an uncontested set of texts. The sense of credibility provided in this study is important given that readers of the testimonial research are likely to reach conclusions informed by their own understandings, experiences, and readings of the text; the goal of establishing credibility is not to diminish the possibility for alternative or rival findings but rather ensure that the data analyzed and presented is accurate so as to enhance readers ability to seek out and argue alternate and rival findings (Patton, 2002).

**A note of the presentation of findings**
My approach for presenting the findings of the subsequent three chapters looks at instantiations within participant interviews, and uses participant testimonial data to warrant the assertions made. From the onset I wish to be clear that the findings are not intended to be a focus merely on individual responses; rather I intend that the findings present the individual responses as informative of the constructs across participant cases. The critique often lodged in work that examines race is that the evidence for particular findings is often unwarranted, speculative, and intuitive, so called soft knowledge. While I understand that such critique is a defensive shield intended to protect the nature of whiteness, I none the less appreciate that such critiques will be made, and am hopeful that my approach serves to preemptively address those critiques. I present multiple individual participant responses from across the sample to fully warrant my assertions within each finding. I do not rely on a softer claim/warrant presentation and a singular example from the data, and that other participants present similar narratives without providing such data; rather my findings are data rich with direct quotations from participant interviews.

A potential tension between individual and group orientations also arises from my approach. If the unit of analysis was only to address individual participants at the level of their individual responses, findings could be easily dismissed as being the products and revelation of individual perspectives without connectivity. In a sense there would be no findings at all but rather the presentation of nine individual representations of people who happened to participate in an interview study. To that extent I am employing the glocal approach, whereby individual responses (the local) serve to illuminate illustrative findings across the cases (the more global), shifting focus away from any one individual participant as “good/bad,” “racist/non-racist,” etc. and opening
the dialogue about the findings in a more expansive way; this represents what I have suggested to be “case as analysis” as opposed to “case as product” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Eliasoph, 1997).

**On Findings and Discussion**

Chapters four, five, and six will present the three findings that emerged from several layers of data analysis along with discussion. The first finding presented in Chapter 4 is that participants appear to demonstrate a propensity toward the use of what Bonilla-Silva (26) calls “semantic moves” when speaking about race and beliefs relative to race (p. 57). In exploring this finding two sub-findings related to participant discourse arise: participants engaged in a) white racial bonding as well as b) the use of color-blind discourse and rhetoric. Participants’ approaches to color-blind discourse varied; primarily participants used expansive language of inclusion and being non-judgmental while simultaneously positioning restrictive views of racial inferiority, and presenting what Bonilla-Silva (2006) frames as abstract liberalism. To illustrate abstract liberalism I will also present autoethnographic data to situate how my own experiences are similar replications of what participants presented throughout the interview process.

Less frequently, color-blind discourse was marked by minimization and naturalization of race. The color-blind framings of participants, regardless of type, often include confused language and conceptualizations of race that at times present incoherent narratives. Discussion will center on how both sub-findings work in concert in the maintenance of whiteness’ property value, and consequently the social structure by which white supremacy and subordination of minority groups occurs.
The second major finding in Chapter 5, asserts that participants did not demonstrate complex explanations of their rationales to be teachers; they often focused on surface level reasons and clichéd orientations to the profession that could be viewed and understood as being naïve. In discussing this finding some focus will be placed on the long term effects of underdeveloped rationales of pre-service teachers once they have left the program, and how the finding contributes to the education debt. Specifically, attention will be placed on how the finding reflects yet another semantic move made by participants relative to race; this professional naïveté, as in the case of participants, can block teachers from becoming culturally relevant and serves to exacerbate the potential to receive racially uninformed and poor instruction.

The third finding in Chapter 6 is actually a set of amalgamated smaller interrelated assertions relative to White Racial Identity beginning with the ideas that a) participants conceptualized diversity as analogous to race, unable to distinguish between the two constructs, b) participants understanding of their white identity was often linked by participants not to self but onto ‘racial others,’ and finally c) participants white racial identity was often presented with incoherence and in underdeveloped ways. In this finding I will also present more autoethnographic data to help situate my own White Racial Identity. Based on the revelations of previous participants’ data, and specific responses within the smaller assertions relative to white racial identity, I will present were I believe all participants, are located in the Helms (1984; 1990; 2003) White Racial Identity model.

After locating each participant within the WRI model I will argue that the Helms’ WRI model appears to be a limited analytic in moving forward the discussion about race
and racism. I will suggest that given the model’s propensity for placing participants within an individualistic orientation to racial identity, the model ignores the systematic nature of white privilege and whiteness that confers benefits to whites beyond the level of isolated individuals. Further, I will argue that the model does not account for what participants both choose not to reveal and what they in fact do not know about themselves. Through discussion, I will offer a different model for exploring WRI that addresses the both nature of the individual and the system of white supremacy that confers privileges to whites as a connected group of individuals.
Chapter 4 - Semantic Moves Relative to Race

Throughout the interviews conducted for this dissertation research, participants used a variety of semantic moves and rhetorical constructions (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Embedded within their narrative responses to questions expressing their views, ideas, and beliefs about race, these semantic moves varied from expressions of white racial bonding to a variety of color-blind approaches. Each of the semantic moves will be explored in turn.

**White racial bonding**

The first semantic move that the participating pre-service teachers demonstrated was the use of racial bonding through discourse structures. This finding indicates that while whites are not apt to outline what white is on-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to a general public, whites do have a sense of what whiteness is; this leads whites to bond with others whom they believe share the property value of whiteness in the comfort and safety of whiteness’ shelter. Considering the first time I taught a linguistics course, I remember a conversation regarding “slang,” and how several white students being upset because they did not understand the slang of particular groups and thought that it was not fair they could not. Two ideas emerged in our conversation; 1) the exclusionary nature of slang was only a problem when other people use it, and 2) the students in my class also had a slang that was used as a means to express shared values and knowledge to the
exclusion of groups not meant to be the beneficiaries of the shared knowledge. This principal of including whites within a particular belief of shared knowledge, while excluding those who are not white from the full implications of the shared knowledge, organizes the concept of white racial bonding through a particular discourse structure.

The language marker most often used to denote white racial bonding by this study’s participants was the term “you know.” Eight of the nine participants used the exact phrase “you know” during the interview process. Each of the participants accomplished a different purpose with their deployment of “you know,” however all of the uses ultimately centered back on establishing shared knowledge between themselves and me, representing a level of racial bonding. Brian, for example, used the phrase “you know” to dismiss the concept that whiteness could affect a teacher’s way of teaching, specifically asserting that whiteness does not play a role; instead, it is “where they grew up, you know,” attributing differences in teaching style to geography of one’s experiences rather than to one’s whiteness.

Bob, on the other hand, uses the phrase “you know” to establish bonding around levels of discomfort with what whites should call other groups, saying, “The first time I ever saw, uhh, you know (dip in voice) African American students, (raises voice back) you know.” Bob’s dip in voice highlights a discomfort in how to frame his first experience with students from different racial backgrounds. His use of “you know” to ground his description suggests that I would understand the difficulty in framing others, hence becoming a shared value of our whiteness.

Angela’s approach to the use of “you know” was still a different form of bonding in that Angela establishes that she would never know what it was like to be from the non-
dominant racial group: her use of “you know” helps to establish that as a white I would understand her dilemma. Angela says, “I will never have the experience of being a Black racial person minority or majority or anything, you know.” In this conceptualization, Angela establishes that I too am white, and consequently will never have the experience of being non-white, so from her perspective we had a means of bonding. Cathy, on the other hand, bonds based on the lessons parents teach children. When asked what she learned about other groups of people Cathy asserted, “You know, don’t judge anyone till you get to know them.” While Cathy does not know me, her assumptions represented in the use of “you know” is aimed at how we might share the socialization of being non-judgmental.

Still other participants used the phrase “you know” to establish shared judgment of groups of people of color. In response to an interview question about student behavior, Todd asserts, “I know some of the kids didn’t have the best parents, you know.” Todd is not alone as many of the participants used what they believed to be a shared value that parents of minority students were not the best parents. Todd’s particular use of “you know” helps establish what he thinks is a shared understanding of poor parenting. Todd further uses the concept of “you know” in bonding to establish with me as the researcher that he does not have negative thoughts about Black teachers. When asked if he had ever had Black teachers, Todd responded, “I don’t think twice about it and it’s not something that I take into account and if you see the teacher’s Black I’m not like ohhh, and I am not, you know, I had Jones and Smith (both Black faculty) and I don’t have any preconceptions of them.” The answer Todd provided did not relate directly to the question asked, but did establish that Todd wanted to share a bond with
me, whereby I would understand that he did not judge a teacher’s race or somehow that the race does not even enter his consciousness. Interestingly, Todd did not finish the statement, indicating that I would already understand what he was saying and consequently the meaning to his response, and therefore there was no need to continue responding.

Sierra and Pat also used the phrase “you know” to establish judgments about groups that must be shared knowledge among whites. Sierra asserts that her home town “…is becoming more diverse, uhmm, there are two maximum security prisons, and, you know, how prison populations are mostly Black.” Sierra assumes that I would recognize prison populations to be mostly Black and that the population of prisoners is what establishes her community as diverse. In describing “bad kids” Pat states, “More now that I have taken education classes, you know, it’s home life.” While I did not teach Pat in the diversity course, being familiar with the instructor who did syllabus my perception is that she was not taught that negative student behavior is a result of home life. Yet, Pat believes that she learned this concept in her diversity course; she also believes that also as a fellow white person and a faculty member who taught the course, I, too, would see that student behavior is linked to home life and was something that was taught in the course.

The phrase “you know” in-and-of itself does not reveal to be inherently problematic at a purely linguistic level. What is problematic are the ways in which participants used the phrase, and the semantic moves location for insertion into responses that reveal the phrase to be a linguistic device to demarcate a bonding experience along lines of race. I argue that in using the phrase “you know,” participants attempted to highlight that as a white, I, too must have a particular insight into what was being said.
that was shared with them. In the first iterations of data analysis (of which there were five -- transcription, member checking, coding, sorting, and cross-case analysis) I was concerned that perhaps the use of “you know” was language filler that may have been used by participants as a non-significant marker of nerves or uncertainty with how to answer a question. In fact, when documenting the cases of each participant as layers of data analysis, the phrase of “you know” does not overwhelm or dominate any one participant’s experience in the interview and, as standalone cases, is not significant.

After reviewing the data over multiple layers of analysis, and closely examining the occurrence of “you know” within the context of the interviews across participant cases, a pattern emerged. Participants’ use of “you know” only occurred directly before, during, or directly after participants used language and description that could be viewed as polemical or “loaded,” to the extent that the language exhibited high levels of judging non-white groups and/or indicated struggle with concepts related to race. The use of “you know” did not appear to be part of the participants’ regular discourse patterns during the interviews, as the semantic move did not occur in regular utterances. Rather the occurrences appear to present as a tool used to establish affinity and bonding between the white participants and myself as a fellow white.

In the instances where the “you know” phrase was evoked by participants, there was an attempt to establish that what was being asserted must be shared and common knowledge, and thus I would “know” and consequently understand the assertions being made. This idea that the knowledge being discuss could be a shared value seems to indicate a relative connection premised on our race. I argue that if the participants in this project had perceived me to be racially different than them they would not have used the
phrase “you know;” they would not necessarily have believed that the information they were saying was of shared value and would not necessarily have felt ‘safe’ in expressing some of their positions, views, and beliefs with someone whom they saw as racially other. I argue that the use of “you know” is much more than a semantic move to express bonding; it is a semantic move that shows white people feel safe in revealing ideas that non-white groups may see as problematic. For example, Pat’s assertion of “you know” to explain what she perceived as bad home life. The establishment of “you know” only makes sense given participants’ perceived affinity to me as a fellow white person. If participants had perceived me to be non-white, or not valuing whiteness’ property value, a race-traitor (Ignatiev, 1995) for example, their narrative responses to questions would have inherently and necessarily discounted my ability to share in the same personal property affirmed to whites vis-à-vis whiteness’ value, and thus there would have been no need or utility in the discourse of shared knowledge that “you know” creates.

**Color-blind orientations to race**

In the post-

*Brown v. Board* United States, many whites have internalized that on-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987) discriminatory and racist comments are not acceptable forms of discourse. In establishing a rationality for their beliefs, many whites mark outwardly racist comments as the product of irrational racist people such as skin-heads, Klu Klux Klan members, Nazi’s, Neo-Nazi, and other groups that may hold beliefs outside of the mainstream despite how they present themselves [Glen Beck for example] (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Bonilla-Silva, 2001). In creating distance from these so called “irrational racists,” many whites have developed other forms of discourse or semantic
moves to communicate racialized beliefs. Bonilla-Silva (2006) highlights that color-blind racism, a form of post-Brown “racism lite,” is one semantic move used by whites to protect views of race that are in fact racist in nature.

Bonilla-Silva (2006; 2003; 2001), Williams (1997), Leonard (2004), Thompson (2003) and Ferber (2003) have all explored the nature of color-blind racism in their work. Bonilla-Silva (2006; 2001) moves forward a framework for understanding color-blind racism through the identification of several components or constructs where color-blind racism manifests. The four major constructs are an abstract liberalism, biologization, naturalization, and minimization (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Drawing from my corpus of data in presenting of the sub-finding relative to color-blindness, I suggest that these components of color-blind discourse were very much present in the narratives of participants and will explained in turn.

Abstract Liberalism

By far, the largest way in which participants engaged in color-blind discourse was through what has been conceptualized as abstract liberalism. The concept of abstract liberalism is an engagement with ideas that reflect liberal ideals, both political and economic to explain race while simultaneously engaging in discourse that often conflicts these liberal views and reveals a far more conservative orientation to race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Drawing from the concept of expansive vs. restrictive approaches to race, I suggest that participants engaged the articulation of surface level beliefs and commitments that appeared to be expansive but actually cover beliefs that were
restrictive. In other words what white people actually believe is not expressed in what white people say.

Crenshaw (1995), Tate & Rousseau (2002), and Dixson & Rousseau (2006), all discuss the role of expansive vs. restrictive constructions of race. The expansive view of anti-discrimination policies conceive of ending the conditions and circumstances by which the subordination of Blacks exists, working “to further the national goal for eradicating the effects of racial oppression” vis-à-vis the casting a broad net (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 105). On the other hand restrictionists pose that discriminatory acts take place in isolation, are targeted at individuals, and are not representative of policies targeted to whole groups (Dixson & Rousseau, 2004; Crenshaw, 1995). To this extent, restrictionists are sheltered from dealing with race outside of very narrowly constructed, localized, and historical experiences and contexts, and thus are able to lodge racial critiques. An excellent example of expansive and restrictive tension can be found in the recent Supreme Court decision in the case of *Ricci et al. vs. DeStefano et al.* (07-1428 decided June 29, 2009). Written by conservative Justice Kennedy and signed onto by Roberts, Alito, Thomas, and Scalia, the other conservative justices of the Roberts court, namely, this majority opinion legislated from the bench to created more restrictive approaches to dealing with anti-discrimination. In debating the nomination of Justice Sotomayor, conservative pundits feared that she would legislate from the bench to promote expansive ideals that could lay in conflict with current law. The irony in the Supreme Court’s decision in the Ricci case is that, in overturning the lower court’s decision which was affirmed in part by the appeals court in which Sotomayor sat, the court legislated against the current law to protect white interests in restrictionist ways. In the wake of the 2009
decision many legal scholars believe that the federal appellate court panel that Sotomayor was a part of properly followed law and adhered to Title VII rights in this case, and certainly is addressed by the dissent Ginsberg of and Justices Souter, Stevens, and Breyer. The Kennedy opinion makes it more difficult for minority applicants and minority employees to pursue litigation for discrimination under Title VII legislation, reducing employment discrimination to complex individual instantiations. The court’s majority opinion articulated a common restrictionist stance by dismissing the New Haven Fire Department’s proactive attempt to address racial inequity in the lack of promoting white firefighters when it was found that the promotion test and the results of the promotion test adversely affected minority applicants. In her dissenting opinion, Ginsberg asserted that the white firefighters had nothing taken away from them; they were neither given preference nor did they have preference withheld, thus no loss occurred, and further the firefighters were not inherently entitled to anything. In the courts majority opinion, Justice Kennedy used expansive ideology of “fairness” and “equality” to give the white firefighters an avenue of redress, while applying restrictionist doctrine to prevent the minority firefighters in this case, or minority employees and applicants, to seek relief and redress from the court.

In the case of participants in this study a similar approach to the Supreme Court’s majority writing surfaces with respect to color-blind orientations. Participants often attempted to claim, and initially establish, a non-racist expansive identity, but then followed up their discourse with conflicts to the much purported non-racist, non-judgmental identity that were far more restrictive in nature. In coming to terms with
these conflicting positions, participants engaged in the abstract liberalism form of color-blind discourse and also displayed a great deal of confusion relative to race.

*Establishment of non-racist, color-blind, expansive standpoints*

Respondents used a variety of techniques to establish non-racist, non-judgmental, open and expansive positions. When asked what she was taught about other groups of people, Angela, asserted, “be nice to everybody” and “my family is big on don’t judge, never judge, you never pass judgment.” Similarly, Cathy asserted, “my parents for the most part they always said you know don’t judge.” Todd and Steven also engaged in a similar narrative; Todd responded he learned “that you can’t judge anyone,” and Steven asserted he learned “never being biased.” Brian used a slightly different tact in responding, the “thou shall not judge” approach, asserting that his beliefs are that “pretty much everyone is equal and I have never really thought of me being special or more gifted than anybody.” Barbara articulated one of the most cliché forms of abstract liberalism, saying “my mom always raised me not to see skin color;” seemingly Barbara could literally be blinded to the existence of race. Barbara furthermore claimed, “we are not, we are very accepting, and are not judgmental or discriminatory.” Barbara did not finish her initial thought of what her family is not; she first established that she is accepting, but does go on to further assert not being “judgmental or discriminatory.”

When asked about his friendship circle and the friendship circle of his family, Brian quickly moved to establish a non-racist, non-judgmental identity. Brian said,

I think everyone in my family was pretty much white but I had a lot of different friends growing up because I played basketball, African
American friends, and we were all one big community and we weren’t a racist bunch (laughs) it’s like everything was everything and I didn’t see them for their skin color and it wasn’t said I think it wasn’t talked about but you just kind of knew.

In this one complex statement Brian attempts to establish that, from a liberal perspective he is not racist in his assertion, “we weren’t a racist bunch;” despite laughing awkwardly about his own statement, and he also did not see his friends for their skin color, an evidently color-blind approach. In his statement he also establishes his African American friends as “them,” clearly distinguishing “them” from ‘him,’ concretely contradicting his assertion that he does not see them for race. To confirm the contradiction in his narrative, Brian ends with the idea that race was present, something “you just kind of knew” but that “wasn’t talked about.” In not talking about it, but knowing it, Brian establishes that to maintain an expansive perspective or standpoint on race, whites must be able to hold in what they know without saying it out-loud.

Bob also enacts a ‘now-you-see-it, now-you-don’t’ approach in attempting to establish a liberal open belief system of being non-judgmental, while simultaneously narrating a discourse full of contradictions. When asked about his friendship circle and that of his family, and if the friendship group included people other than whites, Bob said,

No. We kind of growing up with who was around and we didn’t really know anyone around, and I do know my dad has played beer league softball and there was a Black guy on there and he was friends with him and they live kind of close. They are always friendly and they have
always raised me not to judge people by any means even in school there was only a couple of them and I was always friends with all of them and I always had them come over and like that and never had a problem and they raised me to be, but just the location did not allow it.

In the narrative Bob established that he was raised “not to judge people by any means,” creating the space to claim an expansive identity but he does have several contradictions. In one instance Bob infers that he was friends with “who was around” and that he “didn’t really know anyone around,” yet Bob also asserts that there was a Black family that lived close and that his Dad knew at least someone who was Black and they were friendly. Simultaneously Bob also claimed that he was friends with “them,” which in the context of the narrative “them” could only signify non-white friends, even though he previously stated that “no” the friendship circle did not include people who were not white. In his last statement Bob says that “they,” his parents, “raised me to be;” based on the context of the previous statements his parents raised him to be non-judgmental, but geography, “the location,” was the reason that “did not allow it,” meaning that geography did not allow him to be non-judgmental. Bob’s narrative is complex, and though he primarily attempts to establish a non-racist, non-judgmental, and expansive identity, Bob also brings to the narrative a number of contradictions. In the next section I will present a number of contradictions to the abstract liberal ideology expose’ that helps to locate the nature of conflict between the expansive standpoint and the restrictive vies endemic to color-blind racism through abstract liberalism.
Conflicts to the abstract liberal, non-judgmental, and expansive narrative

The seven participants (Angela, Barbara, Bob, Brian, Cathy, Steven, and Todd) in the study that attempted to establish outwardly abstract liberal, non-judgmental, and expansive standpoints, also had conflicts to such an epistemological standpoint on race, that in part highlight the very nature of abstract liberalism as a color-blind discourse. Whereas Brian previously said he had been taught not to judge, in answer to the next question about some of his experiences growing up that might have indicated he was white, Brian talks about basketball saying,

We always play teams from inner city Connecticut or Lilac and you would be like WOW!, we are really white and they would come in and the pants are down and they got shorts that are too long and your looking like ohhh ok, just the way they talked and interacted was different than us, and growing up you flipped to BET and you would see that and be like this is not my life at all I had it good compared to a lot of people out there.

In his previous statement, Brian has asserted that “everyone is equal,” yet his narrative reveals something different entirely. Brian, in fact, makes numerous judgments and, despite his claim that he never thought of himself as “being more special” than anyone, he clearly indicated that his life and experiences are in fact better than others, as exhibited in his statement “I had it good compared to a lot of people.” Brian’s use of “WOW!, we are really white” and “looking like ohhh, ok” also establish his judgments and support that his perception of the other basketball players was based on race, his judgments of race, and his establishment that he was different than the inter city players.
Barbara, in her orientation used geography as a means to literally claim not see race asserting that she is “very accepting” and “not judgmental or discriminatory;” when discussing where she wants to teach. Barbara asserted, “I would like to teach down South, only because I would be beneficial there because I am the radical [Northeastener\(^3\)] in the Christian Bible thumper Southern belt.” In her statement Barbara highlights that she does have judgments of people based on both their geography and their religious orientation; in her framing of people being “in the Christian bible thumper Southern belt,” Barbara establishes a superiority to said people by being the “radical Northeasterner,” and that she would in fact be “beneficial” to students because of her superior position. Barbara’s use of geography as a proxy for race complicates and challenges her previous rhetoric that she is not judgemental.

Bob, who previously had conflict between his desired expansive presentation and his restrictive standpoints, continued throughout his second interview to engage in judgmental language and like Barbara. When asked if he had ever had teachers who were not white Bob responded, “I always had white teachers. I only had one Native American teacher, but maybe I shouldn’t say that cause she is from India.” On follow up I asked Bob what the experience was like having a teacher from a different race than him and Bob said, “uhm you know it was little, I didn’t know, I mean she looked a little different and she kind of talked a little bit weird.” Whereas Bob earlier had professed that his orientation was around not judging people, he first displays a confusion of the teachers’

\(^3\) Barbara actually referred to herself by her state but to protect the anonymity of participants I have chose to refer only to participants as Northeasteners to locate geographic region and not identify the state(s) where participants are from, or where Righteous College is located. Thus in her response Barbara actually calls herself a racial “name of state”er.
race all together, and then frames her as looking “a little different” and talking “a little bit weird,” both judgmental perspectives inconsistent with his non-judgmental self positioning as expansive.

Bob also carried his judgments into how he framed students. When asked if students from underrepresented groups need different types of instruction than white peers, Bob’s answer reveals how he in fact judges students of color. Bob asserted,

Uhmm I just think you know you have to be more patient with them…they just don’t want to learn, be in school, you know, they don’t want to be in school that’s why they’re always late to class and have excuses.

In this piece of narrative Bob talks about students of color, in block, using pathological and judgmental conceptions. Bob assumes and also lays judgments down about students’ desire to be in school, their motivation to learn, and uses what he perceives to be an aversion to school by students of colors, to justify what he frames and believes about students of color being “always late to class” and having “excuses.”

Bob’s socialization to the profession seems to have done the work of confirming his judgmental beliefs for him. Bob claims to have an interest in teaching in an urban setting and when talking about his field placement experience in an urban setting Bob said, “I have been to those schools before and they just screw around and dick around,” and then talking about his particular placement at an open school called School Absent of Structures (SAS), Bob went on to say,

It’s all African Americans and the kids come in and they are late, don’t understand what’s going on and the teacher came in and was really frustrated and he yelled at them and I laughed at him and I was like where
are you going at inner city kids like that, you’re going nowhere and they were giving him shit, he was white and he was frustrated”

To complete his thought about potentially teaching in the city Bob says,

“I found I really don’t care. I was really, like I really like the inner city cause I can show patience with these kids and there are some gambles and you have to give up some things, you can’t be as strict with as normal but I saw kids wearing an iPod doing examples…if he sits there and doing work that’s a great idea and so I’m kind of curious if I can handle it, so far I like it.”

Bob’s narrative has multiple layers and is quite complex. Previously, Bob has claimed to have a non-judgmental identity, yet immediately he asserts that he knows what an urban setting is all about and that “they,” his reference for inner city students of color, “just screw around and dick around.” This judgment was then reified for Bob when he was placed in an urban school, SAS, where he correlated that the students are all “African American,” “late” and “don’t understand” what is going on. Bob recognizes that yelling at children is probably not an effective technique, but associates that yelling is not effective because “where you going at inner city kids like that,” reducing the conversation from critiquing the method of yelling at children in general, to a focus only on inner city students. As Bob continues, his justification for being interested in teaching in an urban setting is also predicated on judgments about children that as a teacher “you can’t be as strict as normal;” the implication is that in a non-inner city setting you can afford to be strict and in turn have higher standards, and that his desire to potentially teach in an inner city setting ultimately derives from a curiosity of whether he “can
handle it.” The narrative Bob uses posits many judgments that all seem in contradiction to his self-positioning in expansive ways.

Todd initially asserted that he was taught “You can’t judge anyone,” and continued from there to initiate discourse that seemed to border on judgments in saying that his family “would never stereotype anyone as like Hispanic of African American or Italian and just very open minded.” The corollary seems to be that if you do not judge people, there appears to be no need to tell one the specific groups you do not judge; being non judgmental would assume to be in all instances if the identity was truly non-judgmental. Conceptualizing the specifics of what would not happen in terms of stereotypes implies that Todd in fact does have stereotypical conceptions of others that he recognizes as not being what he should do. Bonilla-Silva (2006) talks about the nature of color-blind racism being a slippery conceptualization; even though Todd claims not to be judgmental there is an implication around how Hispanics, African Americans, or Italians can be stereotyped and thus are clearly a part of Todd’s conscious, even when he claims not to be judgmental.

Todd uses other judgmental language to conceptualize students. When asked if students from underrepresented groups need different instruction form white peers Todd says, “no, because like, I mean, any African American or Latino can be just as smart as white kids and there will be African American or Latino students that will be good students and I don’t like to generalize.” Ironically, it is Todd’s answer itself that puts forward generalizations about African American and Latino students so far as the underlying assumptions in Todd’s response, that generally students from minority backgrounds are not inherently as smart as white kids but they “can be just as smart,” and
there “will be” students from minority populations that can be “good students.” Todd’s narrative does not assert that African American and Latino students are as smart but rather they “can be,” a judgment that reveals Todd’s conceptualizations to be deeper than, and in conflict with, the assertion that he is not judgmental.

Steven articulated his conflicting beliefs relative to students’ language and relative to his experiences with Black students at Righteous College in deciding to attend. When asked if students from underrepresented groups needed different instruction form their white peers, Steven says,

I guess there isn’t a difference and it should be the same, I mean there is a language barrier but you might have to explain it more so they can fully explain it, but no they should all just get the same.

This statement itself is filled with contradiction. Steven front ends and back ends his thought with the expansive concept of a broad net being cast and that race should not affect the opportunities offered to students, that students from all races “should be the same” and “all just get the same.” Between this framing, Steven articulates his belief that stands in conflict to expansive orientations on race, asserting, definitely that there is a language barrier in place when dealing with students of color, and that if you are not careful to explain things to students of color, they will not get it.

Steven also reveals an interesting perspective about his beliefs in describing his football recruiting trip to Righteous College saying, “I first came here for football and there was like six Black kids on the team and that was like, ok, this is weird.” In finishing his story about the experience Steven tells, “I got paired up with a Black kid on the football team but I got a sleepover with him and it didn’t bother me or affect my
decision.” Steven, having earlier asserted that he has been taught “never being biased with anyone,” found that having six kids on the football team was “weird,” an articulation of judgment. Further, Steven says that having a Black roommate did not “bother” him or “affect” his decision to attend Righteous. While saying that the experience did not do these things, Steven implies that having a Black roommate could have bothered him or affected his decision. In articulating the expansive, that the experience had no effect, his need to tell the story in a way that positions him in the expansive while also conceptualizing the presence of Black kids as “weird,” I argue that this reveals that the restrictive judgmental aspect of his beliefs is near in his mind, and that he wants to create open distance from it.

Angela’s judgments reveal themselves slightly differently than other participants. While Angela does not use race outwardly as the basis for directly revealing her judgments, she does relegate her judgments more generally to the nature of families. When describing from where she believes student behavior comes, Angela, says kids, who didn’t come from the best of families…like a lot of them were from foster care or came from families that where they didn’t have socioeconomic advantages and were down on their luck kind of where things weren’t valued.

The nature of Angela’s judgments are in direct conflict with her belief that you “don’t judge, never judge, you never pass judgment.” Angela conceptualizes that families who are struggling are simultaneously, families where “things weren’t valued” displaying a high level of judgment.
Finally, Cathy also displays a number of judgments that seem to be in direct conflict with the idea that she is not judgmental. Cathy claims that her parents taught her “don’t judge” but follows up by claiming that non-judgment extends “even to kids they knew were not good kids.” In Cathy’s example, trying to place herself within the expansive arena of being non-judgmental says you should not judge the kids, even the ones who were not good kids. This statement is highly conflicting in nature and confusing as the conceptualization of kids as not being good kids appears to reveal a judgment in direct conflict with how Cathy has framed herself and her family as non-judgmental.

Cathy reveals two other rather interesting conflicts relative to a non-judgmental perspective. First, even though Cathy has already asserted that she and her family are non-judgmental she tells a story that reveals a level of judgment about African Americans. Cathy says,

My older cousin had an African American friend at college and he came to visit, and my grandma was all furious and not very happy about it and my cousin was trying to explain to her and she was just like it’s not what I’m used to and then my brother persisted to call him the chocolate man because my grandmother said I had never seen a chocolate man before and she was like they are a little bit different and so she was like, well there were certain things we would laugh about. In this statement Cathy reveals that she was in fact socialized around a judgmental belief systems even though she claims that was not part of her experience. In particular, Cathy reveals that her grandmother showed fury that her cousin had an African American friend
and that “they are a little bit different.” The judgmental nature then carries over to her brother’s conceptualization of the friend as a “chocolate man,” and Cathy finding the use of chocolate man to be a conceptualization containing humor. The humor that Cathy finds comes at the expense of her cousin’s African American friend, and derives ultimately from judgmental conceptualizations.

*Kenny in the non-judgmental judgment conundrum*

Like many of the participants I was taught at the surface not to judge, and that message was often reified directly before and after either parent would judge someone. One exchange from childhood that I remember clearly was at a grocery store and my mother watching a Black woman purchase steaks at the grocery store and using food stamp coupons to pay. When we got home she phoned a girlfriend and began to complain about how “they” just needed to get work and not sit around all day, and why should she be responsible for providing people like “them,” and the nerve of purchasing steak. The exchange went on for some time, and even at a young age, probably 6 or 7, I understood it as being racially charged. Aware that I had heard the entire conversation she admonished me, “we don’t judge people, that wasn’t because she was Black; I just can’t stand seeing people get something they don’t deserve, but remember that it’s not nice to judge.” If the exchange was not really about the woman’s race there would have been no need to add in race to what she was telling me. That exchange was typical of many exchanges from both of my parents and from both sets of grandparents. The real message was not ever that we did not judge, but rather it was do not get yourself caught
judging other people outside the comfort of your white friends and family.” It was an experience of “keeping up appearances,” a message made clear to me at an early age.

My parents and grandparents beliefs were not restricted purely to race, in fact any area of difference was part apt to be judged and criticized. Exchanges often were framed in discourse patterns such as “not that it matters really, but why do (insert group)’s do that,” or “it is so typical of (insert group) to do _____________, not that I am judging that, I’m just saying.” In my socialization experiences my elders often criticized any group unlike themselves including people poorer than us, more financially secure than us, people of different religious orientations, sexual orientations, family configurations, people thinner than us, people heavier than us. “Us” was always the metric by which other groups were judged. As a gay male, growing up and knowing I was gay, this conflict of judgment was a difficult balance, and in part why to this day I have not openly disclosed my sexuality to my parents. My parents would say, “Ohh, look at those faggots,” or “That is so disgusting,” referencing a gay couple; comments always were followed with “but there’s nothing wrong with that if that’s what they want to do. The conflicted message was clear; there was something wrong with anyone different, but they didn’t want to be perceived as racist, sexist, homophobic, etc., and wanted to socialize me about how to balance what you really believe with what you let others think you believe. From my later teenager years until even now, my parents still openly judge many groups, including gays; however my mother, who probably has a good idea that I am gay, will always follow up the critique with “but it’s ok if anyone wants to be and you know you could always tell us anything and it wouldn’t matter.” To date I have not disclosed my sexuality in part because it is not “ok” and is part of a larger cycle of
This judgment socialization has impacted my own interactions with people across difference. While it might be pleasant to think that I am not judgmental I know that I am and have to constantly remind myself that the judgments come from being socialized by white parents in a white (hetero)sexist, racist, classist, white supremacist society. My response to balancing what I know are judgmental orientations has often been hyperextending, or going overboard in my interactions with people different than me, in order to not reveal my own judgmental nature. What I call the hyperextending certainly in my late teens and early adulthood shaped friendship circles, interactions, and even job choices. I took my first teaching job in the city school district not necessarily because I wanted to work there, but to prove that I could work in the city without anyone knowing what my judgments of the families and location were.

**Naturalization**

Naturalization, as a form of color-blind discourse, allows participants to justify perceived differences between races, and the racism attached to whites’ behavior as naturally occurring phenomenon, a sort of ‘just the way it is, what can I do?’ approach to dealing with issues of race. Enacting upon a naturalization frame to organize one’s colorblindness is a shift from the way abstract liberalism, where the speaker can attempt to self-frame as non-judgmental as a precursor to their judgmental commentary. In naturalization, there is a casual recognition that racism exists, and that is just the way it is. Two participants, Pat and Sierra, used naturalization as their primary discourse.
strategy with respect to color-blindness, and Barbara used some naturalization in tandem with her abstract liberalism.

Pat recounts a story of middle school romance and how her learning of a naturalization lesson that even now frames some of her experience with people of color. Whereas in the previous section we saw that seven of the participants claimed to have learned lessons in non-judgment from their families, Pat presents a discrepant narrative that locates her within the space of naturalization of race. Pat says,

I remember in sixth grade I had a crush on this African American kid and I was telling my mom about it and it was a life lesson that didn’t pertain to sixth grade, and she told me she wouldn’t have a problem with it but it would be my brothers, I have three older brothers, and my dad that would have a problem and we had a discussion about why would that matter and she gave me the speech about the interracial thing and how other people look at it and it’s hard for me.

In this story Pat gives verbal confirmation of the way stock stories (Delgado, 1993) operate; Pat says that she received “the speech about the interracial thing,” acknowledging that there is a master narrative about interracial relationships that whites can go to in socializing their children to the white/right way of thinking about particular race situations. In fact, Pat’s mother seems able to not have to engage in her personal beliefs to enact this socialization, as she defers responsibility for the racism to Pat’s brothers and father. To some extent Pat’s mother, vis-à-vis Pat’s hearsay narrative, shows her mother’s desire to situate herself within an abstract color-blind discourse pattern, while socializing Pat that the sermonic message of the stock story is valid and to which
she should adhere. Pat ends the telling of this story by justifying the rationale for her brothers’ and father’s hypothetical need to protect her when she says, “I got angry but it has to do a lot with me being the little girl and the only girl and they are watching out.” Through either her own beliefs or as a result of what was socialized to her in this naturalization experience, Pat relegates the issue of the racism as a natural consequence of something more important, her family protecting her. Pat does not sufficiently problematize the stance in her narrative, and, given that this is what she reports as being the lesson she was taught about others from her family, the color-blind via naturalization approach had sufficient impact on Pat’s racialized narratives.

Like Pat, Sierra gave insight into the naturalization of racial order that was socialized to her at a young age. While Sierra said that her mother was more open than her father, she described what she learned about others from her family during this exchange,

Kenny: What did your family teach you about other groups of people?

Sierra: Pretty much that white is right…

Kenny: … really, you remember that growing up…

Sierra: … yeah, my dad is pretty much an Archie Bunker type, if you ever date a Black person I’m disowning you and blah, blah, blah, my dad is pretty bigoted (laughs heartily).

In this narrative Sierra’s use of “blah, blah, blah” recognizes her father’s racist orientation as part
of stock story (Delgado, 1993) about warnings white parents give to their children about the consequences of interracial relationships, similar to Pat’s conversation with her mother. Sierra plainly and matter-of-factly informs me she was taught that “white is right” and that her father is “an Archie Bunker type,” and ends her narrative with a large, hearty laugh. One could argue that Sierra’s laugh is a form of discomfort with the narrative, yet, from my perspective, the laughed seemed not awkward, but in a strange way, seemed to indicate a pride in her father’s bigotry as a lesson that she had learned. Again, like Pat, this is the narrative that Sierra chose to exemplify what she was taught about other groups of people, and thus has the weight of being a socializing experience of import and consequently informs her own color-blind framework.

An aspect of Barbara’s narrative indicates Barbara’s engagement with naturalization as a causal explanation for the lack of diversity in her mother’s friendship circle. When asked about her parent’s friends, and whether her parents had predominately white friends or friends from other groups, Barbara attempted to situate herself and her family in expansive language in explaining that her parents friends were white. Barbara asserts, “Not really, I mean we are not, we are very accepting, and we’re not judgmental or discriminatory. It’s just that when we lived in Mississippi my mom had a lot of cultural diverse friends and back here not.” While Barbara’s narrative primarily indicates an abstract liberalism in her establishment of a non-judgmental identity, her relegation of the absence of friends from varied races to geography seems to display Barbara’s belief in ‘being just the way it is’ or natural to this area. It should be noted that Lilac has, a great deal of diversity within the fabric of the community, which can be defined in many ways to many people. I interpret what Barbara said to mean that in her Lilac there is
more space for one to choose not to engage friendships with people other than whites; Barbara and her family live in a nearly exclusively white privileged upper class self-contained community full of all of the resources one might need such as grocery stores, tailors, dry cleaners, banks, restaurants etc. In describing the other communities where Barbara lived in both South Carolina and in Mississippi, it was clear that while still privileged, the communities had less racial exclusivity and intermingling between whites and Blacks was probably an inevitable (naturalization) experience. In a sense, because Barbara has laid out a abstract liberal conceptualization of herself and her family as non-judgmental, the framing of the social circle as absent of people of color in Lilac is a color-blind attempt at a face saving act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) or in Bonilla-Silva’s (2006) language of color-blind rhetoric Barbara’s naturalization narrative has “a positive self-presentation rhetorical goal” (p. 90).

Naturalization is not the most pervasive form of color-blind discourse believed to be used by whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) and in this study, it was certainly a lesser included discourse structure used by participants. Still, understanding naturalization is critically important in understanding how color-blind racism operates. The importance of naturalization comes from the idea that “segregation as well as racial preferences are produced through social processes and that is the delusion/illusion” of naturalization as a color-blind approach (p. 56). The naturalization approach is worthy of mention in part because the intentions and consequences of racism often go under examined. The under examined nature of race occurs in part because of the belief that ideologies about race are naturally occurring, individualized, and just the way it is, not in fact connected to the
larger systemic nature of racism. The testimonies of Barbara, Sierra, and Pat illustrate the power of the socializing effect of naturalization as a form of color-blind discourse.

Minimization

A third discourse strategy of color-blindness is minimization or use of language that posits that, while whites “believe discrimination is still a problem, they dispute its salience as a factor explaining Blacks’ collective standing” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 43). In minimizing, or denying race as a significant factor in people’s experiences, whites are able to use rationales to dismiss the importance of race for both whites and non-whites in terms of experience.

Brian was the first participant to engage in a minimization of race. When asked if whiteness shapes the way white teachers teach Brian responded:

I don’t think so because just because how they grew up and where they grew up was different from where I grew up or you know maybe it shaped them, one of my teachers is from Helena, right across the river and its more of a city more than anything else there is no suburbs and if he went to Helena High that’s a big school, big integration and, and most of the minority populated schools around besides the city of Capitol and that might have been something that shaped him.

Brian’s extended narrative deflects away from the question about teachers’ whiteness by minimizing the importance and then relegates experience to geography, namely “where they grew up,” as being different, without outwardly saying different from what. In articulating his belief Brian is able to code geography as a proxy for race, but not in a
way that enhances the importance of whiteness as a variable affecting how a white teacher would teach; in fact he blamed the ‘geography,’ and if it was “minority populated,” then the geography would be what affects a teacher; this places blame on the minority group whilst simultaneously using minimization for the effects of whiteness.

Brian continued with his minimization approach when responding the question about students from non-white racial groups needing different instruction than their white peers. Brian responded,

I don’t think so! I don’t see any reasons why they are any less capable than anyone and I was actually watching *Law and Order* the other day about affirmative action, but why not just take the name and the race off the application; that way you can’t be affirmative action. If they are just seen as equal they will be taught as equal and when they have problems they will need help.

Again, using extended narrative, Brian firmly minimizes that students of different races might need a culturally relevant approach to their learning. I find this minimization interesting, given the general tenor of educational conversations and teachers over-cited expression that children need differentiated instruction. In denying that non-white students could need and benefit from a culturally relevant experience differentiated to their needs, Brian ignores the negative effects of racism’s history, including how segregated learning experiences, moral inequities, socio-political orientations, and historical underpinnings have created a debt serviced to children of color in this nation and of which white children do not bear the cost (Ladson-Billings, 2006b). Brian establishes his belief that any experience tailored to the needs of a population of students
of color must be necessitated on the premise that the students are not in fact capable, hence his resistance to engage in what he believes is a more problematic stance; in essence Brian has to minimize race if, in his prospective, differentiating students of color would frame them as deficient, be able to maintain a positive self-presentation as a rhetorical goal (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Finally, Brian would like to minimize the import of affirmative action articulating that race should just be equal. Interesting as a caveat is that Brian wants not only race removed from the application but also one’s name in his minimization of the important of race. In my opinion, this orientation signals that Brian believes that one’s name races. In this case Brian is unable to minimize both, and so the higher order takes over; in order to maintain white interest in employment, race and name should be removed so that everyone has an “equal” shot. By minimizing affirmative action Brian actually reveals that he does see and judge race not only by what category one checks off on an application, but also in his assumptions of what white and Black names are. Given that white women have been the largest beneficiaries of affirmative action, Brian’s response denies a certain historical reality, namely that it is whites who have most benefited from affirmative action policies. Brian also ignores the historic reality about race that necessitates the continued need for a real affirmative action policy that does not play lip service to minority groups and simultaneously reifies the white privileging practices that many affirmative action policies have established. In minimizing the importance of affirmative action Brian is also able to minimize the 500 year plus history of racial inequity in the United States that necessitates affirmative action and policies such as Title
VII. Brian is not alone, as five of the United States Supreme Court Justices in the Ricci et al v. DeStefano case share Brian’s outlook.

Like Brian, Barbara engages in minimization as a color-blind discourse strategy. When asked if students from underrepresented groups need different instruction than their white peers, Barbara claims, “I don’t think so. I think everybody is equal and as long as you instill that’s your point.” Her minimization is interesting; while she articulates a similar, equal treatment argument as Brian, Barbara articulates some belief that the minimization has to be socialized as “that’s your point” when working with others. This equality tension that arises with minimization is interesting. If equal treatment was the goal and I owned a shoe factory, I would give everybody the same size shoe, or equal treatment. If I were to be equitable as the shoe factory owner, I would find out the needs of those who requiring shoes and create a compliment of shoes in various sizes that fit the wearer. The ideal that race should be minimized in the name of equal treatment misses the point that students being treated equally is likely to replicate inequity and exacerbate an already problematic and segregated schooling experience that many of the nation’s children of color receive.

To transition between minimization as a rhetorical strategy of colorblindness, and the confusing and incoherent narratives exhibited by participants, I will draw from Sierra. Sierra exhibits a narrative that is in part centered on minimization and clearly an incoherent narrative. When Sierra was asked if her white teachers’ teaching styles changed with respect to teaching children from different racial backgrounds Sierra pointed to a very specific example,
Uhm, my French teacher was harsh to the Black kid in our class but it wasn’t just because he was Black, he just sat there and he was engaged and would learn and stuff but she just, her idea of a good student was one that was quiet and sat there and did work.

Initially Sierra attempts to minimize the attribution of her teacher’s behavior as being racially linked. Sierra, however, only partially minimizes, asserting “it wasn’t just because he was Black.” In her statement, Sierra identifies that the harsh treatment received was if not fully, at least particularly because he was Black. Further, what was it that the teacher was seeking, beyond the student’s race, that he allegedly did not provide that would warrant the treatment he received? Sierra says that “he just sat there and he was engaged and would learn.” As a former classroom teacher and teacher educator, the student being described appears to be angelic and ideal, a student who apparently has self-control to sit in class, be engaged, and learn. Sierra tries to justify and minimize the harsh treatment the student received as not being linked to race by explaining that the student was not the teacher’s “idea of a good student.” Based on Sierra’s description of the student, the student’s behavior and what the teacher looked for in a student, the only element that seems to be disconcordant is the student’s race. So in attempting to minimize the importance of race, Sierra’s narrative becomes confused and confusing and appears to not sustain a minimizing approach to color-blindness.

*Lack of coherence in racialized narratives*

Sierra’s lack of coherence when talking about race is not unique to her. In fact Bob, Pat, Sierra, Angela, Steven, and Cathy all exhibit a fair level of incoherence when
speaking generally about race. In the third set of findings I will also present how the incoherence moves beyond general discussions of race and presents itself specifically when speaking of identity. In these findings, however, I will limit the presentation of incoherence in narrative solely to general discussion of the topic of race.

When asked if students from underrepresented groups needed instruction different from white peers Bob responded in the following way,

“like the teacher I’m with now is always on the projector doing like number 1 this is how you do it, number 2, and you ok it’s just example after example and they are not learning anything whereas they just need to get more engaged in what they are doing but ehh I don’t uhm jeez what was the question again?”

Here Bob in part presented what appears to be pedagogy that is not engaging itself, yet the responsibility for engagement gets placed back to students as exhibited in his assertion “they just need to get more engaged,” as if students have the control over how material is presented and can make the experience more engaging. In his response, Bob avoided direct discussion of race and direct response to the question asked; he began to lose track and became very incoherent as evidenced by his statement “but ehh I don’t uhm jeez what was the question again?” When the question was reworded, specifically “Do Black or Latino students for example, need different types of instruction from white peers?”, Bob’s ensuing response was no less coherent when he said,

Ohh yeah, no just more patience with inner city school and all kids are capable of doing the same thing just because they are Black white Asian or whatever means they always learn but one way is best for them but it’s not gonna change just because you are a different color and the kids that
are more fiscally sound I guarantee you that all the Caucasian kids are
mixed and matched for learning style and you just have to figure out, I’m
not gonna teach them any different.

Bob’s narrative is not only extended and complex, it is also rather incoherent as he tries
to cover several bases in defending whiteness through the use of a color-blind approach.
The question asked on the follow up is racially specific and leaves less room for
ambiguity than asking generally about marginalized groups. Bob was initially confused
with the general question of marginalized groups; when asked very specifically about
race, he employed racial deflection and shifted the response to say that inner city school
children need patience, relegating issues of race back to geographic location, intimating
that Black and Latino students do not exist in suburban or rural settings.

Bob moved to establish the abstractly liberal idea that ‘all kids are capable of
doing the same thing’ yet added a layer of confusion and racial ambiguity when he
asserted “just because they are Black, white, Asian or whatever.” In his
conceptualization, Latino groups, one of the groups specifically referenced in the
question are removed, Asian groups inserted, and a new racial class of “whatever” is
created. Bob also totalizes the discourse in his use of the word “just,” as if the question
asked whether students from underrepresented groups receive different instruction solely
because of, or to use Bob’s language “just” due to race; clearly that was not what the
question was asking Bob.

Bob’s combining of concepts is confusing; he totalized the question to race being
the whole and only essence of a student, and deflected by stringing together a rapid fire
set of racial groups. Bob ended his narrative with a discussion of students being “fiscally
sound;” white students were attended to by being mixed and matched for learning style,” and he ended saying that he has to “figure out” what students need despite that he is simultaneously “not gonna teach them any different.” In the entire confused narrative, many concepts are brought to bear, and, from my perspective, the question goes mostly unanswered.

Pat’s narrative about race is also incoherent and confusing. When asked about the racial or ethnic makeup of her and her family’s friendship circle, Pat responded, it’s like my dad had a lot of friends and still does but my mom, whenever she gets close to someone they always end up passing away and so she kind of likes just to have associates I guess from work, but she’s getting a little bit more.

First and foremost, the narrative response Pat gives did not answer the question presented and Pat danced past race and ethnicity to just talk generally about her parents’ friends or lack thereof, i.e. her dad having “a lot of friends” and her mother’s fear of friendship due to the fact that “they always end up passing away.”

Pat’s confusing and incoherent narratives did not end with her family’s friendship circle. When asked if students that were not white were treated or taught different by teachers Pat said,

That’s hard because it’s different perspective. Remembering now I wouldn’t say so but we didn’t have that many so I think maybe there was some pre-conceived notions. There would be if there was a conflict teachers would just assume certain things and so I am sure it happened but I didn’t personally pay attention to that.”
Like Bob, Pat took on simultaneously conflicting positions that add to the confusion of the narrative. First Pat stated that “it’s different perspective,” and after looking over her transcript several times, and after listening to her interview, I am still unsure what different perspective it is that she was referencing. Pat went on to say that differing treatment did not happen, but attributed that the reason that teachers did not treat students from minority groups different was that there were not “that many;” I interpret that to mean students from non-white backgrounds. In the same statement, however, Pat says that “I think there were some pre-conceived notions” which appears to contradict her idea that teachers did not treat students differently.

The narrative became more confusing when Pat said that “if there was a conflict” that the “teachers would just assume certain things” and she ended with a 180 degree switch of position, not claiming that she is “sure it happened” and then absolving herself from any negative implications in the assertion that she “didn’t personally pay attention.” In trying to respond to the question from many color-blind angles, Pat is contradicts her own statements, all the while presenting a confusing and fairly incoherent narrative.

I asked Pat about where she wants to teach and received perhaps the longest extended response in the entire set of interviews among participants. Pat did not use overtly racial language, but used geography and other codes as proxies for race, saying, I am very open to it now and I don’t want to make that decision but I thought about maybe teaching in the city school district because I want that challenge and they have that bad reputation of needing so much help and I want to have impact but if you are a good teacher you can be a good teacher anywhere and I haven’t really made that choice and I haven’t had
that experience, and maybe I will realize that I’m not capable of doing this and so I just know I don’t want to be in a rural because it is too far from where I am from and so possibly the more common urban areas. I would like to leave the state, I would. North Carolina, because I have always wanted to go down there and I think it is a great area and there especially now I have that chance to travel to places bigger than Lilac and I want to teach in the South because I want to have that Northeastern impact because the Northeast is known for their high standards and their high requirements and take that and put that somewhere to raise their standards but I couldn’t do the deep south because I would be frustrated with their standards for the students because I hold myself even higher than Northeastern, don’t be mediocre and I feel like they don’t even have those standards and they would be really low and I would expect too much of them and that lifestyle down there too I can’t eat seafood either so I don’t know that would probably be a damper on my living situation but like maybe I’ll miss home and want to come back and Teach for America is another thing I want to do for experiences because they put you in the roughest of areas and those kids really need help and if I’m young and if you want experience you jump right in there and I may cry everyday but at the end I will be a much stronger teacher.

Pat presented a significantly extended narrative, an extended narrative that switched from topic to topic with little organization or coherence and seemingly in one breath. Pat does reveal some significant aspects of her racialized beliefs in the narrative, again through
the proxy of geography. Pat conceptualized the experience of teaching in city schools as challenging, the South, particularly the down South, as lacking standards for education, and the roughest areas as being a good model for professional development and onsite learning of what it means to be a teacher. Ladson-Billings (2006b) has argued that the nation’s children of color are suffering from the effects of an educational debt lodged against them, and teachers seeking the training of ‘hard knocks' from teaching in areas most affected by the debt seems an ill-fated move that is unlikely to help children of color in any significant way. So even if Pat was to learn from those experiences to be a better teacher, it would come at the expense of the children and families most affected by the racist orientations of Jim Crow segregation that provided the foundation for our modern educational system. Furthermore, the narrative shows that Pat has an extremely confused, incoherent, and cursory understanding of the reality for the places and spaces she references in the narrative.

Sierra was asked if teachers’ whiteness shapes the way they taught her. Sierra presents a short but confusing narrative responding, “It’s hard to say because they didn’t have a diverse student population but I would have to say yes because I don’t know.” In Sierra’s response we see a fundamental belief, that whiteness only matters in contexts where students are not white. I argue now, and will argue later when directly addressing White Racial Identity, that a teacher’s whiteness is more salient and significant in a setting when teaching an all or predominately white student population; opportunities abound to socialize with white students about what it means to be white, for white racial bonding, and to share the nature of the segregated experience of being only with white people. Sierra interprets whiteness as only being influential when the white teachers
teach students who are not white, which is ultimately a defensive position about one’s racial identity as opposed to the recognition of whiteness’ presence in every white person’s set of experiences. The confusion and incoherence in Sierra’s narrative comes with what follows her belief system when she asserts “but I would have to say yes because I don’t know.” If she does not know, Sierra could articulate simply that she does not know, but Sierra feels compelled to argue the affirmative despite not knowing, and in doing so complicates and confuses, thus making this narrative incoherent.

Angela also articulates a level of incoherence in her narrative about race by deflecting away from a response directly related to the question posed. When asked if students from underrepresented groups need different types of instruction from their white peers Angela presented an incoherent narrative in the following way, “I have always thought about kids that learn visually should be taught you know make sure you have every learning style but I have never thought about how race could play into that.” Angela does not approximate an answer to the specifics of the question and likens the question back to an abstract discussion of learning style, asserting at the end that she has not thought about “it,” not willing to use the word ‘race’ directly. I was confused by her response and not able to understand what she said, beyond likening race to learning style and learning style being her primary consideration.

When asked if students in his schools were diverse, Steven’s position was confusing and somewhat incoherent. Steven said, “yeah I had different views of some of them. Why are they even here they are not even doing anything? They just get in trouble all the time.” Fundamentally the question asked Steven if there was diversity in the student population, yet Steven saw the question as an opening to present his own opinion
on ‘diverse’ students very existence in the landscape of the school; his questioned if they should even attend since from his perspective they did not do anything and just got in trouble all the time. Steven seemed to communicate in this narrative that kids who do not meet a standard of what he believes to be “doing something” simply just should not come to school anymore. Ironically his narrative glosses over an important consideration that diverse student populations, who are often considered to be school dependent, do in fact come to school, most often having excellent attendance, and try to engage with a schooling system that simply refuses to engage them. The entire schooling experience becomes a catch-22 for students, when they come to teachers who wonder “Why are you here?” and when they do not come to school, teachers create a narrative of “Those people they are lazy and just don’t value education.” Steven’s narrative is confusing and incoherent to the extent that he never really answers the question in depth, but rather used the space of the question as a sounding board, and his suggestion seemed not only implausible but did not make sense for someone who is one semester away from having his own classroom and serving the public in the role of teacher.

Cathy’s confusing and incoherent narrative is perhaps the single most illustrative example of incoherence and deflection away from a direct question about race. When asked if she ever had teachers from races other than white, Cathy responded in the following manner,

Yes I had a lot of different teachers (7 second pause), let me think here, uhm (8 second pause). I have had teachers that are very liberal from one side or the other and try to push their opinions on you which I don’t really agree with, I have also had teachers come from different backgrounds like
the straight A student that wasn’t popular and went to college to the kid
that did bad in high school but then went to the marines and got a good
education and so their perspectives in teaching are different.

Cathy’s words truly do speak to the incoherence themselves; she clearly does not address
race at all, and even with extra extended pausing, is only able to engage with
circumlocutions that approximate the subject of the question; she never addressed the
foundation of the question of whether she had teachers other than white teachers.

In all of its forms, from abstract liberalism marked by its expansive engagement
of being non-judgmental coupled with highly judgmental language, to naturalization, to
minimization, and finally to incoherence, the semantic moves of color-blind discourse
give participants extra room to move around and through discussions of race. While
creating rhetorical space, color-blind language permits participants an avenue to avoid
taking positions by ignoring, denying, or presenting incoherence; when taking positions
the participants couched beliefs that might have been perceived as racist with open
ideological language of acceptance and being free of judgment. Regardless of the
particular type of color-blind approach, the semantic moves were deployed by
participants when the nature of the questions involved race, a finding consistent with
Bonilla-Silva (2001; 2006); Bonilla-Silva found the occurrence of the semantic moves of
color-blind discourse to most often appear as the nature of the questions has increasingly
racialized language, perspective or even perceived racialized perspective on the part of
participants.

In considering the meaning of both white racial bonding and color-blind
discourse, I am drawn back to the literature in Critical Race Theory (CRT), and
particularly the concept of whiteness as property. The concept of whiteness as property suggests that whiteness, an absolute with a certain level of inalienability, carries values to those who possess it (Harris, 1995). As whites, the high sense of value attached to whiteness promotes whiteness’ property function. A key idea behind property value becomes how whites negotiate the maintenance of said value particularly, since to possess whiteness is also to have an absolute and inherent goodness (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006).

Harris (1995) asserts that whites capitalize on whiteness for the purposes of socializing and enjoyment and, as such, bonding amongst whites helps whites to solidify and share in the high value placed on the reputation of whiteness. One of the functions of whiteness property value is its “absolute right to exclude” (Harris, 1995, p. 282). Typically whiteness is defined not by its characteristics, which would force whiteness to become a stable entity easily identified and consequently addressed, but rather by what it is not; as such whites are able to exclude those “deemed not to be white” (Harris, 1995, p. 283).

In this study the deployment of semantic moves, such as white racial bonding and the use of color-blind orientations to express racialized beliefs, is suggestive of the need whites have to maintain the value of their whiteness. The semantic moves become a defensive posture by which the core value of whiteness can be defended. In particular whites draw from “stock stories” (Delgado, 1993), which serve as a type of master narrative that socializes whites to the meaning of whites, and are used as ammunition in the deployment of semantic moves targeted to protect whiteness property value. Without being challenged or brought to pre-service teachers’ attention, it is likely that these
teachers would not admit or acknowledge the role of color-blind racism or white racial bonding, as calling attention to such approaches necessarily opens the opportunity for whiteness value to be weakened.

In thinking specifically about how both the semantic moves presented in these finding are indicative of the maintenance of whiteness property value, I refer to Harris’ (1995) descriptions of the characteristics whiteness as property that show how is maintained. In all four characteristics highlight how whiteness is understood as possessing property value:

1) Disposition: whiteness confers rewards based on certain behaviors of whiteness

2) Use and enjoyments: whiteness, having certain privileges is enjoyable for those who possess it as they can benefit in the privileges

3) Reputation and Status: given the nature of the benefits and privileges of whiteness, whiteness necessarily has a reputation and status that needs to be maintained, which leads directly into;

4) An absolute right to exclude: because of the rewards, use and enjoyments, and reputation of whiteness, whites use an absolute right to exclude in order to maintain the previous three elements.

The participants’ semantic moves demonstrated all fours conditions of whiteness as property value. First, participant’s use of white racial bonding and colorblind discourse helped to establish, through affinity, particular types of behaviors consistent across the narratives. In consistently engaging in the same semantic moves, the
participants in this study established the nature of disposition that is the participants understood the behaviors of whiteness that confer rewards and benefits. Further, participants used discourse in modeling the coherent behaviors of whiteness and attempted to confirm shared meaning of those dispositions through the bonding move of “you know.”

The second evident characteristic is the use and enjoyment of whiteness. In the denial that occurred through color-blind orientations when discussing racial others, participants deflected away from beliefs which might frame their whiteness as bad or questionable. If their whiteness was bad, overt and covert privileges would not be possible. In establishing color-blind discourse, participants created distance from irrational whites who have jeopardized the enjoyment of whiteness through their racism. From the participants’ perspectives, white overt racists threaten how enjoyable whiteness can be, so there is a great necessity to distance oneself from any orientation that appears racist in nature; the use and enjoyment of whiteness can then be received without being responsible for the negative aspects of racism. Ironically, the white racial bonding demonstrated participants’ willingness to share in the nature of whiteness and establish beliefs in the comfort of being with another white; thus whatever they said could protect their whiteness from outside threats, as long as they could establish a shred meaning and affinity through bonding. In part this is why I argue that had a researcher of color engaged the same participants, the nature of protecting the use and enjoyment of whiteness would have necessitated an abandonment of white racial bonding; this shift would have increased hyper color-blind orientations and different semantic moves that
demonstrated to the non-white researcher that is the participant was a good white, and would not threaten the participants’ sense of white privilege.

The third consideration is the reputation and status of whiteness. Color-blind orientations, as a type of semantic move, are particularly apt to help maintain the reputation and status of whiteness. As has already been suggested, color-blind orientations create rhetorical distance from racism and the other ills of whites that do not shed positively on the reputation and status of whiteness. Whites do not want to create a situation where whiteness can be damaged, and thus use their rhetoric to attempt shielding themselves of responsibility for problematic beliefs, and consequently, are able to maintain a positive reputation and status of their whiteness.

Finally, whiteness as property value has the absolute right to exclude. The white racial bonding that occurred in this study as semantic moves to discuss race have been presented thus far for what they do to connect whites to fellow whites. I suggest that like any concept, the anticoncept is also necessary to fully understanding what is in place. Whereas the bonding is inclusive of whites, the bonding is anti-inclusive of those who are not white. Conversely, had the researcher in this study been non-white, the racial bonding semantic move would have been absent. In bonding and claiming affinity, the white not only bonds with the white, but he/she helps establish that anyone who is not white will not be included in the bond, but rather excluded from the inner workings of whiteness; thus the absolute right to exclude is obtained.

If we understand property as an intellectual material, as Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have suggested, teachers decisions about how to approach their craft will inherently privilege the property and property value that they hold. Consequently there
exists a possessive investment and interest in whiteness to protect the nature of the intellectual materials that form how whites, and in this case white teachers, see the world. Thus the conversation of how semantic moves are demonstrative of whiteness property value is far more than a theoretical conversation. In understanding how the semantic moves used by participants represent the whiteness property value, we also have a window into the way in which whites use their privileged position to shape their epistemological standpoint and understandings of others. The view of self and others directly affects how white teachers shape their craft, and how they value students who either possess or do not possess their similar property value expressed in race.
Chapter 5: Naïveté in rationales for being teachers / Another semantic move

The participants in this study by and large did not articulate well developed or complex rationales for their desire to be a teacher. In fact the rationales provided by participants could be understood both as naïve and yet another semantic move around race. The pervasive and overwhelming amount of white teachers, and the staggering statistics that children of color are most likely to be taught by white teachers in mostly resegregated schooling environments, makes the discussion of teacher rationale important from not merely an employment and training perspective but also from a racial perspective. The struggle to break from the historic, moral, socio-political, and economic debts (Ladson-Billings, 2006b) that have dominated the framing of current educational opportunities in school systems is particularly complicated given the importance of the intended role of teacher as an agent of change and socialization. Schools need teachers who are not only competently and thoughtfully prepared to teach, but who are also clear about why it is that they are doing the work, and are sure of the implication that the teacher’s race has on the educational opportunities and socialization that children receive. I argue that the teacher’s racial identity is important not just when the identity may differ from her/his students; given the socializing powers teachers have, a thoughtful understanding of why one wants to be a teacher and the power of a teacher’s race are important in the socialization of any child from any racial background. There are high levels of apathy among teachers, and new teachers particularly in high needs districts are
unlikely to be retained through three years of teaching (National Center for Education Information, 2005). The finding presented in this chapter suggests that the participants in this study were unable to articulate rationales for becoming a teacher that would help them enter the profession ready and prepared for the challenges of educating in the 21st century. Moreover, the articulation of naïve perspectives seems to serve as another semantic move that demonstrates the colorblindness of white pre-service teachers and seems to block an engagement with culturally relevant pedagogies.

During the first interview participants were directly asked about their reasons and rationales for becoming teachers. While there was a great deal of variety in terms of the participants’ responses, the data suggests that many of the positions were uninformed, or lacked complex development. Brian, for example, could only state that he wanted to be a teacher since he was in ninth grade, but gave no specific rationale about why, stating “when I was in ninth grade I knew I wanted to be a teacher and I don’t know why or what drew me.” Brian went on to say that he had a teacher he thought was “the coolest guy” and “I always knew that I kind of wanted to coach and he was a coach…there were engaging teachers and coaches and I was just like I think I can do that.” Brian went on to articulate a cliché about being a teacher stating, “It’s just that I care what happens to kids,” followed by, “If you want to be an astronaut sure, I’ll write you a reference letter.” Brian’s lighthearted approach to talking about the profession was reflective in the comment that really caring would include writing a reference for the position of astronaut. In his narrative Brian did not demonstrate an ability to work through the realities of his students’ lives; rather he presented a generic and color-blind narrative to support his rationale to be a teacher.
Like Brian, Barbara did not articulate a rationale that appeared to have depth. Barbara shared that co-workers and fellow students suggested that she become a teacher. In particular Barbara stated, “A co-worker was like, ‘You love history; why not go to school for education?’ and when I had that epiphany moment with her. I know I was going about it all wrong.” The so called epiphany moment was really not related to the profession itself but more to the fact that she liked history and education would create the ability to have gainful employment relative to her interests and likes. Barbara also shared that she did not “want to work in a restaurant [her] entire life.” Barbara switched majors from hospitality to education, and ultimately said, “Teaching is something I always wanted to do.” In her responses Barbara shared that a love of content brings her to the profession, but does not speak specifically about what a teacher does, how teachers connect with children, develop curriculum, or anything else that would give insight into her career choice. When asked what she would like students to know about her choice to become a teacher, Barbara stated,

I want to help and being a teacher is a good way to do that. I want to be that positive role model because I never got in trouble and I’m not the bad kid so to speak and I always told myself at a young age that I wasn’t afraid to do anything, whatever, I don’t know that could make me very naïve of the greatest person on earth.”

In her extended response Barbara articulates the cliché of educator as helper, then redirects the conversation away from the act of teacher and back toward herself and her own experience as never getting in trouble or being the bad kid. Barbara’s responses appear to indicate that either she has not thought through the more serious implications of
the profession, or she has not developed a discourse to be able to articulate her true understandings of the profession.

Bob, like Brian and Barbara, does not articulate a rationale for teaching that delves beyond either the surface or the clichés about the teaching profession that dominate the wider parlance about teachers and education. In particular Bob relates his choice to be a teacher back to his father’s work situation stating, “You see that and, you, I don’t want that. I want to go to college and better myself, getting a high paying job so that I don’t have to do that kind of work.” The desire to better his perceived lot in life is admirable, but does not necessarily explicate that teaching alone would accomplish this goal, particularly since teachers make low salaries relative to other careers for which Bob could study as an undergraduate. When asked specifically about why he is choosing a career in education, Bob began to articulate cliché and surface level reasons stating,

since middle school I knew I wanted to be a teacher and making a difference in kids lives. I loved the idea of guiding kids or something like that. I know that I want to do sports and I have always been good at sports and I just love it and it’s relaxing to me at the same time math came easy to me.

Bob went on to share that he looked to either be a physical education teacher or a math teacher, and that he knew he “wanted to have summers off and be a phys ed. teacher because that’s just the easiest job teaching ever you just play sports all day.” Righteous College did not offer a teacher preparation program in physical education, so Bob decided that he “always liked math” and would pursue that major at Righteous.
Ironically, during the interview Bob expressed that he is upset by friends who believe that being an education major is easy. According to Bob his business major friends say that being a teacher “is the easiest thing in the world because you guys never have any work.” Bob continued saying, “I sit there and think you’re full of shit; you guys are gonna be working 8-4 or whatever it’s gonna be and you’re done, and my job never ends.” Bob finished by saying, “They think my job is really easy and they don’t always see me doing work but I sit there and laugh at them.” Bob is upset that his friends suspect his job is going to be easy, yet he articulated that his desire to be a teacher centers on the fact that it is an easy profession. Overall Bob summed up in his desire to be a teacher saying, “I just really want them (students) to know they can trust me and they will want to work with me.” Bob again cited no substantive rationale for his choice of teaching that would support students’ understanding why they should trust him or want to work with him.

Angela also discussed with vagueness her perceptions about her choice to be a teacher. When asked about her decision to become a teacher and education major Angela states,

I love social studies and I love politics and history, and it’s always been interesting to me and I could talk about politics, and social studies and history until I am blue in the face and so I think I should teach. Angela also stated that she was influenced by two teachers that she feels felt or thought developed her interest in history and that for student’s she wants to “make them care.” Angela is not specific about what making students care means, or how as a teacher her role would allow her to develop an ethos of care among her potential future students.
Angela states that one should “want to teach” to be a teacher, citing a generic phrase often used by education majors to explain the desire to teach; Angela went on to state, “I really try to make myself one of the teachers I feel is there because they want to be there.” While this sentiment is positive in nature it does not explain beyond a surface level why she wants to teach or the conditions that would demonstrate she has met the goal of wanting to be there.

Todd also displayed a rationale for teaching that appeared to be vague and underdeveloped. Todd stated, “Not to toot my own horn but they [referring to his family] always say I would be a good teacher because I’m not shy in front of people and have no problem like I’ll get up and talk in front of anyone.” Todd is right that being a teacher does require that he talk in front of people, but this rationale provided to him by his family does not robustly account for the complexities of the profession beyond the technical aspect of talking to groups of people. Certainly the public speaking dimension of teaching is also not unique to the profession and would be a requisite for many fields of study so it provides no particular explanation of the choice to be a teacher.

Todd did explain what he sees the role of teaching being unique, asserting that, “from a legal standpoint my job is to teach them that curriculum, but more than that my job is to connect with them and help them.” Todd uses a reductionist approach as he describes a main “legal” purpose of his work to be delivering content. Content delivery is but one aspect of teaching and ultimately, if the prospective teacher sees content delivery as the major purpose of his/her job, the conceptualization of teacher is reduced only to that of information specialist. The reductionist vision of self as teacher, coupled with a vague and clichéd notion of teachers as helpers, does not sustain an in-depth
understanding of the reason to be a teacher. Todd continued with cliché in his assertion, “choosing to become a teacher is me taking an oath to do my best to help them.” Todd is unable to move beyond teacher as helper and teacher as a technician delivering content to explain why it is that he wants to be a teacher, or how being a teacher will do the “helping” that he proposes for kids.

Cathy also articulated a very confused position about why she wants to be a teacher. In part Cathy said that being a teacher comes from having good models of teachers, but it is her explanation of what her models are that gives one pause. Cathy said that teachers

…influenced me especially the diverse teachers that I had, how I could have one history teacher that was an ex-Marine but he taught just as well as any teachers maybe of a different race. I thought it was cool that so many races and religions could still be good teachers and it didn’t matter. (Pause) It doesn’t matter?”

Cathy asserted that race does not matter, then paused for a long second, and turned her statement into a question, as though seeking my approval to ensure her that race did not, in fact, matter. It is interesting that, in her conceptualization of teacher, Cathy placed emphasis on aspects such as military or service, and was surprised that either of those aspects could create a situation for the teacher to also be good. Cathy’s position that this was the model that motivated her to pursue teaching is confusing analytically as she did not really provide what it is about those teachers that served as model for her, beyond hypothetical and undefined race as well as military service.
In attempting to further explain how she arrived at becoming a teacher Cathy bounced from topic to topic, never proving a response that would illuminate her understanding of the profession she chose. When asked why she wanted to major in education and be a teacher, Cathy’s extended response was,

I have always loved history and knew I wanted to do something with history; my dad and uncle were history majors, it runs in our families. Also I do like to help people, and I do like teaching, and my sister will be like help me with this and I like having the work to help her get to know it and it makes me happy. I have always taught sports camps and my uncle was principal of our middle school.

In this response, Cathy jumped from her love of history, to family love of history, to helping her sister, to teaching sports camps, to having a family member as a principal. Having family members in education, Cathy has the potential to be able to make deeper connections to the profession, and even potentially have a language to explain why teaching makes sense. Like other participants, ultimately Cathy came back to the idea of teacher as helper, and displayed a sort of interest convergence between her personal interests and choice of content. When asked to discuss what she wants students to know about her choice to be a teacher, Cathy ended with, “I am very serious about the fact that I really do like history and how it helps later in life and all that.” The over focus on content, particularly her personal affection for the content, coupled with a lack of discussion about the students in meaningful ways, seems disconnected from an understanding of teacher beyond the surface.
Steven was also unable to articulate substantive reasons why teaching is his chosen profession. When asked why he wants to be a teacher Steven articulated, “I thought, I’m gonna be a teacher; it’s like so easy,” an articulation similar to Bob’s thinking. Further Steven sees his role as twofold, helping to “educate them [students] on information that they are gonna need to know for the test but also build relationships with them;” he further stated his wish is for students to go home and say, “Mr. Paper did this with me today and it was so much fun.” Steven’s desire for students to have fun does not appear to be a substantive approach to teaching in and of itself. The concept of teacher as test preparer becomes in a way a reification of an autocratic teacher as technician who must focus on test results as a measure of teacher efficacy.

In essence Steven as test-preparer espouses a self-regulated view of teaching that aligns with the lay discourse on what teachers’ roles are, yet falls short of being a clear vision of what teacher education hopes to prepare teachers to be.

Sierra has been around the “majors” circuit in her time as an undergraduate; as the oldest participant, she has been working continuously on her undergraduate degree for the better part of 7 years, and has majored in many fields. After her penultimate major of photography did not pan out, Sierra, “I started thinking about my back up plan to become a French teacher; my grandmother is Canadian French and that was my backup plan so I was like, ok, I want to go into teaching; I want to be a teacher.” Sierra’s only real other discussion about why she wants to be a teacher came when asked what she would want students to know about her choice; like previous participants, Sierra centered on the role of her content saying, “I teach them because (6 second pause) I love my subject and I want them to learn it too and that I am there to be a role model.” Sierra’s
response echoes many of the participants who balance both their personal interest in the subject with the formula response of teacher as helper and role model.

Of all the participants, Pat shared what appeared to be the most in-depth and substantive ideas of why she wants to be a teacher and her rationale for choosing the field. Pat cited that being a social studies teacher is important in order to help students “become better citizens.” The response shows some thinking that matches the aims of being a social studies and the goal of a free public education to promote democratic ideals of citizenship. Pat was ultimately unable to describe what her role as a teacher would serve in pursuit of the development of the citizenry and future electorate, and consequently her articulation, while positive, remains at the surface.

Pat also believes that planning lessons, an important aspect of a teachers professional obligation, is wasteful and not a productive organizational tool for her as a teacher; she said, “It’s just not how I like to be organized,” and said her mentor shared she would only need lessons as pacification of administrators; her mentor is alleged to have told her “When you get into a school your superintendent wants this BS kind of stuff.”

Pat also shared that being “real” is an important concern for her; she stated that she learned from her mentor about having students see her as “human,” stating “I don’t want students mad at me,” a negative perception of teachers she thinks are “disciplinarian.” Pat’s responses indicate that despite wanting students to “become better” students, she is not particularly interested in planning or management as part of her job, nor does she develop how a teacher engages her students in the act of developing the ideals of citizenry.
The gaps between white and non-white students can be understood as being exacerbated by any number of factors that loosely fall into the categories of educational debt that Ladson-Billings (2006b) has pointed out have shaped the landscape of American education since the beginning of so called “free” and public schools. The challenges in teaching in the 21st century are not limited to the act of teaching and delivering instruction; the gaps that exist between students are microcosms of the larger gap in wealth, material worth, employment opportunities, and livelihood between whites and non-white peers. The school then can be understood as a site where the gaps that persist into adulthood are formed.

In this discussion then, the role of the teacher cannot be limited to stereotypic constructions of what a teacher is, if the challenges of paying off the debt are to be addressed. As presented in Chapter 1, it is very difficult to retain teachers in high need districts and there is a phenomenon of white flight, whereas new white teachers rapidly leave the profession. Teacher education can only do so much by means of preparing teachers for their roles. Teacher candidates and even many teacher educators reduce instructional opportunities to issues of methods and approaches to delivering instruction and leave the question and discussion of their identity, and particularly the racial identity, unspoken. In an approach with either too much focus on methods to the exclusion of a broader perspective, or too much focus on sweepingly broad claims about the aims of education without meaningful mechanisms for reaching said goals, a crucial aspect of race is left unsaid, and colorblind (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). When the racial identity of the teacher is left unexamined, and the teacher is unable to see her/his work as a teacher
being that of a political agent of change, the ability for the teacher to situate the work within a culturally relevant approach is lost.

The generic and naïve ways in which the pre-service teachers in this study articulated their desires to be teachers demonstrates a certain abstract color-blindness in-so-far as a seemingly expansive narrative is deployed but a restrictive approach is engaged. I am asserting that the methods-based and “I want to help kids” orientations articulated by pre-service teachers are naïve in their nature, and help pre-service teachers maintain a blindness to the ways in which the teachers’ white identity affects a socializing force for students, and ultimately works to support the long-standing hegemonic system that has privileged whites and kept peoples of color at the margins (hooks, 1983). Further, in a dysconscious way, the unexamined, naïve, and underdeveloped rationales for becoming a teacher prevent pre-service teachers from engaging in the selective and intentional use of approaches that compliment the reality of the actually particular classroom setting of which the teacher is a part, in a meaningful and culturally relevant manner (Dixson & Fasching-Varner, 2008).

Consequently, the finding that pre-service teachers do not possess sufficiently developed rationales for becoming educators becomes significant not only in what it tells us about the pre-service teachers’ choice to become a teacher, but also is significant with respect to the way that naïve rationales become another set of semantic moves whereby one’s race and the implications of race go unspoken; the work becomes racially dysconscious (Dixson, 2009). When new teachers enter the classroom racially dysconscious, they may attempt to employ methods that were taught to them in their pre-service teacher education programs, using hypothetical children, and without
consideration for the socio-emotive and socio-political realities of the classroom
landscape in particular, or the socio-political realities of the students’ lives. Instead of
learning the thinking behind the intended engagement of a particular method or strategy
the teacher clings to the method itself, decontextualized from who the students are (as raced, gendered, sexualized, classed), who he/she is as teacher (as raced, gendered, sexualized, classed) and the resulting pedagogy becomes as naïve as the rationales the teachers have for becoming teachers. Upon entering the profession new teachers often find that “methods” learn are ineffective at reaching the particular population of students in their classroom; the new teachers may become upset at the methods apparent inefficacy and then dismiss their education as teaching them too idealistically, and/or blame the students and attribute the lack of efficacy to “problems” with the students, often a code for what they believe are deficiencies the teachers attribute to race, homelife, socio-economic status, parenting etc.

New teachers are often apt to characterize the children as the “reality” that prevents the teachers from engaging the students instructionally, and they become defensive about a culturally relevant praxis, citing that the “reality” is less idealistic than they were taught. Eventually, when new teachers have exhausted all of the largely ineffective methods or “tricks” learned in their teacher education program, they become frustrated with the job. It is in the moment of frustration with their job that I believe the finding of this dissertation study takes on its secondary meaning. When frustrated within their jobs early in their career, young teachers are likely to contemplate a question like, “Why am I even doing this at all?” In asking the question and thinking about their rationale for being a teacher, they are left with what participants in this study came up
with: “I like kids,” “I want to help,” “I thought it was gonna be easy,” “I wanted summers off,” “I really like the subject matter;” what emerges is that there is not a substantial or substantive reason to stay, and their uninformed identity marked by the semantic move of naïveté creates the urge to leave the classroom. In the findings presented in Chapter four we saw that this frustration with lack of substantive reason to enter the profession can be compounded by the new teachers’ raced beliefs and the semantic moves they employ that are color-blind in nature. In settings where there is a mismatch between the race of the teacher and the race of a majority of students, the frustration is compounded with what the new teacher believes to be the struggles in dealing with students and families, etc., and they are driven further away from the profession. Thinking about racial identity in chapter 6, white racial identity in particular, is important not just for the semantic moves presented in Chapter 4, but also for the way in which the move of naïveté has long term implications for students’ opportunities based on the race of the teachers and the way in which students will be socialized by teachers.

I will suggest in the implications that teacher education programs have a moral and ethical responsibility if not to the pre-service teachers, to the future students of these teacher candidates. The greater the turnover in a district the less stable the teaching force, and students do not receive the benefit of teachers who have developed their craft over multiple years. Additionally, when students are taught by those who have unexamined, naïve, and dysconscious (Dixson, 2009) racial identities and reasons for being teachers, there is likely to be an absence of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994).
Urban districts, which are nearly all re-segregated, have large student populations, recruit and hire many teachers, and have poor retention of new teachers, which results in maintaining a cycle of dysfunctional educational opportunities for students. Teacher education programs have the opportunity to break this cycle and to contribute to potentially greater teacher retention, and a more racially informed teaching force, if they focus more deeply on examining the rationales of their pre-service candidates and help the candidates to see the lack of substance contained within their rationales and how such naïve rationales further situate them within color-blind frameworks. If teacher education programs sought to ensure that teacher candidates entered the profession with fully developed rationales for being teachers, armed not with a set of methods but rather a set of conceptual understandings of learning, and a mechanism to help them engage both the desired conceptual understandings and the actual students in front of them, we might see the retention cycle of teachers change to benefit students who are already subjected to the multitude of educational debts endemic to segregated public education. Further, and more importantly, teachers who have connected and full understandings of their rationales in place, the ones who have moved out from behind the shadow of color-blind orientations, are likely to engage in a culturally relevant praxis that recognizes the nature of systematic oppression in place for many K-12 students of color.
Chapter 6: WRI identity, the WRI model and its limitations

In this chapter I will begin by presenting what I believe to be a set of three amalgamated smaller assertions/findings relative to White Racial Identity. I will begin by looking at 1) participants’ conceptualization of diversity as race, then look at 2) how participants’ white identity is linked to ‘racial others’ rather than self and will follow with 3) the incoherence of and/or underdeveloped nature of narrative relative to white racial identity. From that departure point I will then provide where I believe participants are located within the Helms White Racial Identity model. Finally, I will present an analytical critique of Helms’ White Racial Identity development model, proposing an alternate model of white racial identity.

Amalgamated Findings About White Racial Identity

A) Diversity as race

An important element in beginning to understand participant white racial identity is understanding how they conceptualize race. In the case of eight participants in this study it became clear that the concept of “diversity” served to signify as a coded synonym for race. Participants revealed most often that they understand diversity as race and consequently race as diversity when asked to speak about the hometown they grew up in. After the initial interview when we talked about each participant’s hometown, I was curious in the second interview to see if the participants believed their hometown
was diverse. In asking the question I hoped to learn more about their hometowns and to understand how they conceptualize diversity before asking any questions that specifically looked at race. I had not conceptualized asking this question believing that participants would speak solely about race; understanding that diversity could be framed in a variety of ways and hold multiple meanings, I had expected answers from participants to touch on a variety of concepts to describe the diversity or lack thereof in each community. The first question of the second interview was, “is your hometown diverse?”; without any additional prompting, most participants discussed diversity solely in terms of race, and revealed an aspect of their socialized identity and orientation to the concept of diversity.

Pat, Angela, Bob, and Brian all gave rather short answers directly stating their understanding of diversity. Pat responded, “uhh, not really, the majority is probably white.” Similarly Angela responded, “no!” and when asked “why not?,” Angela responded, “it is all white people.” Bob asserted, “it’s mostly Caucasian. I remember there were only three or four African Americans and maybe one Hispanic. Bob said, “uhh, yeah, actually for the most part [inaudible] when I got to high school it showed we had a substantial minority population.” For these participants their quick responses established firmly that they conceptualized diversity along lines of race, and they succinctly linked the idea of diversity squarely to race in their responses.

Other participants, like Cathy, gave more extended responses when asked if their community is diverse. Cathy said,

Ummm, where I am from no. Where I am from it’s very uhh, it’s a lot of white kids and you don’t get much, probably when I graduated 10-12 African American students and then like a few Asians and that’s
about it, and there is not much diversity but in the city there is a lot more diversity.

In her response Cathy shows two important understandings relative to race; first, when thinking about diversity Cathy sees diversity as an issue of race as exhibited in her statement that her town is “a lot of white kids” Second, what Cathy does not say is telling; in finishing the sentence Cathy says “you don’t get much.” While she does not fill in the ‘blank,’ I would argue that she would have uttered ‘diversity’ as her next word, particularly since as she stopped herself from finishing, she said that she only graduate with 10-12 African American students. If her claim is that there is not much diversity because it is white, providing information about the African American population appears to serve as an illustrative counterbalance to highlight that in fact the town is primarily white, and consequently not diverse. Cathy also reveals that there is a geographic connection to race in that if one wants to find more diversity, one ought to go to “the city” as “there is a lot more diversity” in “the city.” As seen in other respondents’ answers in the previous findings, the link between geography and race is not an uncommon characterization.

Todd gave an entire racial profile of his county in order to explain his belief that where he grew up was in fact diverse. Todd asserted,

Uhm, the county a whole I mean it’s pretty diverse, we have like specific areas like Rampant and Fall Hills that are predominately African American and so is Highhack, and then where I live is mostly white like, and Mounthill is predominately Hispanic, so basically a good way to put it is through the parades we have. In Mounthill there is always Puerto Rican
Day Parade, in Fall Hills they have the Haitian Day Parade and in Bubbling Brook [where Todd lives] there is a St. Patty’s Day Parade. Todd clearly linked diversity to race and Todd was even able to provide a narrative tour of his county in order to clearly explain his point.

Barbara also provided a rather lengthy extended narrative to fully explain her position about the diversity of her community. Barbara stated, Shorefield, not so much, all white (lowers voice), and we had that urban suburban program and they kept to themselves and we didn’t know how to communicate with them so we couldn’t really relate to each other and South Carolina I would say was a 50/50 split and then Mississippi I wanna say it was like 60 40 as white the minority but I noticed that everyone down south there wasn’t very much cliques and that interests me.

Having lived in multiple communities Barbara gives the racial breakdown of each in order to explain how she saw them as diverse. Like Todd and Cathy, Barbara also does some reduction of race to geography presenting the urban suburban program as some sort of Martian invasion and being unable to communicate with the students in the program. Having lived in Lilac myself a great deal of my life, and having taught in Lilac, I know firsthand that the so-called urban suburban program of which Cathy speaks really is a one way street and only children from the city are sent to what is perceived to be superior suburban schools. There is no reciprocity to send children from elite suburbs to the urban schools, and the program has traditionally been predominately minority based. So when
Barbara references the urban suburban program, and considering the rest of the discussion, urban suburban also becomes a proxy for race.

Interestingly Barbara also exhibits some of the racial bonding language presented earlier in a different form, here to highlight distinctions between “them,” the racial minorities attending her school as a part of the urban suburban program, and “we,” the white students from her town. Barbara’s distinctions are analytically interesting to me as I argue that it shows a sort of “white only” space stereotypically associated with Jim Crow era segregation, and the we/them language supports a segregated distinction that appears to be relevant to thinking about the types of opportunities a future teacher sees as appropriate for white and minority students.

Part of Sierra’s narrative response to this question was presented earlier relative to white racial bonding, but it bears repeating with the additional response with which Sierra continued; it is not only illustrative of her conceptualization of diversity as race, but also illustrates the larger narrative and societal construction that pathologizes race and is very much a part of Sierra’s narrative. Sierra suggested,

not entirely, it is becoming more diverse, uhmm, there are two maximum security prisons, and, you know, how prison populations are mostly Black. So people move up to be closer to the families that are in prison so there are lots of Black people but not a lot of Hispanics of Asian, just a small Asian population in Sayville, but mostly Black and white. My high school I think throughout my entire high school career there was a total of like 20-30 Black kids is a lot out of 1,500 students
and it might be accurate or a little high, there was one Black kid in my French class and a girl in my English and Chorus.

Like the others, Sierra’s response limits the discussion of diversity to race and codifies her understanding of race as the direct link to diversity, or the direct link to race her understanding of diversity. Sierra also extrapolates more than just a presentation of race in her response, as she reveals her belief and socialization about the lot in life of Black folks as primarily populating prisons and having many Black people move closer to their prison population family members. I believe that Sierra’s narrative is not an isolated belief that only she possesses, but rather part of a larger community narrative. To try and understand Sierra’s statement I investigated the prison in her hometown. According to a New York Times article (1991) regarding the state where Sierra lives, the prison population is nearly 80% African-American or Latino despite the total population of the state being comprised of less than 25% from the African-American and Latino groups; this staggering statistic helps to situate how Sierra arrived at her misinformed conclusions about her community makeup as diverse mostly because of the prison. The Supermax facility Sierra described was in fact cited by a federal judge in 1991 because African American and Latino inmates were regularly “discriminated against in discipline, job assignments and housing” according to a New York Times (1991). Minority inmates were able to prove they were disproportionately punished with longer and more severe sentences for in-prison violations all of which became part of the inmates behavior record used to determine eligibility for parole. Sierra does not go beyond what is the appearance of Black inmates to reach her conclusion, but in fact there are a number of social factors in place that speak to the complexity of what Sierra articulates on the surface. That Black
inmates are essentially persecuted at this prison, extending their stay beyond initial sentences only serves to reinforce to Sierra in her socialization her concept of diversity as race.

Steven appears as the discrepant case among participants in terms of his conceptualization of diversity. While he still goes on to explain diversity as relative to race, his confusing narrative does open up the realm of diversity beyond just race. When asked if his town was diverse, Steven said,

Yes, very. Many different cultures and opportunities for many different cultures and mainly because Lillywhite (the Ivy League school in his home town) is so popular and Ivyville has a lot of protests and stuff for hippie stuff like a lot of nature stuff, Ivyville is gorgeous, if you’re not into that stuff but its cool cause its lots, different people and stuff for everyone. Our neighbors are from Honduras, I mean Puerto Rican Honduras and they are college professors and they are really down to earth.

In his narrative, Steven shifts to his discussion of his “Puerto Rican Honduras” neighbors and race becomes slightly present in his conceptualization, but his understanding is clearly confused and confusing; the shift to the discussion of his neighbors, although perhaps his way of illustrating the diversity, does not seem not to make a lot of sense. Also, in an attempt to talk about the community, Steven shifts topics from the “many different cultures” to the “opportunities”, to the “hippie stuff,” to the landscape and environment, and then back to “different people;” he often inserted undefined “stuff” into
his response which only confused the ability to follow his logic and description of how he views his home city as diverse.

B) White Identity and its link to “others”

For many of the participants, questions asking about their whiteness produced responses that illustrated their understanding of their whiteness by discussing racial others, and not themselves or really even their whiteness. For seven participants, discussing experiences of their own whiteness produced narratives that focused on others. Barbara talked about learning she was white by going to a so-called Black mall, and stated,

One time when we were in Mississippi and we were kind of interviewing schools so we visited all the schools and one school the girls said there was one mall, the Bomba, and don’t go there it’s bad and we were like why is it bad?, and we went and it turned out we were the only white people in the mall and we didn’t care because we’re not like that, but the problem was all the Blacks looked at us and eyed us down and looked at us like why are you here and I was like wow.

In her narrative not only does Barbara link white identity back to others, but she essentially does not engage the question; she ignored really discussing herself and focused instead, in an implied manner, on how the “Blacks” created a racist situation by that fact that they “looked at” and “eyed” down Barbara and her mother. Also consistent with her narrative of expansive goodness and non-judgmental behavior, Barbara inserted that “we didn’t care because we’re not like that.” For one to believe Barbara one would
have to suspend in their minds eye that this is the story she used as an illustrative example of knowing her whiteness. That this is the story she tells leaves open the strong possibility that “it” – race – did in fact matter.

When asked if she had experiences where she really knew she was white, Angela said, “when I went to a city school for the first time I was like, WOW! I am the white girl, like when I went for my placement last year and I was the minority and that’s really different.” It took what appeared to be Angela’s first experience as the racial minority to understand that she was white. Angela did not consider other experiences that taught her that she was white. Angela spoke somewhat to the invisible nature of whiteness as being something that is not recognized as present without the counterexample to awaken the invisible part of white identity and make it known.

Unlike Angela, Steven essentially did not answer the question. When asked, “can you think of an experience where you knew you where white?,” Steven used the question as an opportunity to discuss and state his beliefs and positions about people of color.

uhmm, yeah, definitely. I started off knowing that the Black kids were nice, one was my age and one my sisters age, but then you got to high school and kids that got kicked out of school and I didn’t. I had a different viewpoint of what the kids are cause they just don’t care about anything.”

In his narrative, Steven begins with a strong “uhmm, yeah, definitively” indicating that perhaps he had a particular, specific, or memorable experience. As his narrative continued it became clear that he was neither going to answer the question nor do the work of understanding his own white racial identity. Instead of answering the question or exploring himself, Steven laid out an indictment of Black kids, insinuating that in his
youth he “started off knowing that Black kids were nice,” but then learned they were not because they “got kicked out of school” and “they just don’t care about anything. His response and lack of willingness to engage self highlights the pervasive way in which White Racial Identity can not only go unexplored, but can be actively avoided by whites simply through deflecting any conversation about self as white to racial “others” who can bear the brunt of the responsibility.

For Bob, Brian, and Todd, sports and teams with racial minorities were the experiences where they really knew they were white. Brian’s narrative, presented earlier to show the conflict between Brian’s claim to be open and non-judgmental despite his judgments, essentially claimed that he understood himself to be white by seeing “inner city” kids (a proxy for not white) with low pants and “shorts that are too long” who “interacted” different than he and his other white teammates. In a similar type of narrative Bob, said,

I guess more so in basketball when I got towards seventh and eight grade my school always played inner city schools and they were allll Black and I started realizing not so much that you know I was just a different skin color and that but I started to notice they had a little more slaaaaang talk and they always definitely jumped higher than I could and they were fast you know and we always got out butts kicked by them and I guess sports is really jus the place where I realized I am a white boy I can’t ump and I can’t run.

Todd had a slightly different, albeit ultimately similar, narrative about sports that Brian and Bob had. Todd gave a very extended response that is presented below,
In 8th grade when I started playing for St. Georges, which was my school but my 8th grade school didn’t have a team so I played for St. Paul’s which is down in Highhack about 5 minutes away but it’s like in the ghetto and I was one of three white kids on the team and I hung with them and they were cool with me but then I started being friends with those kids and we would play basketball not for the team but at the rec center and at the center I had never been there but they lived in the neighborhood and I lived like 5 minutes away and one day I had my mom drop me off and none of my buddy’s were there, and there must have been 60-70 kids older and younger running around and I was the only white person and I was kind of just looking around and it wasn’t until one of my buddy’s came that I got on a team cause no one wanted to pick a white kid, and I was pretty good and everyone stated calling me “white boy” and one kid was like “yo white boy I don’t mean to call you white boy but I don’t know your name” and it was like all the time from 8th grade until 12th grade that was common for me when I played basketball I was one of the few white kids there and all the time you know you are white and then like I played in a couple of summer leagues and they have street announcers that would comment and I always got references to white guys and famous white guys or something.

Todd’s presents less judgmental language of the references by which he understands his whiteness, but, like the other narratives in this small finding, the concept of his whiteness is predicated on racial others who serve as the socializing orientation to understanding his
whiteness. In this sense, it is racial minorities who not only suffer from the effects of white racism and white supremacy, but who also bear the brunt of teaching whites that they are white. In a sense the idea of learning that one is white via racial others is exploitative and demonstrates that white racial identity can not only be misunderstood by whites, but be completely ignored and go dysconscious (Dixson, 2009) without interaction with minority groups.

Sierra had a response similar to Angela’s, when asked if she ever had an experience where she knew she was white; she described an experience where she was one of few.

I think like when I had an apartment on East Main Street and I was one of 5 white people in my building and I was uneasy because I had never really been around Black people before but they were the best neighbors I ever had and it was a great sense of community and everyone looked out for everyone and it changed my perspective.

Sierra also demonstrates the idea that white racial identity is predicated on racial others when asked if her whiteness shaped the way she teaches and, after a 12 second pause, her response was,

If I were to teaching in a suburban school it would be fine, but in the city they will be like “white teacher!, what do you know about us?” I had a friend who had an observation at a city elementary school and they were like “go back to the suburbs you don’t know anything about us,” and I don’t want them to look at me like that and that’s how they are going to look at me at first being a white teachers and wanting to teach in that
environment makes me very aware of my whiteness and my perceptions of other races because I do not want, I don’t want to convey negative perceptions that will push them away from me and there are certain things about my upbringing and things that come from that and I need to think about how they play out in my interactions with people.

Clearly in this very lengthy narrative, Sierra transferred much of onus for her “whiteness” and its potential effects onto hypothetical racial others. Sierra demonstrated that she had come to certain conclusions about what students from other racial groups would do, and saw racial identity as something only significant in a setting where her race differed from her students. What Sierra did, which is in part an explanation for how her WRI may be more developed than her peers in this study as suggested in the Helms model (1984; 1990; 2003), is acknowledge some ownership in her experiences. In her housing situation she highlighted that while the experience of being few among many shaped her understanding of her whiteness, she also acknowledged that she went into the situation with judgments, and the experience helped to challenge some of the beliefs she had prior to the living situation. That she was able to see the experience as even slightly transformative is potentially promising; in terms of the scope of this study, she is by far the discrepant case with regard to having the experience of being the only white and it served as a transformative ‘intervention’ of sorts between her belief system and the reality that the belief system ignores. Sierra was also cognizant that being a youth with a parent whom she described as being like Archie Bunker had great impact on her WRI development. While Sierra was misguided in many aspects of her narrative and had generalized what potential responses could be from purely hypothetical urban students,
she ded recognize that her “upbringing” would impact the way she interacts with students of different races. While Sierra did not recognize that those same socialized beliefs play out in settings with other white students, she was the only participant able to problematize her white supremacist racist upbringing, and bring it to bear her experience on what might be her White Racial Identity.

C) Incoherent and underdeveloped White Racial Identity Narratives

The last small assertion is that in participant narratives relative to white racial identity white participant narratives appear to be incoherent and/or underdeveloped when addressing white racial identity. These incoherent and underdeveloped narratives in part seem to indicate a certain level of uneasiness with the concept of participant whiteness and the implications of one’s whiteness.

In her narrative, Angela presented a classic example of incoherent narrative as discussed by Bonilla-Silva (2006). Angela talked about not having a teacher from a different race until she reached college; she had one African American professor in her three and half years at Righteous College, and when she was asked if that experience was in any way memorable Angela said, “Yeah. Not really. No! I don’t know? I don’t think so? In a sense one could look at the question and response and assert that it is not a direct reflection of her white racial identity. I argue, however, that Angela’s inability to reflect on the experience of having an African American professor, her first teacher of color in 20 years, and, her inability to express what the experience meant to her as a white person, reveal that Angela is probably not in the habit of thinking about her whiteness or how her experiences are shaped by her own whiteness. If Angela is unable
to think about her whiteness relative to the context of others, a typical manner in which participants attempt to make sense of whiteness, it is likely she is unable to think about her whiteness independent of such experiences. Related to this smaller assertion of racial confusion, Angela takes nearly every position one could take in answering the question, without ever definitively addressing the substance of the question.

Barbara seemed both amused and confused when asked if she identified as white, and her response engaged in the multiple answer approach like Angela. Barbara’s response was, “I guess. Yeah. I don’t know. What else would I be (laughing)?” Also, when asked to talk about how her whiteness could impact her teaching Barbara, looking very confused and puzzled by the question said, “that is a good question. I have never thought about it.” Like many of the participants, Barbara had not openly thought about her own whiteness and the impact of said whiteness not only on the act of teaching, but also in terms of the very routine and mundane ways in which she lives her life, despite the dysconscious presence of her race.

Steven gave a confusing answer about his whiteness that avoided directly addressing the question and consequently directly addressed any aspect of his whiteness. When asked if whiteness shape the way he teaches Steven said, “No, I have good morals and values and I want there and I want to be there for my kids and I don’t care if they are Black, white, or whatever.” In this response Steven implicitly acknowledges a belief that if he were to engage his whiteness as significant, he would consequently exply himself as a racist without “good morals and values.” Steven also shifted the question back to students’ race, thus avoiding the opportunity to think about the role his own whiteness
plays in his socialization and experiences as a white in society that has been premised on white supremacy and racism.

Brian’s unexamined and confused narrative, like Steven, also ignored an engagement with discussing his own whiteness and speculating about hypothetical students. When asked if his whiteness shapes the way he teaches. Brian stated,

I would say just not being as, I don’t know how to say it, as diverse growing up knowing one thing and someone else grows up knowing a completely different thing and there is a gap and how you fill the gap is kind of like your push to diversity, and I just, I don’t know. The things that relate to the adolescents themselves on the individual level and talk about a TV show that would bridge the gap instead of saying your African American so let’s talk about Africa today and that would be completely obvious treating them like, yeah your b-Black. But, it doesn’t matter.

Brian’s narrative is confusing as he jumps form topic to topic, with no topic directly addressing the question asked. In one sense he is claiming that his whiteness is akin to not being diverse when saying he “would say just not being as…as diverse,” and he struggled to conceptualize this as he was unsure “how to say it.” We have seen previously this idea of diversity as race, and whites apparently being diversity neutral and other races being diversity engaged.

Brian went on to suggest that part of the task is to minimize the importance of race and that African American students would be engaged more by talking about a television show than talking about Africa, and that the only reason a hypothetical teacher would even engage in a discussion of Africa is to
placate African American students. As a future Social Studies teacher, one might assume that Brian would want all of his students from any racial group to know a lot about Africa. Knowledge of Africa seems extremely important given what we know about human development, and how much of our human existence is believed to be traced back to Africa. It is understood that the most racial diversity in the world exists in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, and many of the origins of man can be traced back genetically, for all racial groups, to the African context. Brian implies that he would not want to teach “Africa” to avoid appearing like he is only teaching to or for African American students yet this position, which appears to be to protect his vision of self as expansive, missed the larger teaching opportunity and, in any case, completely void of a discussion of his very own whiteness and its implications.

Pat deflected away from whiteness and toward the idea that she is a presenter of material and curriculum and, as such, has to ensure that her whiteness is not a part of her teaching. When asked about the role of her whiteness and her teaching, Pat stated,

“I don’t think. I’m just. I don’t know how to say this. I want it to be about teaching and that kind of thing and there is no way to be objective when you are teaching, it’s just impossible so I think things are gonna come out, but if you are like students are like white, it’s just. I’m just gonna try not to tell that, come out, it shouldn’t matter. I have this material I need to teach you and sorry if you don’t like it, this is how I grew up and so don’t judge me because I’m white just like I won’t judge you no matter where you are from.”
Pat’s narrative is extremely confusing, and like other participants Pat is not able to really present a coherent or developed sense of her white identity; the confusion indicates a disconnect between what participants want to hold as dysconscious and questions that are asking them to directly and consciously address race. In her narrative, however, Pat does reveal a number of interesting concepts. First she argues that teaching should be about material and consequently implies that her race should not be a part of that discussion. Pat also jumps again to hypothetical students whom she already perceives as judging her. In her hypothetical defense of self, she also revealed that her whiteness ‘is what it is,’ a neutral concept and that she just grew up that way, but she also made an interesting claim when she argued, “I won’t judge you no matter where you are from.” In that statement Pat revealed her understanding that one’s race is synonymous with one’s geographic location, an interesting argument about racialized spaces and ultimately who belongs where.

On the more ‘unexamined perspective’ end of this finding, Bob was asked to what extent his whiteness might shape his teaching and Bob, after a five second pause, said,

Uhhmm, I don’t really know. I don’t really, to be honest. I don’t really know because I never really thought when I was a teacher I don’t think Black, white, whatever, I just see them as a teacher and you are the leader of the group and you are what they need to respect and listen to and trust and just because I’m white I wouldn’t change anything I’m there to make sure these kids get the proper education.

Bob appeared not to have really thought much about his white racial identity and communicated that clearly in the front end of his response. Bob saw himself as “the
leader of the group” and wanted students to not only “respect and listen” but also to “trust” him. Bob is interested in teaching in an urban environment, and, given the segregated landscape of United States urban schools, this means that Bob would likely be working with students who do not share his race. It is analytically ironic then that Bob sees his whiteness as a “just” case, like it is a neutral element of his identity that he just happened to have and that his whiteness does not or would not affect anything in his teaching. Given the history of public schooling and the educational debt attached from whites to children of color, what reason would the students have to trust Bob? Bob has not done the self-interrogatory work of understanding not only the complexity of his whiteness, but the social history of his whiteness. From a culturally relevant standpoint (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Dixson, 2002; Dixson and Fasching-Varner, 2008) it is unlikely that without opening his own experience up to interrogation Bob is unlikely to be able to engage students in a culturally relevant manner that would create a situation where students would want to respect Bob.

Todd gave in an extended response to the question of how whiteness might affect or shape his teaching attempts to work through his understanding of whiteness. After a 10 second pause, Todd said,

that’s a good question. Is my whiteness gonna shape the way I teach? I guess it won’t affect it if I am in a predominately white suburban school it will just be another day around white kids, but if I’m in an urban school that is probably the first thing they will see and I will have to prepare myself to defend against adversity because I’m white and if I’m in an urban or higher needs school students won’t like me because I’m white
and how I deal with that I haven’t thought about it and how well do you prepare for that. I honestly don’t know and it’s good to think about. Don’t get me wrong but I’d rather not talk about my race because it is irrelevant to me teaching them, I think?

Todd’s response showed that overall he had a fairly underdeveloped and confused sense of his white identity, as evidenced that he sees his whiteness only at the level of phenotype in his assertion that for students of color it “is probably the first thing they see.” Furthermore, Todd views whiteness as a ‘default’ and as only relevant when dealing with kids who are not white, i.e. “white suburban school it will just be another day around white kids.” Like several participants Todd linked race to geography, as the example of suburban to white and urban and high needs as signified codes (Hall, 1997) to represent children of color. Because Todd does not delve deeper than phenotype he is unable to look at a systemic analysis of how whiteness was privileged in his own experiences growing up, how whiteness receives privilege in general, or examine the systematic nature of white hegemony that has dominated the US social landscape. Not only has Todd not actively thought about his whiteness, he also indicated that he has no desire to think about his whiteness, and in a sense admonishes me in telling me that he does not want me to get him wrong but, according to him, “I’d rather not talk about my race because it is irrelevant to me teaching them, I think?” The “I think” was a leveraged form of discourse that Todd used in an attempt to find out from me if what he was saying was the right answer; what is interesting is that like Bob, Todd’s active refusal to think about, let alone problematize, his whiteness in all likelihood will block him from real
engagement with students, particularly those students who do not share Todd’s white privilege.

In conducting the research, Cathy’s exchange relative to her whiteness was perhaps the most unique, and for me most illustrative of the concept of having an underdeveloped and critically confusing narrative about ones whiteness. Below is the exchange between Cathy and myself.

Kenny: Can you think of an experience growing up where you knew you were white?

Cathy: (8 second pause) I don’t think so. I grew up in a white area and so…

Kenny: … Any experience that showed you that you are white?

Cathy: If I did, I don’t know about it, my parent’s might but, but I never thought anything of it. When we grew up there was nothing wrong with it, so.

Cathy’s response misses the boat completely. To suggest that I would have to speak to her parents to know if she had an experience where she realized that she was white seems to me, at least, to indicate that Cathy has not reflected or thought much about her own identity as a white person. Earlier in the findings we saw that when Cathy grew up, she had the experience with the “chocolate man” and her grandmother; Cathy clearly was able to talk about race to some degree throughout her interviews. What Cathy ended up articulating is a belief that the question implied “badness” as an attached value to whiteness, and that she felt ok with her whiteness growing up and consequently to think about it now could disrupt that very narrative of goodness on to which Cathy holds.
Consequently, Cathy is unable to share any information that really or directly addresses the nature of the question. To that extent Cathy’s understanding of her own whiteness appears, at least, to be underdeveloped and the narrative is rather confusing to understand.

The importance of understanding the nature of unexamined whiteness, presented in confused narratives, is that such narratives appear to be an indicator that issues of one’s white privilege, the history of whiteness, white supremacy, and white racism have also gone without consideration, and a conflict exists between what would be presently conscious and what is presently dysconscious. Any future educator who grew up in the post-Brown and post-Civil Rights era, most likely was not socialized to the outwardly racist manners of times past, and consequently whiteness as a construct may have appeared to be outside of their view, but not in an unconscious way. Of the nine participants, only Sierra articulated that she was raised around notions of white supremacy. None of the participants, for example, went to public spaces with white and Black only bathrooms or water fountains as the nature of racism shifted from a violent outward gesture of hate, to a more silent yet equally violent, introverted racism that ultimately shares similar end goals albeit in a different outward manner. That participants were not socialized in an era of open ideological hate, does not mean that as whites they have been free from the racist underpinnings that created Jim Crow segregation; the responses shared thus far throughout the findings show this to be true. In fact an ideology of white supremacy is still socialized and taught, however the workings of such an ideological system appear in less visible, tangible, and open ways. Given that the ideology and structural systemic advantage of whites is still present and thus
socialized, and coupled with unexamined white identity, leads me to see a powderkeg of
dysconscious racial naiveté, volatile and virulent in nature, but now under a thinly
layered surface of invisibility, and still taught and socialized to future generations.
Without intervention in this process, particularly with educators whose work is
understood to be agents of socialization, each subsequent generation of whites is likely to
develop deeper levels of unexamined white identity and deepened socialized racism that
will be further coded, less visible, and more deeply couched in expansive language of
inclusion.

*Kenny and White Racial Identity*

As a precursor to locating the participants in this study within the Helms model, I
do want to present some data relative to my own white racial identity. I did not interview
myself using the same protocol given to the pre-service teacher participants in this study.
As I am no longer a pre-service teacher many of the questions would not have been
germane to the discussion of my own white racial identity, since I have taught and have
had a longer opportunity to engage in the work. As such, there were areas of the findings
where my autoethnographic data did not fit, since the frame of the questions was intended
for participants earlier in their career. However, for research that examines race, and in
particular, for white researchers examining race, our own narratives must be present in
the work so that our work is not an examination of others with ourselves as neutral
researchers and not implicated in the white supremacist social project. I am white and
benefit from my whiteness in profound and deep ways and as such, I wish to present
information in this dissertation that illuminates how my own experience is both situated
with, and replicates, whiteness and white supremacy. I have previously shared my own color-blind orientations, and I want to problematize how whiteness benefits whites, including myself, to the exclusion and punishment of racial others. Specifically, the goal for teacher educators like myself is to establish that even having had more time in the profession does not absolve white educators from the responsibility of our orientations and actions premised upon, and situated within, a white supremacist framework. In fact I argue that the matter of time may necessitate a heightened sense of scrutiny.

If I am being totally honest in this dissertation and with my own white racial identity, I must admit that tucked into my outward narrative of enjoying, working, and believing that all children can learn, I spent the first 3-4 months in my first job as a fourth grade teacher in urban Lilac feeling very skeptical, and waiting for my socialized stereotypes about deficient and uncaring urban families to manifest themselves. During the interview process for that job I recited very cliché conceptualizations similar to participants in this study, and expoused about how I saw my role as helper, and how much I would love the opportunity to work in the city. At some root level, below the outward abstract liberal orientation I presented to those hiring me, I believed the master or stock narratives (Delgado, 1993) would have to be proven true. I began the year waiting, each and every day, and believing that this would be the day when the myths and stereotypes would be proven as truths. This orientation makes sense after 20 years of socialization around racialized beliefs with which I had been trained and the careful socialization I had received to keep my real beliefs hidden and to only express niceties outwardly. What I found, however, became what really propelled the first shift in my white racial identity development away from what Helms (1992) cites as reintegrationist
beliefs, centered on negative stereotypes to a real challenging of what were comfortable racist beliefs, typical of pseudo-independence status of white racial identity. The families of the children I taught were wonderful, the community support was robust, the parents cared about their children’s future and looked to the school to live up to its purported role in educating children, and the students were kind, wonderful, smart, and present with a very high nearly 99% attendance rate. Most of the parents attended the first open house in October, a situation that I would not find to be true in my experience in my suburban teaching. Most of the parents who did not or could not attend made provisions to call or make alternative arrangements to gather the information that was presented at the open house.

The children responded well to instruction, and flourished when given culturally relevant leaning experiences. When kids in the school appeared to be “acting out” it was almost always connected back to problematic teachers, the ones who bashed students and families in the teachers’ lounge and never really seemed to be about the kids themselves, but rather what the predominately white teachers attached to the children and their families. Despite how my socialization taught me to wait and look for the worst I had to conceptualize a different paradigm and that meant in part challenging my own white racial identity.

What I was waiting for was based on part on a base belief that families of color, in urban centers, were pathological, uncaring, and not interested in educating their children. The interviews in this study are startling because in many ways what the participants shared really formed the basis of my belief system at the time. What I also began to realize was that my own fears of being judged adversely by students and families of
color, and wanting them to like me (Lensmire, 2008), affected my ability to fully understand my whiteness as I deflected on to students and families of color the paranoia and burden of my white racial identity in general, and my white supremacist racist beliefs in particular. Students and families could have judged me, and probably should have as the beliefs I took to the table were problematic. What I found instead was that at the end of the day, the students and families never really did judge me. They wanted to engage with me, and sincerely wanted me to engage with them. What emerged then was an orientation where I thought I could somehow hide or run from my whiteness, including the societal benefits I receive as a white, my white supremacist orientations, and my responsibility for the perpetration of racism. I attempted this white supremacist feat by using my guilty conscious to project onto families my own racialized beliefs and orientations of their deficiency, and the myths and stereotypes which actually formed the base of my white racial identity, and which I had been socialized to believe as true.

While teaching provided considerable experiences to help develop and grow a more evolved white racial identity, I would have to argue that, while each and every day proved that my socialization was wrong with respect to my beliefs about groups of people, somewhere in the back I always waited for the other shoe to drop, clearly a limit of my development as a teacher whose supposed commitment was to equity and diversity. Upon coming to Ohio State I left the classroom, ultimately very uninformed about race and relying on past socialization while trying to believe, ‘well we (whites) really don’t mean what we say and we’re that bad after all.’

While I did develop healthy relationships with students and families of color, perhaps more healthy than many of my colleagues, I wonder to what extent the perceived
healthy relationship was really the reification of a patronizing act targeted to the students and families of color with whom I worked. Whereas I could recognize my colleagues’ discourses as problematic about students, I steadfastly believed that since I did not share their particular narrative, I was absolved from any implications surrounding white supremacy or racism. That I felt I was better than my racism inherently limits the authenticity of my relationships with those students and families.

During early coursework and professional experiences as a Graduate Assistant at The Ohio State University, I was actually propelled back to earlier statuses of racial identity. For example as a Graduate Assistant Field Placement Supervisor, I spent my first year responding to the white racial dog and pony show that rewarded white graduate students for participating in reifying whiteness; the benefits I received by being what I can only now understand as being a con-conspirator in white supremacy through the teacher education (Fasching-Varner, 2009). As a supervisor in a teacher preparation program at OSU, I specifically sold out to being praised by the program manager and faculty coordinator for overlooking what were clearly racist orientations that guided the supervision of pre-service teachers in the education program that punished Black graduate students who were supervising student teachers. I let the rewards of whiteness blind me to what was going on in a classical sense of interest convergence (Bell, 1995). It took changing advisors, intensive coursework, and some powerful scholars to awaken me to limits of my whiteness and to my complacent and simultaneously complicit role as a racist within the fabric of the OSU program.4

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4 For an extended discussion of the particular instantiations the experiences referenced see -- Fasching-Varner, 2009
Part of the work of unexamined white identity is keeping the unexamined identity hidden; this is the act of making race dysconscious in fact. For whites like me, a number of strategies are deployed to protect ourselves from having to deal with our whiteness. A major protection strategy is denial, and what I would call a malignant denial. The denial is malignant to the extent that our sense of self-protection creates situations where whites will deny the most awful of our white supremacist hate crimes to save face in the larger set of discourses (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Often times very malignant denial is associated with so called “irrational” hate groups like Neo Nazis, Klu Klux Klan, Arian Nation members for example; an oft heard malignant denial comes from those who deny that the Holocaust of World War II, that targeted Jews, Blacks, Gays, Gypsies, the Mentally Retarded, and other minority groups, existed. Such denial could be seen as grand malignant denial, like a stage four cancer that has grown beyond control. Whites who do not present such grand malignant denial label those folks who espouse such denial as “irrational,” as a way of locating themselves within a rational framework by distancing those who are framed as irrational. It is the less grandiose forms of malignant denial, however, that perpetrate the daily workings of whites, and which serve to protect unexamined whiteness.

In the past few years I have been confronted with some situations that not only illuminated my own struggle with my white supremacy and racism and consequently my white racial identity, but also were incidents that I (sub)consciously denied to protect and preserve my self image as a good, rational, nice person who is non judgmental, etc. I attended “City” middle school (pseudonym), an urban middle school, at the time with approximately 2,000 students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. In the 16 years since I
graduated on from middle school my denial of my issues with race and ethnicity have helped me to spend little time or attention on my experiences and at least dysconsciously I had let go much of that time period in my life.

One such instance happened last year, when I taught a course called “Diversity, Social Justice, and Education” required of all pre-service teachers at Righteous. The students were non-traditional in so far as teacher candidates in that program already have a Bachelors degree in a non-educationally related field and have decided to switch careers and become teachers. These teacher candidates are different from the more traditional undergraduate students who formed the participant sample in this study as they go full time for 1 year and receive both a Master of Science in Education; additionally they are eligible for state teacher certification where Righteous College is located. I spent time preparing the syllabus, carefully choosing readings and organizing the course around the interrelated concepts of equity, understanding self as raced/classed/gendered/sexualized/abled, and interrogating dominant discourses; my orientation in preparing the course as such becomes ironic given the event that I am going to share.

On the first night the 15 adult students came in and sat down. I gave my usual talks about the course requirements, policies, did some introductory exercises, and shared my vision for the course. As usual at the break students appeared overwhelmed with the approach and workload and I would say half ran out of the room, likely to console each other and complain about what was being asked of them. A few stayed behind in the room, and one young woman said in disbelief, “you don’t remember who I am, do you?” I apologized and said that I really did not know who she was, and asked her to share how
we knew each other. In the moments that followed I could hide my denial no longer, and
I had to take responsibility for the effects of my whiteness and how my whiteness and
white identity privileged my experiences with negative consequences for those who my
whiteness and white supremacy targeted.

Ana asked me, “Did you go to City Middle school?” I responded that I did and Ana proceeded to tell me,

“I really don’t know how I can take this course with you, it’s pretty messed up really that you of all people would be teaching a course in
diversity; I was in your class and we both applied to go to Alternative
High, both got interviewed, I got in and you didn’t. You and the other two white boys that didn’t get in tormented me for the rest of the school year.
The last month of school was awful and you said that I only got in to
Alternative High because I was Hispanic and that hard working people
like you get punished for being white, and if it was based on work quality
and intelligence you should be going there and not me. I will never forget

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5 Alternative High was presented to the community as a school without limits and without walls. The borders and divisions typical of schools do not exist at AH. The school at the time had a student population of about 150 students; in Lilac the average city high school, of which there are 5, has between 1,500 to 2,500 students. AH was vastly different in this sense; at the time students had freedom to come and go as they pleased, eat meals in classes, call teachers by first names, create courses of study based on interest, and the school was exempt from state testing and did not use report cards with grades but rather narrative feedback. While AH has since changed, at the time it was “the school” families wanted their children to go to and there was a lengthy interview process that included interviewing teachers, the students themselves, amongst a host of other criteria. The myth at the time that my parents had told me was that AH used racial and ethnicity quotas and that of the 40 new freshman students only 1 or 2 would be white and male. What I now know was that the school took the students who during the interview process and based on teacher recommendation and interviews were best suited to the school. While I cried foul and used meritocracy, at the end of the day Ana’s acceptance to AH and my rejection from AH show that I in fact was not the deserving of the two students and the merit I perceived was a coded way of projecting my whiteness without the responsibility or need to call it such.
those words!; the words you and those other boys used haunted me all four years at Alternative High – I always asked myself, why am I here, did I not deserve to be here? Now you are supposed to teach me about diversity and your whole talk about getting to know yourself – it all seems like crap, you don’t even know who you are. How could you forget the way you treated me?”

In an instance my whole world changed. Ana was right; the dysconscious quickly moved to conscious. As I regained consciousness and put together the pieces, a numb feeling ran through my body. I remember articulating all the ideas that Bonilla-Silva (2006) talks about as being color-blind and based in false sense of merit. I was the child of an immigrant, my mother spoke English as a second language, I could have and should have been a different person, I had reasons to do and be different, but I ultimately did not. In our house whiteness took precedence. My mother actively refused to teach me German, and I could be read for what I was -white- with all the privileges that are associated with whiteness. I had no basis to judge Ana or think that she was less deserving than I was to go to Alternative High. Clearly she more deserved to go there as she was chosen and I was not. The white supremacy, racism, and myths/stereotypes about minorities that I had been socialized to believe as true helped to create a situation where my whiteness was directly lodged as a weapon. It forced me to have to acknowledge that at best I could be an antiracist racist (Clark and O’Donnell, 1999) and, while my current narrative and theoretical understandings of race, diversity, and multiculturalism learned in the doctoral program sought to help me work with educators, I had not done the very basic work of understanding my own whiteness in a meaningful
way. If I was to continue to see myself merely as an anti-racist I would keep doing the work that Ana intuitively understood as hypocritical – telling teachers to do things I was not willing or able to do myself. In claiming the position as an anti-racist racist I could at least for the first time look systemically at my implicit and complicit roles in the white supremacist domination that has marked and continues to mark the landscape of the United States. While I may have been more informed academically, the concept of race is a lifelong struggle, and I understood that my status as a racist white could never, will never, and should never disappear. To assume it would disappear or was no longer relevant, which is how I was living my life at the time that I re-met Ana, would mean that in fact I was still perpetrating the very racist actions I attempt teaching teachers to fight against – being racially dysconscious. In a profound and ironic twist Ana helped me to understand the shortcomings of the white racial identity model’s linear progression; Ana was exploited by me, as my learning came at the social cost of her having to take a class in anti-oppressive education from one of the very people who oppressed her.

Ana and I discovered a number of anomalies in our experiences post middle school that show the tangible effects of racism. I went on to become fluent in Ana’s native language of Spanish as I had the opportunities while in college to live in Spain and Chile, whereas Ana explained that she lost a lot of her Spanish as she was socialized to believe, by my white racism and that of others’, that her Spanish was not a valued commodity, a marker of difference used to judge her. Ana finished high school and went to college, feeling that she always had to prove herself to whites and that there was an undercurrent form of narrative from someone – a Kenny, let’s say – who was judging her and believing that she did not deserve to be there. On the other hand I flourished in
college just by being white; “Kenny” learned quickly to manipulate his whiteness for its benefits, learning how to use office hours to ingratiate myself to professors, telling them how much I was learning and how great their classes were. I also was able to manipulate my working class upbringing as a means of receiving sympathy from faculty while hiding behind the privilege and never really acknowledging it.

I went on to teach children and then to leave the classroom to educate future teachers on how to do “the work.” I eventually focused on Critical Race Theory and Multiculturalism to compliment my Literacy background, hoping to prepare teachers to better serve populations who have received the least from the educational system. Ana, meanwhile, entered a career in social work and saw how children from her Latino community in Lilac and other groups of color were being mistreated by a white teaching force, and by the narratives and actions of whites in the community hell bent on punishing children and families of color. Ana decided she needed to enter the system to help create a different set of narratives, to help protect students of color, from people like me, the Kenny whose whiteness, along with other whites, helped to shape two trajectories in two lives that took twists and turns and ultimately brought each back to the other. In the weekend class, it was Ana who taught me, and ultimately the students benefited from an honest and open discussion of the experiences that Ana and I shared throughout the course and in trying to understand the complex trajectories of our raced lives.

**White Racial Identity of Participants Within the Helm’s model**

In combination, participants’ color-blind approaches, white racial bonding, conceptualizations of race as diversity, deflection of whiteness to racial others, and
whites confusing and seemingly underdeveloped narratives give some insight into where
participants might appear to be in the Helm’s White Racial Identity model. I will
ultimately go on to argue that the model itself is an extremely limited analytic for
understanding whiteness in a more systemic or global way, but I first must present where
in the Helms model the participants and myself are located in order to help give shape to
what will be my critique of the models’ utility.

The contact status – “I’m innocent”

Brian, Barbara, and Cathy are the three participants who appear to possess the
most characteristics and qualities associated with the Contact Status. In the Contact
Status a great deal of naiveté exists relative to race, and “The person does not consciously
think of herself/himself as White” even though s/he may acknowledge that
phenotypically s/he is white (Helms, 1992, p. 37). When asked directly if she identifies
as white, Barbara most exemplifies this quality as demonstrated by her response, “I
guess, yeah, I don’t know what else I would be” and then laughs out loud. The
lightheartedness with which Barbara described her racialized identity is consistent with
someone early in the Contact Status, where race has not been part of the person’s active
and conscious thoughts and potentially a great deal of work, such as denial, has been put
in place to remain that way. Brian and Cathy also struggle with self as raced as
evidenced in Brian reducing race d to TV shows as how he can bridge the racial
disconnect between himself and students. Cathy’s confusion rests with whether she has
ever had an experience where she knew she was white, suggesting her parents would be
better suited to answer the question.
During the contact status one comes to know that racial groups exist, but color-blind discourse is used to “minimize differences in treatment due to race” (Helms, 1992, p. 38). In explaining his understanding that television could be a better cultural connecter to students than race, Brian also asserted that with respect to one’s race, “it doesn’t matter,” a very consistent attempt at providing minimalism of race. Barbara also emphasizes the minimization of race in explaining that she “think[s] everybody is equal,” and her outright claims that she literally does not see race. Cathy too, engages in significant color-blind discourse, presented earlier, and is quick to minimize race as exemplified in her belief that she teaches the same regardless of location, student type, situation, believing that such an approach helps her to “show no bias.”

The last quality associated with a white person in Contact is that s/he often has limited authentic positive experiences with people of color, at times using the person of color to teach the white person. Cathy is unable to distinguish between one’s race, one’s geographic location, and one’s learning environment. I would argue that, in her limited experiences with people of color, and particularly her description of the small town as “a white area” Cathy may actually be in what I am conceptualizing here as “Pre-contact Status,” where she is still attempting to learn the basic meanings and implications of race; for argumentation purposes I will say she is very early at the Contact Status with respect to this last element.

Further evidence of Cathy’s lack of experiences with people of color are found as she described only ever having a couple of minority students in her K-12 schooling experience; additionally she made rather confused statements that she has had lots of teachers from different races but then describing teachers’ military service and high
school performance as being indicative of having had teachers from a variety of races. Barbara’s situation was different as she lived in ultra elite suburban areas, considered self-contained in nature, and never had a teacher of color until college; her comments on that one experience, where she felt like she learned a lot about people of color and thought that the experience was “cool” because “you just don’t see it,” referring to Black teachers, and her presenting only her negative experiences with minority students from the urban suburban program, indicate limited positive experiences with people of color. Barbara’s one positive experience becomes the vessel she uses to carry information about the whole race. Brian shared that in his formative schooling experiences there were “maybe 3 Black (lowers voice) kids;” he had no teachers of color, and his desire to teach around a population similar to himself, which he describes as “the suburban system...would be the easiest transition for me,” show his limited experiences with people of color, findings that are consistent with the contact status.

Disintegration Status – How can I be white?

Two participants, Angela and Pat, most consistently appear to fit within the Disintegration Status. Disintegration status revolves around “guilt and confusion,” realizing that there are differences between whites and people of color the person tries to balance relationships with both groups (Helms, 2003, p. 50). With respect to White Racial Identity, Angela appears to exhibit qualities associated with the disintegration status as she realizes differences between whites and people of color. Angela used her experience of being in a school with a predominately minority student population to help her understand that differences in the opportunities offered to students exists, but
ultimately dismissed the situation as being ‘just the way it is,’ and claiming that she would love to have a different perspective but that she is “just white.” In a disintegrationist way, Angela tries to balance relationships with both groups, yet has not developed significant or meaningful relationships with people of color. Angela learned from her field placement that, although racially overwhelming, the experience was positive and that she would like to work in the environment of that school as she saw positive opportunities for students of color. Angela felt comfortable in the setting despite her initial reaction of “WOW!, I am white,” when first entering the school.

Pat also attempts at balancing relationships between both her white group and groups of racial others. In part she saw her experience with an African American professor as positive, but thought that the experience was positive because, from Pat’s perspective, “he didn’t put his cultural bias” in the course. In another instance Pat wanted to believe that in her schooling the “racial slate was clean,” a belief that helps place focus on students of color having positive experiences in school with white teachers; Pat also ultimately recognized that her teachers must have had “some pre-conceived notions” of students of color that did come into play when “there was a conflict” between white teachers and students of color.

A second component of disintegration is that whites often turns to other whites to seek resolution of feelings about race and learn that “when interacting with people of color, if he or she wants to be accepted by other Whites, then he or she…must violate…moral and ethical principles” (Helms, 1992, p. 46). With respect to the first aspect, Angela thought that students of color at Righteous College give her and other whites a “vibe” about the lack of commitment to diversity, which appeared to bother
Angela. When asked, however, if she attends events or programs that promote diversity that could exhibit to students of color that white students do in fact have a commitment to diversity, Angela stated that she would rather not, asserting that she only went “Freshman year when we had to.” Angela does not feel a compelling reason to attend such events unless forced, and would rather talk to other white people about the effects of this “vibe,” rather than talking to students of color about her perceptions of the ‘vibe’ or attend events and participate in a meaningful way that would reduce any rational for this perceived vibe. On one hand she feels put off by her perception of this negative vibe, but is also unwilling to personally do anything about it. Angela’s interest in not attending events shows a moral conflict as she places onus on students of color for something she is not willing to engage in directly with them, and she holds them accountable for a feeling that she believes they have created, but which she has created in her mind.

As demonstrated in her earlier narrative about her interest in an African American student, Pat showed a similar disintegrationist perspective. First Pat sought resolution about the raced situation from another white, her mother, who helped socialize Pat about race. Thus the resolution Pat seeks would be consistent with the belief system she had already been socialized to believe as true. Pat also breaks all moral and ethical principles in accepting the racist position that she should not pursue a relationship or discovery with the African American student. The stock stories (Delgado, 1993) from which her mother drew in helping Pat seek resolution and with the idea that Pat’s male family members needed to protect her present questionable racial ethics. Pat’s male family member would not need to protect her from a white boy, but when the love interest is African American then there is a need for protection, certainly a racist supposition. Pat instead of doing
what she thought was right, deferred to what was white. Acceptance from her family was more important than developing a meaningful relationship free of bias and judgment with the African American young man. In accepting her mother’s resolution, Pat favored what she was taught about race despite how such beliefs violate human morality and the basic principles of the human experience.

Reintegration status – We have the best because we are the best

Participants Bob, Todd, and Steven best fit within what Helms describes as reintegration. The reintegration status encompasses both covert and overt racist beliefs, with “hostility and anger directed toward people of color” (Helms, 1992, p. 53). For Bob, hostility and anger were exhibited in his description of Black kids’ slang and the students of color having a perceived athletic ability more developed than his. Further Bob presents hostility and anger directed toward people of color exhibited in his belief that it is “horseshit” how much, from his standpoint, Black students get away with by using “the race card,” and his inability do the same.

Todd’s hostility and anger toward people of color was palpable. For instance Todd expressed his assumption that he has to defend his whiteness to students of color in a manner that indicated he was angry about this, despite that he was speaking of hypothetical students. His hostility and anger were also evident in his perception that students of color will not like him due to his race, and his expressed view that students of color are something you “deal with.” For Steven, there was an underlying hostility in his idea that students of color should not even bother coming to school as there was no point since they did not want to learn anyhow.
Negative stereotypes and a total denial of racism also generally characterize reintegration (Helms, 1984; 1990; 2003). Bob, Todd, and Steven all deny racism and the need for a focus on race, while simultaneously holding negative stereotypes about race. While claiming to be non racist and non judgmental, Bob used his experience playing basketball with students of color to promote a set of stereotypes about Black slang talk, and Black athletic superiority, and his experience in urban classrooms to characterize Black students as late, not interested in learning, and in need of more patience than their white peers due to the stereotypical attributes Bob attaches to students of color. Steven denies that racism affects his own life or the lives of others and believes that all children need exactly the same thing in their educational experience, yet conceptualizes students of color within very judged and stereotyped ways such as coming from deficient families with parents that do not value education. Todd believes that race is unimportant as a consideration in education and denies racism for himself and his family, justifying that his family’s association predominately with white people is “the farthest thing from racist.” Yet describing his purported belief, Todd characterizes neighborhoods where children of color live in stereotypical ways at one point describing a neighborhood as “ghetto,” and his speculative argument that “African American and Latino can be just as smart as white kids” implies that intelligence is only conditional, and is at times linked to race, a stereotypical view of racial inferiority as biological.

_Pseudo Independence - “Let’s help them become more like whites”_

The first eight participants presented themselves with attributes of statuses more aligned within the abandonment of racism, the first phase,. Sierra is a discrepant case
with respect to her white racial identity within the Helms model and presents more within the pseudo-independence status (PIS), the second phase of the identity development model which is toward the evolution of a non-racist identity. In PIS a shift in belief occurs as one begins “to acknowledge the responsibility of Whites for racism and how he or she wittingly and unwittingly perpetrates racism (Helms, 1990, p. 61). Sierra demonstrated characteristics of pseudo-independence that other participants did not exhibit, and was the only participant who openly acknowledged her socialized upbringing as racist; she was able to talk about catalyst experiences, such as living in a predominately Black community, and taking coursework that examined the psychology of race and examined the effects of race on birth rates and infant mortality, and helped to challenge the racist orientations of her upbringing.

Helms (1992) believes that when a white is in the pseudo-independence status s/he begins “to acknowledge the responsibility for the whys of racism,” (p. 61) and what had once been comfortable racist beliefs are no longer comfortable. Sierra struggles with the conflict between the beliefs to which she was socialized, and a newly emerging set of beliefs that are informed via other paradigms and approaches. So while Sierra does not believe that the new information she has learned and her positive experiences have replaced her racist orientations, she thinks that the beliefs are at least challenged and is not sure what do with them. Sierra is beginning to acknowledge the role of her racism and is worried about how her racism will be read by students, a sharp departure from other participants who are worried that students will judge them as racist, a conflict to their auto-beliefs of being good non-judgmental people. So while participants in this study may feel apprehension about what students will believe, Sierra is able to understand
that she is in fact racist and has been socialized to be racist; consequently if someone did judge her as being a racist, there would be a foundation within her experience that substantiates the belief.

*Immersion / Emersion Status – “I’m white!”*

I locate myself within the Immersion/Emersion status (IES). The IES is when the white is searching “for [a] personally meaningful definition of Whiteness and re-education of other White people about race and racism” (Helms, 2003, p. 52). This work requires that the white “person replaces White and Black myths and stereotypes” and reflects on the meaning and history of both whiteness and Blackness in the context of the United States (Helms, 1990, p. 62). This status is thought to be difficult with which to engage because it requires that the white person “assume personal responsibility for racism and to understand one’s role in perpetuating it” (Helms, 1992, p.74).

In the last phase of my doctoral program, I had the opportunity to participate in an urban middle schools research project where I was able to see the effects of my white privilege to some degree; for example, I was able to walk into a school as a graduate student without question or verification of my identity while the Principal Investigator, a Black woman with a PhD, was practically asked for a blood sample each time we entered the building. Situations like these have helped me to reflect on the history of whiteness and Blackness within the landscape of the United States, a landscape that promotes repeated negative treatment along what can only be understood as lines of race. In the United States, my identification is my whiteness is a sort of super pass whereas Dr. Dixson’s race raised flags and served in an opposite fashion to my race, requiring
identification each and every time we entered the building despite me never being asked; it clearly reflects a systemic internalized belief situated within the stock story of “fear” and “distrust” of people of color.

Taking coursework in Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has also helped to provide a theoretical toolkit in the process of assuming both personal and systemic responsibility for how racism works to my advantage and simultaneously to racial others’ disadvantage. I was also socialized to different orientations that did not inherently privilege the white experience, but rather showed what a fraud my whiteness really is. My case in point was learning from Ana what my racism actually looks like and feels like to the victims of my racism, even though I now recognize that for Ana to have to show me my racism in effect further exploits Ana as a victim of my racism.

Finally, through the process of completing this dissertation research, I am attempting to develop a personally meaningful definition of whiteness and re-education for other white people about race and racism, doing what is right over what is white. I could have researched a thousand other topics that would have helped me further to keep whiteness at a distance and unexamined. In preparing the dissertation I read more than 20 dissertations of my contemporaries and found that the work in which my doctoral student peers engaged often invokes the concept of a critical examination, yet is couched in topics examined without critical attention and where a happy ending is provided. Part of being in the immersion/emersion status is recognizing and dedicating oneself to replacing white and Black myths and stereotypes and being honest about the means and ways of whiteness, and its socialized and accepted racism and white supremacy. While I am not sure that this project is critical enough to claim such an identity, the goal is a
critical examination of the whiteness, and is perhaps an important step in reshaping how white teacher educators and I might think about our work.

I also want to be explicit that what is being done in this dissertation is neither newsworthy nor honorable; it is simply the right thing to do and in fact what should be seen as a very ordinary and mundane action. The shift into this status of Helms’ WRI model has inherently shaped the way I approach my teacher education courses and helped me to self identify within the construct of being an antiracist racist (Clark & O’Donnell, 1999). Further, an immersed/emersed white identity helps me to continually challenge from where my assumptions and beliefs come, and how these beliefs serve to privilege certain traditions and orientations. Table 4.1 is a visual presentation of the linear location of participants in this study within the Helms Framework.
Table 4.1 – WRI Identity in the Helm’s Model - Participant Locations

- Each person possesses a WRI and moves through statuses of Development.
- The last status, “autonomy,” is presented as “healthy” and some sort of Racial Nirvana.
- Helm recognizes one could move back and forth, however, the general progression is linear.

Below is a visual illustration how Helm’s WRI plays out with participants in this study.

Key: ✓ - Status already completed  ➔ - Indicates directionality moving toward next status
      😊 - Participants Current Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participent</th>
<th>Abandonment of Racism</th>
<th>Evolution of Non-Racist Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Status 1</td>
<td>Status 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenny</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critique of WRI Model

The descriptions presented in the previous section and the summary presented in Table 4.1 were an attempt at locating the participants of this project within the Helms (1984; 1990; 1992a; 1992b; 2003) model of White Racial Identity. Helms believed that the model could be helpful to whites, and recognized that, given that whites have identity, a model of identity development could be helpful for whites to address “unresolved racial development issues” (Helms, 1990, p. 53). While Helms did in fact examine real empirical narratives in her formulation of what would be the statuses, and in the early 80’s worked with pre-service teachers, the scholarship with respect to WRI has largely remained a theoretical construct as opposed to a site of empirical examination. In gathering the narratives of the pre-service teachers for this research project I had hoped to contribute a more empirically situated look at the White Racial Identity model presented by Helms. Perhaps even as far as the conceptualization and proposal of this project I had hoped to be able to use and understand the WRI model as a means of better understanding pre-service teachers and contributing to the work that teacher educators do. In the next section, however, I will present what I believe are critiques of the WRI model and why ultimately the model as is provides limited utility for educators to.

_It’s just a point of reference

At best, the model and locating whites within the structure of the model becomes nothing more than a point of reference. The idea of the model is premised on the presence of characteristics or attributes of particular statuses; thus attempting to locate participants within the model is taking what you have learned about a white person, in
this case from participant interviews, and finding out what characteristics appear in the articulated responses of participants and making a point of reference about how the participants exhibit qualities x, y, and z. As the researcher I am making what I intend to be educated attempts at locating participants, but ultimately what I have presented about the participants WRI is just a point of reference. This point of reference is also heavily influenced by the lens that I bring to the examination of the interview transcripts. For example, when I first knew Ana seventeen years ago, if I read through the same participants’ transcripts I most likely would have seen vastly different points in the narratives and probably would not have associated WRI characteristics in the same way.

In Chapter 3 I explained the rationale for approaching this work through the idea of testimonial interviews, asserting that the power of such methodological approach is the recognition that any reader of the testimonial data, through her/his lens, could read and see the information different from me. In fact any reader of this dissertation will bring to bear, minimally, unique identity with respect to the interaction of race, gender, age, socio-economic status, sexuality, religion, political orientation, and a host of other identity elements that necessitate distinct understandings of the data. The jurisprudence system in many nations recognizes that people bring to bear a trajectory of identity to the word and thus create systems requiring unanimous decisions among say twelve people. Clearly our jury system has its own unique and historical problems many of which center on race, but the idea was similar in this work, to recognize that my way of seeing the data should be at least plausible even when the reader brings something different than I to bear, and that I too must be open to alternate explanations when the rationale provided by a reader is too plausible.
While it may be interesting to see how participant A exhibits a particular quality associated with the contact status, for arguments sake, but what does it really inform relative not only to the participant but to the participant within the larger societal framework where whiteness and white supremacy live? The answer is that the model becomes a relegation of whiteness and white identity away from the larger conversations about race; being merely a point of reference about individuals maintains the conversation at the individual level. My argument is not that having a point of reference is necessarily a bad thing, but rather that the point of reference has to progress beyond the individual to look at the individual’s situation with the larger schemata, and it must be more than just a point of reference before anything transformative can arise.

Linear or Circular? – either way it still lives outside of whites

In earlier forms, Helms’ model was presented linearly (Helms, 1984) but in later iterations Helms (1994; 2003 for example) stressed the importance of recognizing the model in less linear ways. I think a dichotomous argument about the linearity, or lack thereof, relative to the model, is ultimately less important than understanding how the model is actually situated as being inherently outside of the person and certainly outside of whites as a group. I believe that the model, despite Helm’s clarifications, is still a fairly linear concept, and to evidence this I would argue that it has a starting point, a contact status, and an ending point, autonomy. Even if not intentional, the model creates an understanding that the goal is forward movement. Even as Helms (1990) claims, there is opportunity for participants to move through, between, and circularly through the
statuses; the ultimate goal is toward autonomy and thus presents a linear direction from contact as a beginning towards autonomy as an end.

In either case I would argue that the model as it is presented has the ability to be a structure that lives outside of the person. Again, as a point of reference approach, the model becomes about particular attributes exhibited by particular individuals. Thus individuals in such a model can make claim that their whiteness is not who they are but at best represents a limited set of characteristics that are attached to what they say in this case during interviews. Further, the possession of any attributes or characteristics is independent of other whites and independent of the global structure of white supremacy in general; as a white I can say my characteristics do not seem as problematic as Joe’s characteristics and so we do not share whiteness, which is often viewed as a bad thing by whites attached to the so-called irrational Jim Crow racists. A limit of such an approach is that even if a white recognizes the need to engage in thought about her/his status relative to the model, the model is relatively stable and s/he passes through status to status with the model being fixed and the white able to move progressively from start to end, from racially problematic to racially evolved. As a stable entity then, the model lives both outside of the person and outside of the collective experience of whiteness. Whether denying one’s WRI all together, or attempting to understand the identity by working through a static model, whites see WRI as living outside of themselves, a theoretical construct that does not represent who they are but rather tries to give shape to characteristics and locate such characteristic within particular statuses. What the model does not recognize is that WRI is an already/always condition, not a sometimes/then/now state. What this means is that WRI is something that whites already and always possess
individually and collectively; the model itself should be seen as fabric that weaves together the trajectories of whites as opposed to the sometimes/then approach of “sometimes I was in contact, then I learned x,y, and z, and now I moved on to disintegration” approach.

So what? Who Cares?

Another critique of the model may be less about the model and more about how the application of model is used by researchers like myself. The model as a research tool to help the researcher understand people’s identity is a problematic orientation, of which I, too, am guilty of perpetuating. Initially I had conceptualized the utility of the model in terms helping me to understand where participants were within the model. So what? Who Cares? As a project, the work of participants’ identification within a model is frankly fairly uninformative and does not recognize a couple of key points. First and foremost understanding WRI is completely useless unless the participants have the opportunity to examine their own narratives, and to think about their position within the model and the implications of their WRI. Looking at others without looking at self perpetuates the very racist foundations against which the model is working as we saw with my interaction with Ana. When the project is conceptualized as, such very little is learned. In the case of this research, the opportunity to engage the participants was in a sense lost. Not only were the participants near the end of their teacher education program, but they were also not my students, and the research did not involve helping them understand the ways in which their narratives indicated aspects of their (un)examined dysconscious WRI, which could have been helpful in shaping their
practice. Working with pre-service teachers around unexamined and disconcert disconcert WRI may have been a more interesting project, however that was not the project that was undertaken. So, a major flaw of the model is that unless the whites either individually or collectively examine their identities, all we are left with is the model serving as point of reference, and unable to provide structure for whites to self-interrogate and work against the white supremacist and racist nature of our whiteness and open to the questions, so what? who cares?

*And, anyway what I told you is not all of me anyhow!*

The model becomes about what participants tell either themselves or in this case, tell me, as the researcher. As we saw consistently with every participant in this study, including myself, there are aspects of our WRI that are denied, buried, and otherwise unexamined. There are also elements of our lives we may be unwilling to tell even when we do remember them so we make them disconcertous, and there are other aspects of our identity that lay so deep they cannot enter into the discussion because they are simply absent from the whites’ conscious thought process. In understanding this aspect of the critique my argument is that when focused at the individual level, inevitably part of the WRI process, the model lacks proper nuance. To explicate a way that nuance could be added at least at the individual layer, I am drawn to a rather old theoretical construction about individual identity, represented as a schematic originally described by Luft and Ingham (1955) as Johari’s Window.

In this model, the first or open window contains aspects of ourselves that we reveal to others consciously; the open window reveals portions of our identity known to
us and to others equally. We are aware of what we are sharing with society and what others know about us. This is level of revelation in which the participants of this study engaged, and what informs the location of their WRI draws primarily from this open window and relies on what is self-reported. The WRI location of each participant I presented does not actively consider other windows; the model is not necessarily, as is, a framework that considers what is contained within the other windows.

The second or hidden window, for example, contains aspects of ourselves that we choose not to reveal to others and while known to us, we consciously or dysconsciously keep what is behind that window from others. In sharing the Ana story, I shared something that had been kept behind my hidden window until it was shared with the class, and until I wrote it; I moved it toward the open window because I believed it was critically important in understanding my identity. For other participants, however, there were aspects of their WRI that I would not be able to ascertain given the nature of the knowledge behind the hidden window. Because the hidden window is not revealed it is also difficult to know how much information is kept behind that window, and what the proportion of information behind the window is compared to what was revealed through the open window.

The third or blind window contains public aspects of ourselves that we do not control. These identifying characteristics are not in our conscious sense of who we are. However, because others can perceive them, they can be made available to us. This portion of our identity is a potentially contentious aspect of our identity, because others attach value to these characteristics and we have much less control over this aspect of ourselves. In a sense participants were very apt to use the blind window as a means of
laying out their judgments of people of color; I can judge you but I will never tell you how or why. With respect to WRI identity, particularly when the model is used by researchers to describe other whites’ location within the model, there is a great potential for researchers to bring too much by means of their own perceptions of participants to bear in thinking about their location within the model; our own subjectivities and positionalities (Peshkin, 1989) affect how we see participants. Participants do not get to control how they are read, nor do they have the opportunity to control how they are read. I attempt very specifically to balance the potential negative effects of the hidden window in presenting significant amounts of actual participant speech so that what I understood about participants was informed, as much as possible, from their own words. By means of ownership, while I may be listed as the holder of copyright for this dissertation, the second it is shared with anyone besides me; it is no longer mine, and any reader is also likely to apply a blind window to their reading of the work and neither the participants nor I can control that aspect of this work.

The fourth or unknown window contains aspects of self-identity of which we are not conscious, nor are others. Although this source clearly motivates some or many of our behaviors, it is not accessible to conscious thought or external perception. Thus the great mystery becomes what we do not know about one’s WRI as opposed to what we do know. The unknown window signifies that even with careful attention paid to participant words, or even a white self describing her/his own WRI, the unknown aspect of our identity could create a space for a white to appear one way in the WRI model yet really be located in a very different space or place. In my presentation of different way of conceptualizing WRI, I will focus on recognizing that these 4 windows force a more
complex understanding of WRI that moves beyond simple statuses marked by the “open window” characteristics that participants self-present.

**Moving beyond the critiques**

Critique is easy; in lodging a critique one can pick apart a particular construct and present everything s/he perceives wrong with the idea. It is far more difficult to take the critique and do something constructive with it. From the outset I wish explicate that my critiques of the Helms’ model are in no way intended to lessen the work of Helms with respect to WRI. Clearly Helms, a well-respected scholar, is the most influential scholar on WRI in both the 20th and the 21st centuries. Recently the Supreme Court of the United States turned to her expertise in white racial identity in formulating their opinions. Respect is owed to Helms’ scholarship which is considered to be the first and clearly most well developed model of white racial identity.

My critiques are not intended to do away with the need for or idea of the WRI model and, in fact, I believe, like Helms, that having a model is at least one way to begin the process of examining what often goes unsaid by whites about our own internalized racism and the effects of our white supremacy on other groups. The desire of having a WRI model rests with the hope that whites can explore “the production and reproduction of dominance, subordination, normativitiy, marginality, and privilege (Frankenburg, 2005, p. 236-237). My critiques and consequently the model I propose are intended to help the examination of WRI live to its best and fullest intention, that of understanding the nature of whiteness, white-supremacy, and racism as the “product of local, regional, national, and global relations.” As such I wish to propose a model which may be less
susceptible to its dismissal by whites as being too located within individual frameworks (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 236).

A different model

I argue that whites as individuals are actually all within a frame we can loosely call White Racial Identity (WRI). If understood as a frame and less of a static construct an individual works through, we also understand that the framework has many attributes or characteristics that those within the frame can draw from and possess. The particular characteristics that live within the framework, and not in any one particular status, and upon which individuals draw and possess, could be understood as attributes comprising ones white racial propriospect (WRP). Propriospect is a concept developed by Goodenough (1974) and later expanded by Wolcott (1983) to help balance distinction in culture between shared culture and individual representations of cultural elements drawn from the larger cultural group. In a sense, one’s propriospect is the unique makeup of characteristics that draw from the larger structure that houses all cultural characteristics. In that sense one’s WRP could then be understood as the particular and individual, while recognizing that WRP is not an individual in isolation but rather the individual within the larger structure, creating a back and forth motion that links individual whites to other whites. The back and forth orientation, from shared to individual, creates a larger ability to see ones individual manifestation of racial identity as both living inside her or him, while simultaneously existing in concert with other whites who draw characteristics from the same structured framework. To link the individual white with other whites is part of
Frankeberg’s (1993) call to examine white supremacy, whiteness, and racism in more global and systemic ways.

In the Helms’ model, characteristics of white racial identity are restricted to and presented within particular statuses and again disconnected from a more connected way of knowing. In the Fasching-Varner model of WRI, the characteristics that help to shape and form one’s WRP could be considered as existing more systemically within the global structure of white racial identity. In other words all of the characteristics, behaviors, and aspects endemic to whiteness would be a sort of white racial manifest, a full complement of characteristics associated with our whiteness. With the whiteness manifest as part of the more global structure of white racial identity, individual whites within the structure of WRI possess particular characteristics from the manifest, in varying degrees at varying times, and would represent the WRP as their individual inventory of characteristics. As a child my WRI may be more marked by the characteristic of racial naiveté and as an adult the naiveté may take a less prominent position within my WRP whereas the characteristic of color-blind language may take the more prominent position. I argue that once a characteristic from the manifest is present in the individual inventory, it never disappears or goes away from ones WRP, but rather shifts in terms of visibility and weight within the total understanding of one’s particular WRP within the larger WRI frame. In the proposed model, the WRI is fluid and individual manifestations of propriospect are not restricted to movement through static statuses, but rather the WRP of each individual within the framework is continually and always evolving with characteristics shifting in weight to represent the growth and regression that is natural to the human experience.
Moreover in my model, the individual white racial propriospect would not be understood as being a singular unified element. Rather, an individual’s propriospect would be understood as complex itself, and each of the Johari windows discussed earlier are present. The model changes the sense of identity from being that which one possesses as an individual to that of a more global structure that all whites possess and that frames whiteness. The model also adds a layer of complexity and nuance to understanding the propriospect of each individual within the White Racial Identity model, further distinguishing the model from the Helm’s conceptualization. Table 4.2 presents a visual layout of how the reorganized WRI model would look. In the table a set of characteristics drawn from Helm’s statuses are listed; for space considerations in the table and since no single white could have every characteristic or manifestation of identity elements, I have limited the elements simply to those Helm’s presents with the caveat that many more characteristics are extant in the white experience. Table 4.3 presents a visual layout of how an individual white’s propriospect would be represented within the model generically applying the Johari windows concept.
Table 4.2 Fasching-Varner Suggested Model of WRI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helms’ Phase 1 Elements</th>
<th>White Racial Identity</th>
<th>Helms’ Phase 2 Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment of Racism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evolution as Racist Anti-Racist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Naïveté,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncomfortable w/Racist Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not See Self As</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledges Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognizes Perpetration of Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learns Racial Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marked as Race Traitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinces whites Racism Vanished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizes Differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easy Color-blind rhetoric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt, Confusion, Balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships, Seeks resolution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from other whites, Violates ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and morals when forced to choose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between whites and “others”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covert and overt racist beliefs, reverse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism claims, negative stereotypes,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of racism, Firm Resistance,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforces white supremacist thought,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious hold on whiteness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Features
- This model interacts with the larger society and influences from the larger society
- Recognizes that any number of factors, not just those attached to a particular status enter ones WRP, and likely remain even when other elements enter
- Recognizes that whiteness, white supremacy, white privilege, irrational fear, discriminatory acts do not occur in isolation, and within the model are part of every whites experience of whiteness even if not outwardly recognized or understood
- Recognizes that WRI is a larger shared construct, not an individual experience; whites will experience different elements, at different times, with different levels of saturation and importance on any given element at any given time individually – a propiospect approach (Goodenough, 1974)
- Recognizes that the inclusion of more “positive” or what Clark O’Donnell (1999) describes as Racist Anti-Racist features of WRI do not absolve whites of responsibility, rather heightening white responsibility to fight against less evolved features, serving as an agent of change and re-socialization for other whites
- Values that whiteness must move away from its position of hegemony and see itself as one of many identity models within the larger human experience (See figure 4.4)
Differences in the model

My approach in presenting WRI differs from the Helms’ approach in a couple of significant ways. First, I propose that a particular characteristic does not vanish when a more evolved appearing characteristic arrives in one’s WRP. For example, Helms presents racial naiveté as being characteristic of the Contact Status but never discusses
how racial naïveté is present in later statuses. In my particular study, while only three of the ten participants appear to be in the Contact Status as proposed by Helms (1990; 2003), racial naïveté is absolutely present in each of the participant narratives, including my narrative. In the proposed model racial naïveté would consequently be a part of each of our WRP, an aspect of our propriospect of which we need to be consciously aware, as opposed to thinking we have moved beyond it. The degree to which the characteristic of racial naïveté is present in each participants’ narrative differs, but for those of us who present as being ‘further along’ in the Helms model, naïveté is still present, and moving toward understanding one’s WRP, just as part of WRI helps understand that aspects of our propriospect will not leave simply because we also acquire other attributes from the manifest. In this model also no one particular white is ahead or behind[Type a quote from the document or the summary of an interesting point. You can position the text box anywhere in the document. Use the Text Box Tools tab to change the formatting of the pull quote text box.]

another with respect to the construct of WRI; our propriospect is rather always in flux with the balance of constructs that are present. If the goal in developing one’s understanding of WRI is to address issues of racial development that have gone unresolved it is probably in whites’ best interests to engage with a model that recognizes that possessing what Helms presents as more evolved characteristics does not mean we break from characteristics that would be framed as more problematic or less evolved.
The second way in which the model differs is that WRI no longer becomes a discussion in isolation about individuals but rather recognizes that any individual white racial propriospect is always already situated within the larger framework of white supremacy. Participants in the model I propose have no set of statuses to pass through; rather the WRI identity is seen as an organization to understand the ways in which as whites we collectively and individually work at maintaining our whiteness and its value, and how systematic racism and white supremacy work individuals and a whole system compromised of individuals in concert. The focus in this model becomes not an examination just of individual identities but rather a construct in which an individual can understand both self and self as grouped. This distinction is important, particularly given the propensity of white denial and the ways that whites individually distance themselves from frameworks where constructs like racist, supremacist, judgmental, etc. are present, as demonstrated by participants in this study. For me the model involves shifting whiteness and white racial identity from the center that seeks to control those it relegates to the margins, to a balanced approach to humanity whereby whiteness can better interact within a structure neither at the center or the margin of race, and in ways equitable for other races and other racial identities. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 help to visualize the shift in approach that the Fasching-Varner model hopes to create. As I will discuss in the implications in the following chapter, neither model can be effective unless whites are actively involved in the process of their white racial identity and suggestions will be provided in the implication for how to utilize this expanded model of WRI.
Table 4.4 – WRI, Whiteness, White Supremacy – The WRI model’s traditional interaction at the societal level
Table 4.5 – What a rethought human experience of margins and center shared equitably
Chapter 7 – Implications, Recommendations, Limitations, and Directions

Introduction

This dissertation has attempted to conceptualize a research project with the hopes of understanding of how the narratives of the pre-service teachers might be used as means to better understand the enterprise of education in general, and to better understand the implications of white racial identity in particular. The study was premised on three stated interrelated concepts, namely 1) the teaching force, is comprised of up to 90% white teachers, 2) teachers are one of the primary socializers for children, and 3) the narratives of white pre-service teachers may prove helpful at understanding how whites understand their own whiteness. What emerged in the study were several findings derived from within the discourse structure and several patterns of individual participants’ thinking that lived across participant cases, and helped to shape the overall framing of the findings and discussion chapters. In this concluding chapter I will look at the implications of this research; to achieve this aim I will both summarize the findings and present what I believe to be theoretical, pragmatic, and pedagogical implications of the work. I will also share recommendations for other researchers and myself based on lessons learned in doing this work. I will also examine the limitations of the dissertation, and end with what I propose could be future directions for research based on this study.
Summary of Findings and Implications

Brief Summary of Findings

Given the nature of the findings chapters and their length, I will provide a brief summary of the findings before delving into the implications of the work. In all there were three categorical areas of findings that emerged in this research and within the findings there were also sub findings that emerged to help make sense of categorical findings or to add nuance to a particular finding. The first finding asserted that participants deployed particular semantic moves, namely white racial bonding through discourse and color-blind oriented discourse, as a means of discussing and negotiating of the topic of race. The idea of color-blind discourse was further broken down to conceptualizations of abstract liberalism, naturalization, minimization, and confused or incoherent narratives about race. The second finding of the research explored the uninformed and naïve articulations of why the pre-service teachers entered the profession of teaching, and I argued that the “naïve” rationales served as yet another semantic move related to race, in particular the demonstration of racial dysconsciousness. The third finding was a set of three interrelated findings about white racial identity that asserted 1) participants conceptualizations of white racial identity relegated issues of “race” to “diversity”, 2) participants conceptualized their sense of white identity through racial others, and 3) participants exhibited a heightened sense of incoherence and confusion in conceptualizing their own white racial identity. With those findings in mind I also located participants within the Helms White Racial Identity Model, presented limitations
of the Helms model, and argued for a new model that better situates individual white propioспект within the larger structure of white racial identity.

*Implications and Recommendations*

On the rationales for being teachers

Given the demographic landscape of the teaching force in the United States is significantly comprised of white teachers, an implication of this research is to really problematize how pre-service teachers are admitted into programs, supported and pushed throughout their programs, monitored beyond their teacher education programs, and held accountable for their work as teachers, and how their racialized identities not only inform pedagogical choices but shape the socialization process children are influenced by. I will discuss in the implications there is much work to be done with the overwhelming whiteness in the teaching force, but that whiteness, coupled with said candidates inability to justify why they have chosen this profession, provides reason for pause. That the pre-service participants could not articulate substantive or developed reasons and rationales for becoming teachers is alarming and I argue is not unique to this participant pool. I have worked as an instructor in five pre-service teachers education programs in two states, and while my experiences certainly may not provide sufficient evidence for a fully generalized claim, they do tell me that the narratives of the participants in this study are not unique (Fasching-Varner, 2009). In my interactions with pre-service teachers and educators, and in conversation with other teacher educators, the rationales that pre-
service teachers articulate appear to be underdeveloped and rest greatly within cliché orientations of what it means to be a teacher.

Teaching is a complex endeavor, and even with folks who really have articulated substantive reasons for being a teacher the work of being a culturally relevant effective teacher is difficult (Ladson-Billings, 1997; Dixson & Fasching-Varner, 2008). The complexity and difficulty in preparing future teachers to deal with the realities of teaching and the reality of the impact of teachers racialized identities on students is enhanced when the pre-service teachers themselves do not have significant rationales for entering the profession. I propose several steps to address the underdeveloped nature of pre-service teachers’ rationales for becoming teachers.

First teacher preparation programs need to be more conscious of the admissions process and use that process to intervene with prospective pre-service teachers and help them develop a substantial sense of why they have chosen the field; begin directly involving the candidates themselves in the process of articulating grounded and developed rationales for being teachers. First and foremost pre-service education programs need to have real conversations with potential teacher candidates during the admission process. Often complex checklists and admissions rubrics are used to make decisions on paper about people who live off of paper. Not only do such processes privilege students who are already privileged and have had better access at negotiating the structural systematic advantages of the system, but they also necessarily mean that we do not converse with potential applicants about why it is they are choosing this profession and what their understandings of themselves are. For example, at Righteous College a great deal of time
is spent talking about teacher candidates and how to more robustly engage them, yet little
time is spent talking with the teacher candidates to help them have a stake in this process,
which may in fact help them develop more complex rationales for entering the
profession.

In Crossing over to Canaan Ladson-Billings (2001) highlighted how a program
can think systematically about the candidates being admitted to the program so as to
create the richest opportunity for teacher candidates to grow. Early in the process
potential teacher candidates need to be asked about why they are entering the profession,
and the narrative needs to be recorded by the candidate and then revisited throughout the
program. This rationale recorded narrative becomes tangible and becomes a place the
candidate can re-visit as s/he develops through the program. The recommendation is not
to eliminate admission to anyone who does not exhibit a sufficiently developed rational
for being a teacher, but rather to figure out where the teacher candidate is at that moment
in time and what the program will need to think about in terms of experiences and
opportunities to help the candidate develop wider angles of vision.

I argue that programs should also create a set of stop points where candidates are
required to re-examine the nature of their rationales and to continue developing their
reasons for choosing this profession. These stopping points would allow the candidates
opportunities for self reflection, but would also give programs a mechanism for
examining the development of pre-service teacher candidates over time, and provide
teacher educators with fodder to develop themselves within the frameworks of our
courses so that we can consciously address the nature of teaching within our courses.
Also, a stop point at the end of the program would allow faculty in programs to make informed choices about recommending candidates for certification, so that candidates who do not demonstrate complex or sufficiently develop rationales for teaching do not automatically receive program endorsement for teaching certification or licensure.

It is often assumed that enduring and completing a program in teacher education and satisfying the higher educational institution requirements means that the teacher candidate will automatically be recommended for certification. In the state where Lilac is located, teacher candidates cannot become certified or licensed to practice teaching without institutional recommendation. If candidates cannot substantively speak to and consciously identify why they are entering the profession by the end of their program, I suggest the program has a moral and ethical obligation to the candidate’s future students to intervene and withhold the institutional recommendation; perhaps a program is called for, which outlines a series of steps with which the candidate must engage as a demonstration that s/he is consciously prepared for entering the profession.

For potential students of candidates and for the communities at large which fund public education, I believe clarity as to how candidates are recommended for licensure is a fundamental responsibility. This recommendation would require a less of a consumerism approach to how higher education operates, and a effort by institutions to be less concerned with lost revenue; this would mean admitting committed candidates rather than everyone just to meet enrollment quotas and preventing every candidate from moving to certification. Not everyone should be a teacher just because one wants to be, and especially those folks not prepared for the work; if teacher education programs admit
teachers who are not ready to teach, school systems become further overburdened by
teacher turnover and retention issues. Additionally, teachers engage in poor pedagogy
which is detrimental to student populations and, once tenured, they may become mentor
teachers, socializing teacher candidates into the profession, a problematic training
approach. The retention of strong culturally relevant teachers begins not when teachers
enter the profession in school districts but rather it begins in the very early admittance
process to the teacher education programs.

On the nature of discourse

One of the implications of this research is that discourse is an important tool in
understanding how participants epistemologically conceptualize their worlds as revealed
through their word (Lawrence, 1995; 2008) including the nature of beliefs about race.
This study’s findings related to participant’s race discourse are consistent with findings
from other studies (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006). The nature of raced discourse from
whites is fundamentally similar across settings and across participant samples, and this
study further contributes to the building base of our understanding of the nature of raced
discourse. As addressed in the discussion, the nature of race discourse also compliments
the work of CRT that has examined the property value of whiteness. This study makes a
unique contribution to the literature in bringing the two concepts together – that is the
empirical examination of semantic moves from participants with the nature of CRT’s
discussion on whiteness property value. By understanding semantic moves as
demonstrative of an attempt to maintain whiteness’ property value, we can understand
participant narratives not only within the singular frame of color-blind orientations, but also better situate the color-blind discourse as being part of the larger hegemonic white supremacist structure that has been fundamentally part of the landscape in United States. In situating the discourse structures beyond the individual participants themselves, but as part of the larger hegemony of maintaining whiteness, while understanding the discourse is not occurring in isolation, there is less opportunity to claim that such semantic moves are not indicative of socialized and internalized racism. The implication of this research is that the focus of our understanding of individual whites within the system of whites cannot be a reductionist conversation of who is “good/bad,” “racist/non-racist,” “nice/mean,” but in fact actually creates a space to understand that as whites, we enjoy a large number of systematic advantages and privileges, and our discourse becomes the site to understand how we protect those privileges through the maintenance of whiteness’ value.

The propensity of participants in this study was to situate themselves within frameworks of ideological openness so as to create semantic distance from those they conceptualize as racially problematic and unlike themselves. The need to distance oneself from supposedly racially problematic people is supported when we look at race through the lens of individual narrative; in such an orientation all that a white need do is create semantic distances, and Voila! s/he is not racist. The findings in this study and its discussion link to whiteness as property in the CRT literature and help to move beyond the individualist approach to see how the semantic distancing approach is actually indicative of maintaining white privilege.
A problem in this implication which arose was that, as the researcher I was able to see the insight of the value to linking color-blind discourse with CRT elements, but the participants did not have the opportunity in their teacher education program to see and situate themselves within the larger framework of race. Sierra is a discrepant case within this participant group as she is beginning to understand her individual beliefs as existing within a structure of white racism, white supremacy, and the overall maintenance of whiteness’ property value. The other participants still position themselves as rational and consequently non-racist.

A recommendation from this work, then, is that participants need their narratives made available to them in such a way that they too can engage in seeing their whiteness, as demonstrated through their narratives and semantic moves, and can understand the theoretical constructs they learn about difference, race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. through the lens of their own narrative. One of the powerful forms of avoidance in teacher education programs is that candidates are able to circumvent themselves in the name of learning about others in order to better do their job. How do I teach ______________? What are strategies to engage ______________? In this orientation much of the pedagogical training becomes about others and, since most pre-service teacher candidates are white, they never have to examine themselves. I recommend that early in their programs, teacher candidates are given an interview protocol similar to the one in this study. To accomplish this, pre-service teachers would be interviewed first generically about their school and family experiences growing up, and their rationales for becoming teachers, and their thoughts about being teachers; they then should be given
the opportunity to transcribe their own testimonial data. Following the transcription of the data, participants would be given a second interview protocol that revisited the same topics but through the lens of race and potentially expand the conversation to gender, class, sexuality, etc. They would also transcribe the second interview, and the transcriptions would then become a tool that could be used to explore concepts that the candidates learn throughout their program, with the intent of reducing the level of abstractness and distance to understanding concepts like race. For example when talking about color-blind discourses, teacher candidates would not be able to say, “ohhh, I don’t do that,” but rather with their instructors’ guidance, would be able to see how they engage with race from color-blind perspectives and perhaps be more willing to situate and see themselves within the system of whiteness that serves as a foundational base to their experiences.

On white racial identity

The final implication of this research is relative to white racial identity beyond how the maintenance of whiteness as property, or how white racial identity itself manifests through discourse structures. White racial identity has the potential to serve as yet another analytic layer in helping to understand the nature of whiteness in more profound ways than just looking at the workings of individual whites, as has been suggested previously in this dissertation. As a construct, my critique of the Helms White Racial Identity model indicates that it may not effectively serve the purpose of helping whites understand the dual balance between themselves as individuals and the nature of
being individuals within a group. Even if the model helped whites see this situated nature of racial identity, as I have proposed in my model of WRI, it is of limited utility if not actually in the hands of whites.

Specifically, given the scope of this dissertation relative to pre-service teachers and my professional interest in education, it is important that white pre-service teachers have opportunities to be presented with a model of WRI, which, in concert with their own narratives, could be used for understanding themselves in more profound ways; it could help them to resist the temptation to view their training as an opportunity to learn about ‘others’ from ‘others,’ or to further exploit minority populations in coming to terms with self. Given the recommendation for participants’ narratives that they become a part of their own training, the use of the model of WRI could be an effective tool for white pre-service teachers to examine themselves theoretically. For non-white pre-service teachers I think the examination of their narratives and experiences would be interesting juxtaposed not only against the WRI model, but within the other models of identity development that are extant.

In using the model that I have proposed, participants will have to address the nature of their whiteness, and will have a theoretical language for doing so. A shortfall of the work in whiteness studies is that white researchers are apt to talk about other whites’ whiteness without critical self-reflection. So part and parcel to the recommendation of pre-service teachers examining their own racial narratives is the necessity for white faculty to make public our own narratives, our own experiences, and our own struggle with our whiteness, and the examination of our whiteness within the structure of the
global white supremacy. So whereas I suggest that white pre-service teachers need to examine their narratives and use a WRI model as a theoretical structure to understand their whiteness, so do the faculty who work with pre-service teachers. For me the most meaningful instantiation of this was in the experience with Ana. Prior to the experience of having Ana in my course, I was able to talk to pre-service teachers about the work they had to but always sheltered my own experience away. One of the most powerful dynamics in my teaching became the opportunity for candidates to see me as vulnerable and in a position to do the same things I was asking them to do; I say this again not to bring attention to me as doing something honorable or great, but just doing what is right. I am white and not acknowledging my own whiteness, leaving it unexamined and dysconscious, and not modeling a process for understanding the nature of whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege, is a pitfall of being able to help candidates do that same self-interrogation process. I suggest ultimately that the process of white faculty modeling how whites can self-interrogate our own experience and the hegemony of our operating practices is also likely to reduce white students need to use students and faculty of color as their learning experience, yet another toll that whiteness has taken on people of color.

Implications in concert

Before moving to the limitations and future directions of research, I think it is important for us to consider the implications of the findings in total. In framing this research in Chapter 1, I drew from what Ladson-Billings (2006b) has highlighted as the
educational debt with which students of color are burdened, a debt that is created by the
historic, economic, socio-political, and moral debts created by white supremacist
hegemony. My hope as an educator is to genuinely prepare teachers to better serve the
needs of the children they teach, and to break the cycles of hegemony created by white
people who have created the educational debts of which Ladson-Billings. Therefore I
think it is important to look at how the findings and implications of this research can
work in tandem to help address the debt.

Part of the debt comes from having teachers enter the teaching workforce, like I
did, unsure of the truth of why they have entered the field and full of dysconsciouss, yet
ever-present beliefs and conceptualizations, that prevent them from making authentic
connections to their students, their students’ families, and the communities where
families live. The teaching force is unlikely to change dramatically in a meaningful way;
as has been previously noted, over the past 30 years the teaching force has been
compromised of 85-92% white teachers. Pragmatically, we need more teachers of color
and a richer tapestry of diverse teachers, a simple recommendation and implication of
many research projects. Increasing teacher candidates of color is difficult given, for
example, institutional resistance through gate keeping practices that block students of
color from admittance to undergraduate programs. Often students of color in pre-service
teacher education programs are one of a few or the only student of color, and the
pressures of being socialized to the profession surrounded and engulfed by whiteness is
difficult to bear. Accepting more students of color into a program is meaningless without
addressing the lack of critical consciousness that is the underpinning of pre-service
teacher education programs; the presence of students of color will not in and of itself change the orientation of white teachers, and white teachers will likely continue to compromise a significant portion of the teaching population. As a mathematical reality, we know that most new teachers will be obtaining employment in urban areas. Many of the pre-service teacher participants want to teach in urban area, and even for those who may wish to teach in suburban areas, the jobs just are not there. Suburban teachers are retained longer than urban teachers with significantly less turnover, creating less open positions in suburban districts; our political geography dictates that as a sheer issue of number more teaching positions will be in urban districts as opposed to suburban or even rural districts.

Given these realities about teachers, the findings from this study, and the implications of those findings, the project of developing white teachers is necessary since it is likely that they will not only compromise most of the teaching force generally, but it is likely that white teachers will continue teaching populations most affected by the education debt. Thus it is important to ensure that pre-service teachers do not simply become teachers by enduring their teacher preparation program and without being able to substantiate the reasons they are entering the profession. Programs’ moral and ethical responsibilities dictate paying better attention to whom institutions are recommending that states allow licensure or certification. Additionally, with more grounded and developed rationales, white teachers must leave their teacher education programs better aware of their whiteness, and more in touch with the individual and systemic manifestations of racialized beliefs – including racism and white supremacy – since there
is likely to be a racial mismatch between themselves and the students they will teach. Through understanding the social and moral costs of our white supremacy, white racism, and the value we attach to our whiteness, teachers can better seek to service the principal of the debt created the history of our racial identity. It will also lessen the likelihood of negative racialized beliefs from adversely changing the types of pedagogical and educational opportunities offered to K-12 students. For those pre-service teachers who will teach in suburban settings with people they conceptualize as more like themselves than, the work is equally important. In developing rationales for teaching and by understanding themselves as raced and beneficiaries of racism and white supremacy, they can begin to dismantle the comfortable socialization practices that currently teach white students what it means to be white. Regardless of teaching location, white educators as the historically and contemporarily privileged group have the responsibility for dismantling the walls of the house that racism built.

**Limitations**

To see the work in balanced ways, researchers need to be able to understand the limitations of our work. In outlining the limitations I show not only a balanced perspective about this work, but hopefully the implications and recommendations I have provided will be taken seriously since I understand the limitations of the work. First and foremost the sample size is small relative to the total number of pre-service teachers in the United States and to the larger white population. A perceived limitation of qualitative research could be argued that the depth provided by a narrative approach also limits the
scope of how much you can do and manage. So, unlike a survey questionnaire that can be distributed to an infinite number of people and results can be mathematically analyzed and self-regulated, the act of talking with, interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing via narrative is time consuming and necessitates a smaller sample size. The findings in this study, particularly with respect to participant semantic moves and discourse structures, are consistent with studies like Bonilla-Silva’s (2001; 2006) qualitative exploration into the Detroit Area Study on Racial Ideology. As such the limit of my sample size is likely negligible when considering that the findings are consistent with studies that have had larger sample sizes.

Another potential limit of the work is that my approach did not allow engagement with the participants after the study regarding the implications and recommendations. So in some sense the findings are lost to this particular group of pre-service educators as they have moved on; there was nothing instructive in the research process since that the population of participants was neither derived from students I have taught or will teach, nor were they a population that is early in their teacher education process as their undergraduate experience has ended and they have transitioned into the profession. This fact is really a missed opportunity rather than a limitation.

Finally a limitation of the research was its duration. As I have suggested in the implications and recommendations, the process of working with pre-service teacher needs to start as early as possible and should be sustained over time, recognizing the life-long qualities and implications of race. I would have liked to follow the pre-service teachers over time in the program from the beginning of their teacher training and into
their teaching careers to examine the process of identity development over time. In moving forward with future directions for research I will propose studying WRI and pre-service teacher narratives over time in a more longitudinal perspective.

**Future Directions for Researchers**

I believe that a future direction for research must be the involvement of researchers in more longitudinal studies that work with pre-service teachers over time, from entering their program through their early career, through development, and through their pursuant teaching career. Long-term sustained research is difficult given people’s movement and changing life paths, however no real longitudinal study has been undertaken to understand the development of whiteness of the long term, over the span of one’s career in the public sector, and especially teaching. I would like to begin a long-term longitudinal study with a group of freshman undergraduates and follow them at least through the process of tenure to see how findings from that study would connect, or not connect, to what I have presented here.

For any white researcher who commits to writing about race and researching race with educators, I recommend examining the process of their own race, infusing auto-ethnographic elements with the study of race and pre-service teachers, so that the research can be understood as transformative; as researchers we, too, are implicated in the work, not just researchers detached from our own lives and the ways in which our lives have derived from privileged white supremacist spaces.
Finally, I believe that more research needs to examine the institutional orientations of teacher educator programs. The focus of this study was not on the pre-service teacher education program at Righteous College, but what emerges in this study is the need to better understand what it is that is actually being taught in pre-service teacher preparation programs, so that we can understand disconnects that surface in candidates’ understandings of what they are learning. For example, how are conversations of race, the focus of this study, dealt with in the program? At Righteous College candidates take one single disconnected course about issues related to race, class, gender, sexuality etc. The orientation of “diversity” is not intraprogramatic and this may lead to disconnect for students. Studying the workings of programs in teacher preparation I believe researchers can begin to understand the cross-sectional relationships between teacher candidates and the programs that educate them to the profession.
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Appendix A: Fasching-Varner Interview Protocol

Interview 1

Interviewer: Hi my name is Kenny and I am going to talk with you today about some of your experiences and life history and how your experiences helped to shape your decision to be a teacher. We will also talk a little bit about your practice as a teacher. Before we begin I want to review the informed consent form that you signed.

- Do you have the informed consent form with you?
- If yes: Thank you for bringing the informed consent.
- If no: It’s ok, I have another form here you can sign.

Informed Consent - Verbal

- I want to make sure that you understand the informed consent form that you read and signed and that you continue to freely give informed consent to participate with this project. If you choose not to participate or withdraw consent you may do so at any time and without penalty.

- Do you have any questions about the research I can answer before we begin?
- Do you consent to participate in this research?

Interviewer: Thank you, I am now going to begin answering questions. I have a little digital voice recorder that I am going to use to record our conversation so that I am able to remember what we talk about later. Also, by recording the conversation I will not
have to take as many notes about what you say and this will allow us to have a more natural conversation. If you are uncomfortable with the recorder at any point please let me know and we can turn it off and I can take hand written notes – we can also turn back on if you were to again feel comfortable enough to do so.

**Interview Questions**

- Where did you grow up?
- What was your childhood like: at home? Friends? Family?
- What is your first, or among your first, memories of school?
- What do you remember about some of your more memorable teachers?
- Throughout elementary school who were in your friendship circle?
  - In middle school?
  - In high school?
- What were your parent(s) or guardian(s) perceptions about school that they conveyed to you?
- What types of clubs and extra-curricular activities were you involved in?
- Growing up how would you describe “bad” or “mischevious” students?
- Growing up how and who would you describe as “good” or “well behaved” students?
- What were your perceptions of the roles of teachers growing up? Did your perceptions change with time?
- When did you begin to make decisions about going to college?
- What schools did you look at in terms of attending college?
- What were some of your deciding factors on picking the college you attend(ed)?
- When did you decide that you wanted to major in education?
- What role did your own schooling play in your decision to become an educator?
- Do you remain in contact with any of your teachers?
- What are your families perceptions of your choice to become an educator?
- What are your friends perceptions of your choice to become an educator?
- As a teacher what are your perceptions of your colleagues as teachers? How would you characterize them?
- As a teacher what are your perceptions of “bad” or “mischevious” students? How would you characterize them?
- As a teacher what are your perceptions of “good” or “well behaved” students? How would you characterize them?
- What is it that you see as your job being a teacher? How do you accomplish these goals?
- How do you think your own experiences as a student affect or shape the ways you teach students?
- What would you want students to know about you in terms of your choice to be a teacher?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share?

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for participating in this interview. As you know I will spend the next couple of weeks transcribing this interview. When I am done transcribing the interview I will share the transcription with you so that you can make sure it accurately reflects what we talked about. At that time I will also schedule a follow up interview. After the follow up interview I will share the transcription as I will with the first interview. Do you have any questions?

**Interview 2:**

- Last time we talked a little bit about growing up in ____________, would you characterize ________________ as diverse? Why?
- We talked about your family life. I was wondering what was the diversity of your family’s friends?
- What did you learn about other groups of people from your family?
- Do you identify as white?
  - Can you think of an experience growing up where you knew you were white?
- Did you have teachers from different backgrounds? Different racial groups?
- Did your teachers change their style of teaching for the kids in your classes who were not white?
- Did you perceive or believe that your white teacher’s whiteness shaped the way they taught?
- We talked a little bit about why you picked Righteous College last time, how did the makeup of the student body play into your choice to come?
- What kind of school district do you want to work in? Why?
- We talked last time about how your experiences growing up might shape how you teach. To what extent does being what shape the way you think about teaching?
- Do students from underrepresented racial groups need different types of instruction from their white peers?