Racial Identity Development in Prospective Teachers: Making Sense of Encounters with Racism

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

Prospective teachers bring to the classroom “interpretations of students and their communities, and their location within a hierarchical society that are informed heavily by assumptions about race and ethnicity” (Sleeter, 2005, p. 243). In his research on student-teacher relationships, Oates (2003) found these assumptions “strongly undermine academic performance,” specifically for African-American students (p. 520). How do prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others? How do prospective teachers make meaning of their encounters with racism? These were the primary questions addressed in this study. The researcher interviewed eleven prospective teachers in an urban education focused Middle Childhood Masters of Education Program at a large Midwestern university. The findings revealed the interview to be the first time participants discussed these encounters and reflected on the assumptions they hold regarding their students. The findings also demonstrate that the current teacher education curriculum does not provide prospective teachers with the opportunity to understand and challenge these assumptions. The primary recommendation of this study is a reconceptualization of the racial framework through which prospective teachers construct racism. The significance of this study is to present narrative evidence to support the necessity of curriculum reform in teacher education in respect to preparing prospective
teachers for teaching students of diversity and to guide the development of teacher education curriculum to more accurately reflect the needs of the changing demographics of P-12 students.
Dedication

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;

They shall mount with wings as eagles;

They shall run and not be weary;

They shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, who gave me wings,

and to my daughter, for whom I hope to equally inspire.
Acknowledgments

To my family: Russell Subjinske, Margaret Subjinske, Christen Younger, Matthew Subjinske, Victoria Williams, Richard Williams and Princess Sparkles Williams.

To my friends and colleagues: Dr. Richard Voithofer, Dr. Brenda Dervin, Dr. Roland Sintos Coloma, Dr. Harriet “Nikki” Fayne, Dr. Daniel Brilhart, Dr. Suzanne Franco, Amy Van Vlack, Romena Holbert, Jeannine Hetzler, Danielle Terrance, Abby Warren and the other future educators who “see the light,” my participants, and those students at Beery Middle School, who continue to inspire my work.

And to my advisor and committee members: Dr. Beverly Gordon, who alone believed in me and supported my project from its inception, Dr. Adrienne Dixson, who continues to fight the battle for all God’s children, and Dr. Sebnem Cilesiz, whose quiet knowledge and strength I admire and aspire to emulate.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Education
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Teacher educators, prospective teachers, and P-12 students do not share the same ethnic, social, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. In 2004, the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force reported that 40% of America’s public school students are children of color whereas 90% of America’s public schoolteachers are White. Forty percent of America’s public schools do not even have one teacher or staff member of color (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). This gap in cultural congruency is expected to increase within the coming years (Cross, 2003) in an increasingly complex educational environment:

The entire field of education is confronted with persistent and contested issues such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation, looming threats of a national curriculum and assessment, school choice, voucher plans, busing, and achievement testing; as well as new challenges such as the corporate running of school districts, and shrinking federal, state, and local financial support. African Americans are confronted with those issues and the struggle for adequate educational opportunities and education, and against the unequal distribution of intellectual capital. (Gordon, 2005, p. 160)
In 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate asserted that despite the confounding problem of race in the United States, it remains untheorized as a topic of scholarly inquiry in education. Fifteen years later it is still a confounding problem despite its increased theorization. The few, existing studies demonstrate that “unfavorable teacher perceptions of students, specifically African-American students, even if justifiable by prior performance and other relevant information, strongly undermine their academic performance” (Oates, 2003). In 2003, Gary L. St. C. Oates reported on his investigation into teacher-student racial congruence conditions and their effects on teacher perceptions of student performance. He found the “(mis)match between teacher’s and student’s race seems primarily consequential to the standardized test performance of African-American students—shaping both the way teachers feel about students, and (to a lesser degree) the extent to which these perceptions ultimately matter” (Oates, 2003, p. 520).

In general, most prospective teachers are not accustomed to examining the educational system through a critical lens. They simply, “reproduce the dominant discourse through the uncritical acceptance of myths and stereotypes, as well as through unreflective teaching practices” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 131). Furthermore, LeCompte and McCray (2002) found that prospective teachers remain ignorant about racial inequality; feel blamed for injustices; approach issues of inequality from personal experiences; and want to be told what to do in a multicultural classroom rather than explore the impact of their attitudes on multicultural teaching effectiveness.

For example, many prospective teachers believe the achievement gap is simply due to a deficiency in certain students and their families and the more uncomfortable they are with
who can and cannot learn the greater the chance they will “relegate certain children to lower levels of expectation and academic opportunity” (Howard, 2006, p. 119). Lewis, Collins and Pitts (2000) asked prospective teachers to give at least three reasons for the low science and math achievements of African American students. The results are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Reasons for the Low Science and Math Achievements of African American Students

![Graph showing reasons for low achievement](image)


The coded reasons above (attitude, effect, interest, etc.) were categorized into factors inside the classroom and factors outside the classroom. The prospective teachers
overwhelmingly cited factors *outside* the classroom as the reasons for the low achievement of African American students (Lewis, Collins, & Pitts, 2000).

Prospective teachers should be involved in daily pursuits to “pose and try to answer some of the toughest questions there are [such as the one stated above] about how to work effectively in local contexts with learners who are like them and not like them” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 62). Teacher education programs should provide opportunities for prospective teachers to participate in systematic and self-critical inquiry in which they reconsider their personal knowledge and experiences and how they have shaped their views of race, culture, and diversity (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Such narrative opportunities have the “capacity to contain and entertain within it contradictions, nuances, tensions, and complexities that traditional academic discourse with its expository stance and more distanced impersonal voice cannot” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 83).

We all carry different worlds in our heads. And, yet, we expect new teachers to reach students in worlds they do not even *know* exist (Delpit, 1995). In the United States, new teachers are primarily White whereas their students are increasingly diverse. Although White teachers are not solely responsible for the academic struggles of their minority students, they *are* responsible for the reproduction of the racial inequality that haunts these students (Hyland, 2005) through self-fulfilling prophecies and racial bias (Blaisdell, 2005). Inherent in teacher education is an imperative responsibility to help prospective teachers understand who they are and how they connect with those around them.

**Statement of Problem**
Language, through which narratives are conveyed, is not only a reflection and a constituent of reality but also a cultural rope that connects people across generations and even continents. (Duncan, 2006, p.200)

The purpose of this study is twofold: to provide prospective teachers with an opportunity to make meaning of their encounters with racism and how they believe these encounters shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others and to provide the teacher education inquiry community with research that demonstrates the power of narrative in teacher education and more importantly the power of teacher education as a narrative (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Guiding questions for this study included:

1. How do prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others?

2. How do prospective teachers make meaning of their encounters with racism?

**Limitations of Study**

The purpose of this study is to increase the research knowledge of how prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others. The limitations of the study are specific to the sample size and type. The sample consists of only a small number of prospective teachers who were studied in one Midwestern state. The findings cannot be generalized to all prospective teachers. The study does not evaluate the prospective teachers’ preparation program. However, it should be noted that the use of a
critical framework and methodologies focuses on a challenge to societal power inequities and that prior scholarship suggests localized narratives, such as those presented in this study, do have “implications for the larger, national, cultural system from which the localized practices emerge” (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 97).

**Benefits of Study**

The knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result from this study include a greater understanding of how prospective teachers’ encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future, experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others. Prior research demonstrates teachers’ interpretations of their students and communities (which are heavily based on assumptions about race) impact the academic development of their students. Therefore, the basic and/or applied significance of the knowledge expected to result from this study will better inform the teacher education community as to how we may further understand, address, and perhaps begin to change teachers’ interpretations of their students and communities so that the academic development of their students may benefit.

**Definition of Relevant Terms**

The study of racial identity development in prospective teachers draws on the following terms:

**Race.** DeCuir-Gunby (2006) defines race as “a socially and historically constructed ideological system that permeates all social, cultural, economic and political domains” (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006). Haney Lopez (2000) further defines race as “a vast
group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry” (Haney Lopez, 2000, p. 165).

**Racial Identity Development.** Helms (1990) defines racial identity development as “the process and state of defining for oneself and acknowledging the personal significance, responsibility, and social meaning of belonging to a particular group” (Helms, 1990, p. 6). Racial identity continually adjusts to social, political, and economic changes as well historically contextual understandings of race and the experiences of racial groups. All Americans experience a process of racial identity development which is contingent upon their location within the racial hierarchy in relation to others (Helms, 1990).

**Prospective Teachers.** The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defines prospective teachers or teacher candidates as the individuals admitted to, or enrolled in, programs for the initial or advanced preparation of teachers, teachers continuing their professional development, or other school professionals. They are distinguished from students in P-12 schools (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008). Although teacher candidate is the term used by the formal assessment structure in teacher education, researchers in teacher education commonly use the words teacher candidate, pre-service teacher and prospective teacher interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, I will use the term prospective teacher as it is the term reflected most often in the work of many scholars who study race as a construct of teacher education.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The standards-based reform movement has shifted discussion away from race, except when disaggregating student test scores… I argue that race matters because teachers bring to the classroom interpretations of students and their communities, and their location within a hierarchical society, that are informed heavily by assumptions about race and ethnicity. (Sleeter, 2005, p.243)

Race

Throughout the history of the United States, race has often been associated with “cultural, material, physical, and linguistic differences which need not imply inequality of social status” (Adams, 2001, p. 211). More specifically, Smedley and Smedley (2005), define race within this historical perspective as “a means of creating and enforcing social order, a lens through which differential opportunity and inequality are structured” (p. 24). They further argue that “in the United States race is more specifically defined by the culturally invented ideas and beliefs we have about the differences in skin color, hair texture, nose width, and lip thickness that give meaning to the word race” (p. 24). In other words, race-based societies such as ours have a biologically discrete grouping of races based on the above-stated profound and unchangeable physical characteristics that justify social hierarchical ranking (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).
In their research regarding the teacher perceptions of student race, Catalogna, Greene, and Zirkel (1981) found teachers continue to operate within these biologically discrete categories of race. The researchers in this study gave a group of teachers enrolled in coursework at their local university (n=96) color photographs of 100 elementary students and asked them to place them in a line of piles according to race (as many piles as they needed) and label each pile. The teachers listed a total of 43 races with a mean number of races of 3.73. The results are indicated Table 2:

Table 2.

Teacher Perceptions of Student Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Ethnicity</th>
<th>Student Ethnicity (Perceived)</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The most frequently used labels were “white,” “black,” “mixed,” “Oriental,” and “Puerto Rican.” However, labels also included nationality, language, religion and geographic location indicating an obvious discrepancy in the teachers’ self-created definitions of race.
Further research demonstrates “teachers hold more negative attitudes about black children’s ability, language, behavior, and potential than they do about white children, and that most black students have fewer favorable interactions with their teachers than white students” (Banks et al., 2005, p. 241). This is extremely detrimental to these students in that the development of a strong and positive racial identity is fundamental to the academic, social, and emotional growth of all children, especially those from minority groups. Students who experience racial stigmatization in the educational environment develop a “reactive racial identity” that opposes school in order to provide protection against the negativity they encounter regarding their personal or group identity (Banks et al., 2005).

Despite these constructions, race is not a biological construct determined by a single gene or a cluster of genes. There are in fact no genetic characteristics specific to Blacks and non-Blacks and the same is true of Whites and non-Whites. Genetic variation is actually greater within these populations than between them (Haney Lopez, 2000). In “Proving your skin is white, you can have everything”: Race, racial identity, and property rights in whiteness in the Supreme Court case of Josephine DeCuir, DeCuir-Gunby more accurately defines race as “a socially and historically constructed ideological system that permeates all social, cultural, economic and political domains” (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006). Haney Lopez (2000) further defines race as “a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry” (Haney Lopez, 2000, p. 165).
Race, then, is a social construction. It is a “human interaction rather than natural differentiation [and] must be seen as the source and continued basis for racial categorization” (Haney Lopez, 2000, p. 168). It is a human production that constitutes an integral part of an ever-changing social meaning-making system (Haney Lopez, 2000). It differs from ethnicity in that ethnicity is more neutrally aligned to “lifestyles, value orientations, languages, customs, beliefs, and habits by which a people who have lived and interacted together over generations are likely to differ from their neighbors. It [ethnicity] refers to a people’s culture more than to their physical characteristics” (Adams, 2001, p. 211). More specifically, understanding race as a social construction, separate of ethnicity, is fundamental to the identity development of White persons, especially:

A person’s identity becomes a lens through which they see themselves and which informs their understanding of others. Hardiman (2001) believes that it is important for whites to understand the extent to which their perceptions of self and other had been historically constructed. It was also important to understand the extent to which that construction was embedded in systems of normalization such as the church, the medial, school, and even in the stories and folklores that formed a central aspect of the socialization of most white people. Developing an understanding of the functioning of social constructions that serve to mark one group as dominant and the unquestionable centre also provides space for the understanding that there is also a form of social construction that simultaneously
marks others as subordinate. (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell, 2005, p. 163)

Racism, within this situation, is not merely “an individual pathology, rather it is a systemic structural problem that is constructed and maintained by the collective acts of many individuals, but which is larger and far more powerful than any individual (Vaught and Castagno, 2008, p. 101).

**Racial Identity Development**

According to Helms (1990) racial identity development is then, “the process and state of defining for oneself and acknowledging the personal significance, responsibility, and social meaning of belonging to a particular group” (p. 6). Racial identity is continually adjusting to social, political, and economic changes as well historically contextual understandings of race and the experiences of racial groups. All Americans experience a process of racial identity development which is contingent upon their location within the racial hierarchy in relation to others (Helms, 1990). Racial identity development is particularly important within the Critical Race Theory framework (discussed in *Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework & Methodology*) especially in respect to challenging the dominant ideology and refuting “claims of education institutions to objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity” (Yosso, 2006, p. 171).

Racial identity development theory is concerned with the socio-psychocultural implication of racial group membership which includes belief systems that evolve in reactions to different perceptions racial groups maintain. Black identity development
theory emerged during the 1970s from the work of William Cross and Bailey W. Jackson III, who wanted to understand the identity changes of Black people in relation to their social and cultural experiences of the time. Jackson’s five-stage model begins with an individual at the naïve stage that is lacking any identity or social consciousness. In the second stage of development, acceptance, the individual transitions to understanding his/her Black identity as defined by the dominant majority followed by the rejection of this definition in the third stage of resistance. During the fourth, redefinition stage of Black identity development, the individual begins to define his/her identity independent of the White majority definitions. Finally, during the internalization stage, the individual integrates his or her newly defined identity into all aspects of their life (Jackson, 2001). Adams (2001) identifies a core concept that is common to the racial identity theories of all groups which she has termed parallel development tasks. Specifically, she finds all members of these groups establish new identities that “are not based on internalized domination or internalized subordination” (p. 228). In addition, many authors of racial identity theory for people of color reference the work of Jackson and Cross much like Helms. This is perhaps most evident in Asian American identity development in which an individual begins in a stage of ethnic awareness or discovery of their ethnic heritage and then progresses into a stage of White identification. In this stage of White identification, the individual begins to feel they are different and they feel alienated from other Asian Americans before they awaken to the next stage of social political consciousness in which they focus on their personal experiences as an Asian American and they are angered by how Whites have treated them. The final stage of Asian
American identity development is incorporation in which they are confident in their Asian American identity and they begin to incorporate this identity into the other facets of their identity (Adams, 2001).

Multiracial identity theory follows a similar progress, albeit through less stages. According to Adams (2001), a person who self-identifies as multiracial begins their process of identity development in a stage of awareness of difference and dissonance or an understanding that there is difference between him or her and others and it is perceived negatively. This person may then progress to a struggle for acceptance stage in which they struggle for acceptance by others and they explore their self identity in hopes of resolution. Finally, he or she may enter a stage of self acceptance and assertion of an interracial identity in which he or she is increasingly accepting of their self-determined Biracial or Bicultural identity (Adams, 2001).

Unlike the Black, Asian American, and Multiracial identity theories described above, American Indian identity theory does not follow a developmental or stage model. Instead, American Indian identity theory consists of factors of identity. The factors are as follows:

- **Language and culture** - extent to which one is grounded in native language and culture
- **Genealogical heritage** - personal validity as an Indian
- **General philosophy or worldview** - as derived from distinctly Indian ways (old tradition)
• *Self as Indian person* - degree to which one thinks of oneself as an Indian person

• *Official recognition* - official recognition of membership within a tribe by the tribal government (Adams, 2001)

And, finally, Latino identity theory is similar to American Indian identity theory in that there are no specified developmental stages. Instead, Latino identity theory is based on Latino *orientations* as listed below:

1. *Latino-integrated* - wide lens, identify as individuals in a group context, Latinos positive, Whites are complex

2. *Latino-identified* - broad lens, identify as Latino, Latinos very positive, Whites are distinct and maybe allies

3. *Subgroup-identified* - narrow lens, identify as own subgroup, Latinos are OK or others maybe, Whites are not central

4. *Latino as Other* - external lens, identify as not White, Latinos are generic, Whites are negative

5. *Undifferentiated/Denial* - closed lens, identify as people, do not know who Latinos are, Whites are supposedly color-blind

6. *White-identified* - tinted lens, identify as White, Latinos are negative, Whites are very positive (Adams, 2001)

As is evident in the descriptions above, at some point in the identity theories of people of color, there is a recognition and understanding of racism and its effects at a relatively early age in life. This is partially due to the fact that people of color are socialized to
understand themselves as people of color before the development of other parts of their identity. Conversely, some White people will continue throughout their life without ever acknowledging and understanding their White identity especially in respect to the privilege it affords them as will be discussed later in this paper.

**Whiteness**

The history of whiteness has progressed from simply denying Black children access to schooling to separate schools, and, now, White flight and the growing insistence on vouchers, public funding of private schools, and schools of choice and resegregation via tracking (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). However most White educators do not view whiteness as part of their identity so the importance of its impact on student learning often goes unnoticed (Blaisdell, 2005). Speaking to her experiences with White pre-service teachers, Picower (2004) describes:

> Many new white teachers see whiteness as the absence of race, or only recognize it in opposition to “others” and this leads to a level of discomfort when issues of race are raise. Having lived in among primarily other whites, many whites see themselves as part of a “racial norm” and believe that they are “color-blind,” holding no prejudices towards others. (Picower, 2004, n.p.)

Giroux (1997) locates whiteness as an increasingly evident ‘symbol of racial identity’ within the early 1990s, at which time Whites were angry, resentful, and threatened by “the call for minority rights, the rewriting of American history from the bottom up, and the shifting racial demographics of the nations’ cities” (Giroux, 1997, p. 376). Cheryl Harris (1993) defines whiteness within this context as “an aspect of self-identity and of
personhood and its relation to the law of property as complex” (p. 1725). Wherein, it has functioned as “self-identity in the domain of the intrinsic, personal, and psychological; as reputation in the interstices between internal and external identity; and, as property in the extrinsic, public, and legal realms” (Harris, 1993, p. 1725). According to Perez Huber, Johnson and Kohli (2006), whiteness is further presented as the normalized standard, and people of color are therefore rendered as abnormal… and students are in jeopardy of believing in this racial hierarchy” (p. 196). Dixson and Rousseau (2005) describe this normalization of whiteness through the framework of Critical Race Theory:

Rather, race, within the scheme of whiteness, is seen as a malady. That is, if we accept the notion of whiteness as normal, then any person who is not white is abnormal. Thus, within polite, middle class mores, it is impolite to see when someone is different, abnormal, and thus, not white. Hence, it is better to ignore, or become colour-blind, than to notice that people of colour have the physical malady of skin colour, or not whiteness. (p. 16)

In respect to the field of teacher education, Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell (2005), believe the study of whiteness “seeks to have teachers and teacher candidates examine their overall understanding of their racial identity; the ideologies with which they enter the classroom; explore the impact of those ideologies on their teaching practices and their interactions with students” (p. 149). Within this study, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) specify property functions of whiteness specific to the educational system. For example, they believe students are rewarded for conformity to perceived “white norms” or sanctioned culture practices. Whiteness then allows for
extensive use of school property and to identify a school or program as lacking this whiteness is to diminish its reputation or status. In *Being white: Invisible privileges of a New England prep school girl*, Landsman (2006), similarly describes, “when, as Whites, we talk about the unearned privileges of white skin, we are simply trying to make the reality of our experience understood in itself. We try to name it as a racial privilege, not something that can be denied, or minimized as only affecting those of a certain class” (p. 14).

In her work to better understand the resistance of White pre-service teachers to develop a critical consciousness, Picower (2009) investigated how the life experiences of pre-service teachers’ predispose them to systematic understandings of race and their response to a multicultural education course that challenged these understandings. She found:

> Participants responded to challenges to these understandings by relying on a set of ‘tools of Whiteness’ designed to protect and maintain dominant and stereotypical understandings of race – tools that were emotional, ideological, and performative... these tools are not simply a passive *resistance to* but much more of an active *protection of* the incoming hegemonic stories and White supremacy and therefore require analysis to better understand when and how these tools are strategically used. (p. 197)

In, *Teaching white students about racism: the search for white allies and the restoration of hope*, Tatum (1994) questions the extent to which higher education promotes the racial identity development of White students. In her research, Tatum uses Janet Helms’s six stages of White Racial Identity Development to investigate the racial identity of the
students in her psychology of racism course. Although various White racial identity development (WRID) models have been proposed the most influential have been those of Cross (1971), Helms (1984, 1995), and Phinney (1989, 1990). Of these studies, only the Helms’ model has received the greatest empirical investigation and extensive study.

Helms (1990) further developed the work of her predecessors in respect to White identity theory. Her first stage of White racial identity development is the contact stage, in which “little attention is paid to the significance of one’s racial group membership” (Tatum, 1994, p. 464). Individuals in this stage of development view themselves as “normal” and do not differentiate between racial identities. The second stage of Helms’s six stage model is the disintegration stage. In this stage individuals recognize racial inequalities and their impact on their lives and the lives of people of color. The reactions of these individuals are either to withdraw or demonstrate a desire to actively respond to racism to end its perpetuation (Tatum, 1994).

Tatum describes Helms’s third stage, the reintegration stage, as the point in which “whites may turn to [the] explanation of racism that puts the burden of change on those who are the targets of racism” (Tatum, 1994, p. 467). The fourth pseudo-independent stage is when individuals begin to understand the complexity of racism and begin to develop a positive association with their racial identity. During this stage, there is a strong attempt to initiate relationships with people of different racial identities then their own (Tatum, 1994). Individuals in the fifth stage of immersion/emersion question their identity and attempt to develop a more positive definition of their identity by replacing feelings of guilt with feelings of pride for their identity (Tatum, 1994). Finally, in stage
six, autonomy, a positive White racial identity is developed wherein whiteness is internalized and the individual becomes an ally in the struggle against oppression.

Through her Racial Identity Interaction Theory, Helms (1994) specifically addresses the connection between the racial identities of the educator and the student. Research has qualitatively demonstrated that different levels of student racial identity in combination with other identities result in different levels of educational experiences. The level of student racial identity is strongly impacted by the level of teacher identity and this is developed through three possible types of student/teacher interactions; regressive, parallel and progressive. When a student’s level of racial identity is higher than the educator’s level of racial identity regressive behaviors such as conflict, tension, rebellion and passive-aggression may be found in their interactions. Parallel interactions occur when the student and teacher are at the same stage and stagnancy develops in growth whereas progressive interactions enable the educator with a higher level of racial identity to encourage the development of student racial identity (Helms, 1994). Therefore, the racial identity of educators (or lack thereof) further changes or maintains the status quo through the development of racial identity in the students.

**Curriculum**

The school curriculum communicates what we choose to remember about our past, what we believe about the present, what we hope for the future. (Pinar, 2004, p. 20)
Some curriculum theorists such as Apple (1979), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bowles and Gintis (1976), and Young (1971) would argue the school curriculum of today communicates *exactly* what the dominant majority hopes for the future:

They have argued that the normal function of schooling is to produce labor-power according to the demands of capital by making differentiated school knowledge available to advantaged and disadvantaged groups; this in turn reproduces hierarchy, exclusion, and inequality between social classes and ethnic groups. Schools have accomplished this social reproduction, in part, by presenting certain knowledge (language and labels) as legitimate symbolic goods and then selectively disseminating it to children. (Gordon, 1982, p. 90)

In 1918, Franklin Bobbitt launched the curriculum field and the social efficiency movement with the publication of *The Curriculum*. In it he insisted upon the development of curriculum through the use of scientific technique. *The Curriculum* reflected the work of Frederick W. Taylor and his idealized bureaucracy better known as scientific management in which productivity dominates the producer (Kliebard, 1992). Similar to Taylor, Bobbitt believed human life to be simply “the performance of specific activities” and therefore the purpose of education to be the preparation for “the performance of specific activities” (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42). Bobbitt used the analogy of industrial manufacturing to better explain his thoughts on curriculum development.

The school is compared to a factory. The child is the raw material. The adult is the finished product. The teacher is an operative, or factory worker. The curriculum is whatever processing the raw material (the child) needs to change
him into the finished product (the desired adult). The curriculum developer is a member of the research department who investigates what the consumer market (society) wants in terms of a finished product and finds the most efficient way of producing that finished product. (Schiro, 2008, p. 59)

Bobbitt’s educational employment of Taylor’s scientific management was especially relevant to the times. During this period, cost accounting and maximization of “school plants” were exceedingly important to the new superintendent role as business manager (Kliebard, 1992, p. 119). In addition, Bobbitt argued that education is thus “twofold: first, to perpetuate the functioning of society, and second, to prepare the individual to lead a meaningful adult life in society… an individual achieves an education by learning to perform the functions one must perform to be socially functional” (Schiro, 2008, p. 63). Therefore, society is made up of people who are trying to make meaning of their *function* in society (Schiro, 2008).

The industrial manufacturing model of Bobbitt has simply morphed into the corporate business model of today. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk* to once again address the issue of curriculum organization. *A Nation at Risk* addressed the problems of American schools from the perspective of international competition; the American educational system was economically failing our country by not producing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to sustain our industrial and technological control. The report cited internationally benchmarked test scores, declining SAT scores, adult literacy rates, and complaints from corporate America regarding the lack of skilled and knowledgeable workers to advocate their new academic,
discipline-centered curriculum coined the New Basics (Franklin & Johnson, 2004). As a result of this and other reports the New Right of the 1980s launched us into our current accountability movement.

In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with the goal of improving “the academic performance of all students, while simultaneously closing achievement gaps that persist between students from different ethnic groups and economic backgrounds” (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004, p. 3). This was to be accomplished through a number of initiatives including the assurance of “highly qualified teachers” for all students. According to the U.S. Department of Education a highly qualified teacher must have: “1) a bachelor’s degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2).

This language is deceivingly complex and reliant on simple yet powerful assumptions: “teaching is a technical activity, knowledge is static, good practice is universal, being prepared to teach is knowing subject matter, and pupil learning is equal to higher scores on high-states tests” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 161). In other words, teaching is regarded as a linear activity in which “knowledge, curriculum, and instruction are static and unchanging, transmitted through a one-way conduit from teacher to students, rather than socially constructed through the transactions of teachers, children, and texts” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 47).

Legislative educational policies such as NCLB and the “highly qualified teacher” language directly influence governmental organizations, professional associations, and
higher education (Vavrus, 2002). Teacher education programs in the United States are currently influenced by two such organizations: the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers’ Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). In turn, the educational policies developed by these organizations strongly influence state teacher licensing agencies (Vavrus, 2002).

The mission of NCATE, specifically, is to assess teacher education programs on their ability to design and implement curriculum and experiences of diversity wherein qualified faculty, who model best professional practices in scholarship, service, and teaching, prepare prospective teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to teach all students. Six NCATE standards are embedded within a teacher education unit’s conceptual framework which establishes the “shared vision for a unit’s efforts in preparing educators to work effectively in P-12 schools” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 12).

Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions

Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation

Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

Standard 4: Diversity

Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development

Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 12)
The standard on candidate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions is purposely positioned first “to highlight the importance of candidate learning and accountability” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 12). As such, the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions established in standard one are referenced throughout the remaining five standards. Standard 4: Diversity requires teacher education programs to develop curriculum, field experiences, and clinical practices that promote the “development of knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions related to diversity” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 34). However, the word diversity is not even present in the target proficiency level for the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions of the first standard.

According to Vavrus (2002), teacher education programs may “use whatever technical means it takes to meet NCATE interpretations of diversity” rather than interrogating possible exclusions of diversity within curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation (p. 55). He further argues “undefined diversity discourse veils assimilationist practices limited to a human relations orientation to cultural understanding” which are intended to “leave the status quo core orientations of institutions undisturbed” (Vavrus, 2002, p. 55). The teacher education community must begin to question this undisturbed core orientation. They must begin to ask the tough questions: Who designs, implements and evaluates curriculum and experiences? Why? How? Where (or in what context)? Dixson and Dingus (2007) further illuminate dissonance when they do focus on these types of questions in their urban education focused teacher education programs:
Although we endeavor to de-center Whiteness, in essence, our readings, classroom activities, discussions and assignments may, in fact, only serve to re-center Whiteness. In other words, given the current political climate that conflates political correctness with ignoring and dismissing the experiences and voices of people of color, we are concerned about the extent to which we unconsciously contribute to this silencing by focusing our courses on convincing White students that issues related to multiculturalism, equity and diversity are ‘important’ and ‘real.’ (Dixson and Dingus, 2007, p. 641).

The question for Dixson and Dingus then becomes, “within the context of preparing teachers to teach for democracy, diversity, equity, multiculturalism and social justice, how productive and effective is our work and the enterprise of the field, if we spend most of our energies on convincing our students that inequity, race, and racism are real?” (Dixson and Dingus, 2007, p. 641).

**Teacher Educators**

…We come to the profession with our own historical and cultural baggage and ideology. Unfortunately, in many instances, the perspective disseminated to preservice and in-service teachers unwittingly reinforces stereotypes and prejudices about students based on race, class, and gender. (Gordon, 2005, p. 169)

The *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutes* (2008) require teacher education faculty members to be qualified and model best professional practices in teaching, scholarship, and service to better prepare prospective teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to teach (National Council
for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008). Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance and Development states:

Faculty are qualified and model best professional practices in scholarship, service, and teaching, including the assessment of their own effectiveness as related to candidate performance; they also collaborate with colleagues in the disciplines and schools. The unit systematically evaluates faculty performance and facilitates professional development. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 38)

In respect to diversity, teacher education faculty members are required to reflect in their teaching “the proficiencies outlined in professional, state, and institutional standards” and “integrate diversity and technology throughout coursework, field experiences and clinical practices” while actively engaging in “inquiry that ranges from knowledge generation to exploration and questioning of the field to evaluating the effectiveness of a teaching approach” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 39). In addition, the Standards for Teacher Educators state teacher educators “must apply cultural competence and promote social justice in teacher education” by helping their prospective teachers know their own culture including the “knowledge of their own culture and aspects common to all cultures and foster such knowledge in others” (Association of Teacher Educators, 2008, p. 2).

Indicators for demonstration of proficiency in these standards include the following: “exhibit practices that enhance both an understanding of diversity and instruction that meets the needs of society, engage in culturally responsive pedagogy, professionally
participate in diverse communities, [and] model ways to reduce prejudice for pre-service and in-service teachers and/or other educational professionals” (Association of Teacher Educators, 2008, p. 2). However, without a fundamental understanding of their own knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values and lived experiences, teacher educators cannot begin to “demonstrate,” “exhibit,” “engage,” or “model” (nor can their prospective teachers).

To learn how to teach in an increasingly culturally diverse society, teacher educators need to examine their “histories as human beings” including their own knowledge, beliefs, and experiences as raced, classed and gendered people and how they relate to their role within the teacher education community (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Acknowledging and understanding one’s own race and racism can be a difficult personal experience. The current educational policies listed above do not begin to acknowledge let alone address the process of understanding required to navigate this experience.

As White teacher educators, it is plausible to navigate through an existence without ever noticing reality as a White person. Helms (1993), argues “it is only when whites come in contact with the idea of black (or other visible racial/ethnic groups) that whiteness becomes a potential issue” (Helms, 1993, p. 54). A true recognition of whiteness, racism, and the possible consequences of racism require a deconstruction of deeply held personal beliefs and then a reconstruction of a new more critical and sensitive view of the world (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Helms (1993) refers to this as the disintegration phase of racial realization in which a teacher educator begins to understand his or her own racial identity and the corresponding feelings of guilt, depression, helplessness, and anxiety. Because of
this understanding, teacher educators may have the ability to change their behaviors and actively work against their own racism. They may begin to recognize how their own perspectives have been shaped by their culture, friends, families, peers and social institutions and the influences these perspectives have on their teaching and learning with prospective teachers (Marx, 2006).

**Prospective Teachers**

As afore-mentioned, the *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutes* (2008) require teacher education programs to design and implement curriculum and experiences of diversity in which qualified faculty who model best professional practices in scholarship, service, and teaching, prepare prospective teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to teach all students (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008). Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills and Professional Dispositions states:

> Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other school professionals know and demonstrate the content, knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates meet professional, state, and institutional standards. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 16)

More specific to our discussion, prospective teachers should “know how students learn and how to make ideas accessible to them” and they should “consider school, family, and community contexts in connecting concepts to students’ prior experience and applying
these ideas to real-world issues” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 18). However, Frideres (2007) argues teachers cannot consider contexts until they understand importance of context. They may then begin to understand their own context and what lies outside their own context. White teachers, especially, “have similar understandings that may or may not be accurate reflections of reality” and they must be aware of “the assumptions they bring to such interpretations, both in and out of the classroom” (Frideres, 2007, p. 50).

In the Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessments, all four of the assessed domains speak to diversity. In Domain A: Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning, prospective teachers are assessed on “becoming familiar with relevant aspects of students’ background knowledge and experiences” and therefore teachers must build “bridges between the content to be learned and students’ background knowledge and experiences” including prior subject matter knowledge, skills, interest, motivation to learn, developmental levels and cultural experiences” (Educational Test Service, 2001, p. 14). Missing from this description is the prospective teacher’s background knowledge and experiences that provide the foundation for the bridge between content and student. This foundation in the “building bridges” analogy is absent from the previous requirements for prospective teachers within Praxis III. It is also absent in Domain D: Teacher Professional as reflected in NCATE Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills and Professional Dispositions.

As a result, LeCompte and McCray (2002) find that prospective teachers in their initial teacher preparation programs remain ignorant about racial inequality; feel blamed for
injustices; approach issues of inequality from personal experiences; and want to be told what to do in a multicultural classroom rather than explore the impact of their attitudes on multicultural teaching effectiveness. Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005), found similar results in their qualitative study of how 200 teacher candidates responded to Peggy McIntosh’s article, ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.’ However, Beverly Cross (2003) conducted research in one such program and her results demonstrate that even these programs encounter serious problems with the racial identity development of their teacher candidates. One of the core values of the elementary education program Cross studied states, “graduates will advocate for and provide equitable education for all children and will keep issues of race, class, culture and language at the forefront of equity considerations” (Cross, 2003, p. 204). In accordance with this core value, Cross (2003) asked recent graduates of the program what they learned about race and racism from their program, how it is beneficial to their actual teaching, what they wish they had learned about teaching culturally diverse populations and recommendations they have for the program. Initially, the results appeared promising in that the graduates’ most frequent responses concerning their learning included respecting children’s language, using diverse literature, recognizing cultural diversity, and acknowledging background knowledge and experiences. However, upon further questioning of the application of these responses in their actual teaching, the graduates began to struggle (Cross, 2003).

For example, when asked about how they respect children’s language in the classroom, teachers explained they allow their Black students to use Ebonics during the class with
their peers but then quietly directed them how to “correctly” speak when they are alone. When asked about how they incorporated diverse literature in their teaching the graduates quickly removed books from their classroom shelves that included illustrations of Black children. They believed they recognized cultural diversity in their teaching through the observation and discussion of holidays, foods and heroes of other cultures. Finally, the graduates felt they acknowledged the background knowledge and experiences of their students when they use them to explain a problem with a student’s behavior. In conclusion, Cross found that the graduates still looked at their students under a White majority lens; observed the students but did not connect with them; and looked over and down at them but did not teach them (Cross, 2003).

The ways that prospective teachers frame the world around them has important implications for how they make meaning of, understand, and make decisions in their future professional work specifically in the classroom. For example, Schofield (2003) found that “teachers who said they were color-blind suspended African American males at highly disproportionate rates and failed to integrate multicultural content into the curriculum” (Banks et al., 2005, p. 267). Color-blindness was used “to justify the perpetuation of institutionalized discrimination within the school” (Banks et al., 2005, p. 267). From this research, it is apparent that many teachers do not have the same cultural experiences as their students and this may become detrimental to their students in the classroom. Therefore, they must begin to understand their own culture, identity, and experiences and how they influence their personal developmental and behavioral expectations of their students before they enter the classroom (Banks, et al., 2005).
According to Banks et al. (2005), teachers must also recognize the operation of social and cultural norms, expectations, people, and structures that are organized within educational institutions. Gay and Howard (2000) refer to the disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes in America as “the demographic imperative.” They argue that it is the responsibility of teacher educators and their teaching forces to overcome this “demographic divide” (Banks, et al., 2005).

Prospective teachers should assume responsibility for their racial identity and its influence on their future students through: a commitment to investigating their racial identity, educating themselves about the relationship between their racial identity and the existence of racism in education and “taking constructive action in the naming of racism and the renaming of what they can do about it” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 18). Prospective teachers should be involved in daily pursuits to “pose and try to answer some of the toughest questions there are about how to work effectively in local contexts with learners who are like them and not like them” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 62). Teacher education programs should provide opportunities for prospective teachers to participate in systematic and self-critical inquiry in which they reconsider their personal knowledge and experiences and how they have shaped their views of race, culture and diversity (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Such narrative opportunities have the “capacity to contain and entertain within it contradictions, nuances, tensions, and complexities that traditional academic discourse with its expository stance and more distanced impersonal voice cannot” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 83).
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework & Methodology

Language, through which narratives are conveyed, is not only a reflection and a constituent of reality but also a cultural rope that connects people across generations and even continents. (Duncan, 2006, p.200)

Theoretical Framework

According to Dixson and Rousseau (2006), Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholarship is neither qualitative nor quantitative. Instead, they argue it is more “accurately described as a problem-centered” approach wherein the researcher should “employ any means necessary to address the problem of inequity in education” (p. 49). Within this problem-centered approach it is not only necessary to identify the many issues of racism that plague the educational system but also to identify strategies that combat these issues of racism. Critical race theory methodology formulates research questions for the purpose of understanding how people construct their identity based on race, gender, social class, national origin, or other aspects of culture while acknowledging institutional interpretations of rigid racial categories that create conflict within these identities (Parker & Roberts, 2005).
CRT is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly affect social structures, practices and discourses. (Yosso, 2006, p. 168)

The history of Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be traced back to the early seventies when legal scholars such as Derrick Bell began to question the legal strategy for racial justice as developed through the Civil Rights movement and colorblind ideology. It was not until the late 1980s when Kimberle Crenshaw used the term “Critical Race Theory” to explain the formation of a common theory of racial analysis, intervention and critique of civil rights, and Critical Legal Studies. The fundamental CRT argument was (and still is) that race and racism are “normal, not aberrant, in American society” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. xvi). Racism, specifically, “is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. xvi).

CRT begins with a number of basic themes that have remained fairly consistent throughout its history. First and foremost, as mentioned above, CRT holds that racism is pervasive and endemic to American norms and therefore it rejects dominant claims of meritocracy, neutrality, objectivity, and color-blindness. It also rejects ahistoricism and insists on a contextual historical analysis of the law and challenges the presumptive legitimacy of social institutions. Within this challenge, CRT demands recognition of both the experiential knowledge and critical consciousness of people of color in understanding law and society which includes an interdisciplinary and eclectic claim that the intersection of race and law overruns disciplinary boundaries. Finally, CRT works
toward the liberation of people of color as it embraces the larger project of liberating all oppressed people (Mutua, 2006).

Critical Race Theory in education provides a framework that may be used “to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly affect social structures, practices and discourses” (Yosso, 2006, p. 168). Yosso (2006) supports the use of CRT in education:

As a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism affect educational structures, practices and discourses. CRT is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling. This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. Indeed, CRT in education refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of People of Color. CRT utilizes transdisciplinary approaches to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. (p. 172)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) further identify some of the central themes of CRT as particularly relevant to the field of education. They include but are not limited to the understanding of race and racism as endemic and ingrained in American life and the importance of challenging claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006). CRT demands the “naming” of race and racism as “central, endemic, and permanent” in defining and explaining teacher education as a function of U.S. society. Yosso (2006) explains “CRT addresses the
social construct of race by examining the ideology of racism... [it] finds that racism is often well disguised in the rhetoric of shared ‘normative’ values and ‘neutral’ social scientific principles and practices” (p. 173).

**Position of the Researcher.** In speaking to my perceived position within the CRT framework, I do not necessarily believe I am a critical race theorist. CRT was developed by and for people of color to share their experiences and create change for better experiences. Instead, as a White researcher, I prefer to observe the advice of Delgado in using CRT to inform and share my work with other Whites in fighting racism in teacher education. Aldous Bergerson (2003) argues, we as White scholars, “have an important role in creating an environment that recognizes the need to ask difficult questions and challenge traditional notions in our personal lives as well as our work in education” (p. 61).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is twofold: to provide prospective teachers with an opportunity to make meaning of their encounters with racism and how they believe these encounters shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others and to provide the teacher education inquiry community with research that demonstrates the power of narrative in teacher education and more importantly the power of teacher education as a narrative (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Guiding questions for this study included:
1. How do prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others?

2. How do prospective teachers make meaning of their encounters with racism?

**Methodology**

Although critical race theory has roots in philosophical, historical, and sociological critiques of oppression from poststructuralism, Marxism, feminist theory, postcolonialism and queer theory, my use of it for the purpose of this study most closely aligns with a postmodernist perspective. The postmodernist perspective situates “perceptions, interpretations and explanations that constitute our experience and understandings of ‘reality’ as meanings fashioned by human actors from the social and cultural resources available to them” (Cheek & Gough, 2005, p. 303). Freire (1970) refers to this situation of reality as *conscientizacao*—“or learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 19) through an ever-changing process of self-reflection and meaning of one’s identity and dialogue (McIntyre, 1997).

**Sense-Making Methodology.** Sense-Making Methodology closely aligns with Critical Race Methodology. Most notably, it gives prospective teachers an opportunity to take steps through their previous encounters with racism and the discontinuity these encounters created within them to focus on those moments of discontinuity and determine how they make meaning from them. In its simplest terms, the Sense-Making Methodology is an approach to studying people. Much like Critical Race Methodology,
it focuses on how individuals and collectives make and unmake meaning of their worlds. Since its inception in 1972, it has “sought to better understand communication from a more communicative (dialogic) perspective and to apply that understanding to the design and implementation of formal communication efforts” (Foreman-Wernet, 2003, p. 3). Sense-making focuses on how individuals and collectives make and unmake meaning of their worlds (Dervin, 2003a). In addition, “it focuses on verbs, not nouns… it stands between traditional foci structures and traditional foci on persons” (Dervin, 2003a, p. 147). Foreman-Wernet (2003) explains Dervin’s concept of the term methodology itself:

[It] reflects a broad conceptualization that refers to the relationships between the actual research methods used in any given situation and the substantive theory, or working concepts, that direct those methods as well as to the metatheory, or philosophical assumptions, on which the entire research edifice rests.

Methodology in this sense embraces a broad spectrum of activity that has implications for looking at research comprehensively as communication practice. (p. 4)

Sense-Making offers an alternative philosophical view that falls somewhere in between the modern and postmodern views. As Foreman-Wernet (2003) further explains, sense-making assumes: “1) that both humans and reality are sometimes orderly and sometimes chaotic; 2) that there is a human need to create meaning, and knowledge is something that always is sought in mediation and contest; and 3) that there are human differences in experience and observation” (p. 7). For the purpose of discussing Sense-Making within CRT, the following common themes within this philosophical view should be
acknowledged. First, knowledge is partial and temporary; therefore, reality is discontinuous, gap filled and changeable across time and space. Context is a necessary source of meaning and requires focus on process. And, yet, context is useless if conceptualized as an independent entity. Finally, focus must be placed on the dialectical relationship between product and process as well as on multiple interdependencies. These themes will be explored further in the following discussion.

Critical race theorists argue that “social reality is constructed by the formulation and the exchange of stories about individual situations” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, p. 21). These individual situations consist of a person’s truths in a predicament at a specific time in history (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). Their stories “serve as interpretive structures by which we impose order on experience and it imposes order on us” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, p. 21). In accordance with this CRT argument, Dervin (2003) suggests an alternative communication model through the Sense-Making Methodology that “conceptualizes messages not as things to be gotten, but as constructions that are tied to the specific times, places, and perspectives of their creators” (Lois-Wernet, 2003, p. 5).

In addition, Sense-Making further acknowledges the “gaps” (knowledge, information, and/or communication) or inequities inherent within the acceptance of social reality as constructed by the exchange of individual stories.

According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006), the “voice” component of CRT provides “a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed” and therefore is a critical “link” in the complete analysis of teacher education (p. 21). They further argue “without the authentic voices of people of color (as teachers, parents, administrators,
students, and community members) it is doubtful we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities (p. 22). Duncan (2006) describes this process.

Proponents of CRT emphasize aesthetic and emotional dimensions in their stories to stimulate the imagination and to inspire empathy to all others to imagine the mind of the oppressed and to see, and perhaps vicariously experience, the world through their eyes. (p. 201)

The alternative communication model suggested by Dervin (2003) through the Sense-Making Methodology assumes “there are differences in human beings’ understandings and experiences and acknowledges that social power structures, such as systems of expertise, decide whose understandings and observations get preference” (Lois-Wernet, 2003, p. 5). Sense-Making specifically enables the respondent freedom in naming his or her own world. In other words, in traditional communication research researchers have unknowingly “accepted absolute information assumptions and imposed them on their respondents” (Dervin, 2003c, p. 31) However, the Sense-Making interview process itself is designed to encourage the respondent to describe and define the phenomenon in question.

Stories by people of color “can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism” and provide a reason for self-examination by the oppressor (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, p. 21). As Duncan (2006) argues, “racist epistemologies are deeply embedded in the meaning-making structures that inform the naturalization of oppression and the normalization of racial inequality in public schools” (p. 200). Once those who oppress begin to conscientizacao or learn to “[p]erceive social, political, and
economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” in these meaning-making structures we may then begin the process of changing the world.

Dervin (2003) cites communication itself as “so subdued to the influence of the prevailing organizational arrangements of society that it can hardly be expected to act independently as a main contributor to profound and widespread social transformation” (p. 111). Dervin (2003) further utilizes this explanation to emphasize the consistent theme that “ideas and systems must be changed and that these changes in the social structure are fundamental prerequisites for attaining development of equity” (Dervin, 2003c, p. 26).

In conclusion, the Sense-Making Methodology has the ability to provide prospective teachers with an opportunity to take steps through their previous encounters with racism and the discontinuity these encounters created within them. It then enables them to focus on those moments of discontinuity and determine how they defined the gaps created by this discontinuity and how they bridged them. In other words, how do prospective teachers view these encounters and the discontinuity they created? More specifically, Dervin (2003) asks,

How do they conceptualize the discontinuities as gaps? How do they bring to bear past experiences? How do they construct bridges over the gaps? How do they start their journeys again? How do they proceed after crossing? To what use or help do they put the bridge they built? (Dervin, 2003d, p. 68)

Sense-Making offers prospective teachers the opportunity to name their own reality through their own voice as it relates to their personal encounters with racism and how
they believe these encounters influence their teaching, learning, and interactions with others. Within this opportunity is a chance for critical race theory to help develop a racial reformation in teacher education.

**Research Design.** This study further adopts a critical race methodology in which sensitivity to race as a personal quality of the researcher is acknowledged as well as an awareness of the various meanings of the data or situations where race is central to the study of teacher education and prospective teachers (Parker & Roberts, 2005). Soloranzo and Yosso (2002) developed five tenets of critical race research designs:

1. Placing race and its intersectionality with other forms of subordination (e.g. gender, social class, etc.), at the centre of research;
2. Using race in research to challenge the dominant scientific norms of objectivity and neutrality;
3. Connecting the research with ongoing efforts in communities;
4. Making experiential knowledge central to the study and linking this knowledge to other critical research and interpretive perspectives on race and racism; and
5. Acknowledging the importance of transdisciplinary perspectives that are based in other fields. (Parker & Roberts, 2005, p. 76)

These five tenets are addressed through the Sense-Making interview. More specifically, the research question for the interview positions race at the center of the study in order to challenge the traditional norms of objectivity and neutrality in education. The interview provides a connection between ongoing research in the critical race theory, teacher
education, and curriculum studies communities. Most notably, the Sense-Making interview makes experiential knowledge central to the study of race and it acknowledges the importance of transdisciplinary perspectives that are based in the fields mentioned above as well as the field of communication.

Setting and Sample. The setting of this study is a Midwestern public university which houses multiple teacher education programs from the Colleges of Education and Human Ecology; the Arts; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Social Work; and Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Teacher education programs with rankings include: Vocational/Technical Education; Counseling/Personnel Services; Elementary Education; Curriculum and Instruction; Secondary Education; Administration and Supervision; Special Education; Higher Education Administration; Education Psychology; and Education Policy. These and other programs are offered at the baccalaureate, postbaccalaureate and master’s level to prepare candidates to serve in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 settings.

The total enrollment in the teacher education program is approximately 700 hundred students of which approximately 93% are White, 2% are African American, 2% are Asian, 1% are Hispanic and less than 2% are Native American, Pacific Islander or Other. To be admitted to the program prospective students must meet a minimum undergraduate GPA, minimum GPA for content area, minimum GPA for professional education and provide recommendations and an essay. Once in the program, they go through approximately 10 weeks of student teaching with an average number of 40 teaching hours per week.
Participants. To explore the research questions, the researcher interviewed one African-American female prospective teacher, eight White, female prospective teachers and two White, male prospective teachers who were in their third of five quarters in the Middle Childhood Education (MCE) Master of Education program at a large mid-Western university. The MCE program handbook states the mission of the program:

Our mission is to prepare professionals who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to interpret and construct learning environments in ways that are critical, engaging, culturally responsive, and anti-oppressive. Faculty, program managers, mentor teachers, school administrators, and graduate associates are committed to ongoing communication, collaboration, and research that will support professional relationships with school communities and improve conditions for teaching and learning in middle level classrooms. In particular, the MCE program is committed to building relationships and improving conditions for teaching and learning within urban educational settings.

The MCE program is a cohort-based, five-quarter, full-time program, beginning in the summer quarter and culminating the following summer quarter with the completion of a Capstone experience. The program features consist of:

- Multiple, sustained experiences in varying educational settings with a focus on urban settings.
- Coursework and field experiences developed in relation with national and state curriculum standards for each discipline (i.e., NCSS, NCTE/IRA,
NCTM, and NRC) for teacher education, and for Middle Level Education (NSMA).

- Literacy courses for all students that address the demands of reading, writing, and curriculum development across the content fields.

- Engagement with the questions and issues that young people face in ways that are attentive to issues of transition from elementary to middle school and to definitions of adolescence in schools and communities. (p.5)

One of the entry-quarter course requirements for all (MCE) students is a cohort-specific technology integration course, through which the participants were recruited. Eleven of approximately forty prospective teachers voluntarily agreed to participate in the interview. Ten of the eleven participants were in the primary researcher’s laboratory section of the course therefore she developed a professional relationship with them prior to the interviews.

The interviews were conducted during the middle and/or end of the prospective teachers’ third quarter of enrollment in the program. The interview dates and times were based on the availability of the participants as well as within the researcher’s timeframe for conducting the interviews during the third quarter of the program. Depending on the date of their interview(s), the participants were enrolled in their planned field experience internships in local school districts for 18-24 weeks prior to the interview(s). They had participated in a variety of coursework including critical reading in the content area, inclusion, literacy evaluation, and various content area methods courses.
**Interviews.** Prior to the interview, participants received the following prompt to consider:

I would like you to think back to your most memorable encounters with school-related racism. Think of these situations from the time you started school until now recalling each one and describing it very briefly. We'll go back later and look at each of these situations in greater detail so all we need here is a brief description.

This prompt was not meant or used as a formal interview schedule but rather a guideline for the less informal interview to follow. It also provides the development of mutual trust and respect through information-gathering questions devoid of confrontation before engaging in issues of race and racism (Marx, 2006).

Upon arrival for the interview, the participants were asked to read and sign a consent form with a brief statement of the research purposes *(Appendix A)*. After the participants were read the prompt once more, they were asked to participate in the interview. The interview followed the predetermined interview instrument which included the questions listed below for each situation from the prompt:

1. Start by describing this situation in which you encountered racism.
2. How old were you in this situation? What led to this situation? What were the circumstances?
3. What leads you to call this situation racism?
4. What questions, muddles, or confusions did you have?
5. What ideas, conclusions, or thoughts did you have?
6. What feelings or emotions did you experience?

7. How did what was happening relate to your past experience?

8. How did what was happening relate to your sense of self, how you thought about who you are?

9. Did you see what was happening as relating in any way to power issues or power structures in your family or community or society in general? How?

10. At this point in time was anything helpful to you? What and how?

11. At this point in time was anything hurtful or hindering to you? What and how?

12. Were there any other impacts or consequences? What?

13. If you could have waved a magic wand, what would have helped you [even more] in this situation? How would it have helped?

14. Looking back at this encounter with racism, do you think it impacted or will impact your interactions with others?

15. Looking back at this encounter with racism, do you think it impacted or will impact your learning?

16. Looking back at this encounter with racism, do you think it impacted or will impact your teaching?

These specific interview questions prevent the researcher from manipulating the interview by imposing her “presumed power, social status and knowledge” on the participants (Barbour & Schostak, 2005, p. 43). The full interview instrument is listed under Appendix B.

**Research Diary.** Throughout the interview process, I documented my own meaning of racism and how it continues to facilitate my personal journey as an educator. My research diary includes my records of data obtained from the interviews, contextual information, and reflections as well as ideas and plans for subsequent research which
enable continuity in my ongoing analysis. More specifically, my research diary includes descriptive information such as accounts of activities, descriptions of events, reconstructions of dialogues, gestures, intonation and facial expressions, talking and acting styles, and location descriptions. It also includes interpretative information such as feelings, speculations, ideas, explanations of events, reflections on assumptions, and developments of theories among other things. Finally, the research diary captures my theoretical and methodological notes (Altrichter & Holly, 2005)

Data Analysis Process. I transcribed the interviews and used a basic color-coded scheme for an initial highlight of important themes, statements, thoughts and/or emotions. The data were then analyzed through discourse analysis as defined by Gee due to the relevance of language and equality in this study. Gee (2005) describes the purpose of discourse analysis:

A D/discourse analysis must have a point. We are not interested in simply describing data so that we can admire the intricacy of language, though such intricacy is indeed admirable. Rather, we are interested, beyond description, in two things: (a) illuminating and gaining evidence for our theory of the domain, a theory that helps to explain how and why language works the way it does when it is put into action; and (b) contributing, in terms of understanding and intervention, to important issues and problems in some “applied” area (e.g., education) that interests and motivates the researcher. (Gee, 2005, p. 8)

Chapter 4: Analysis of the Data includes the data analysis by Gee’s seven themes of discourse analysis: significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections,
and sign systems and knowledge. *Chapter 5: Interpretation of the Data*, then discusses the main themes that were illuminated through the seven themes of discourse analysis.
Chapter 4: Analysis of the Data

Background

The participants in this study included eleven prospective teachers in the middle childhood cohort of a teacher education program in a large mid-western university. Each of the prospective teachers enrolled in a technology integration course during their first quarter in the teacher education program in which I interacted with the students. The purpose of the course was the use of educational technology in the K-12 classroom. The course was not related to the purpose of the study and the topic of the study was not discussed during the course.

I came to know the participants of this study through the course. I developed professional relationships with the students that enabled me to later request their voluntary participation in the study. I think the relationships established during this course also enabled the students to feel comfortable with me, as the primary researcher, and the topic of the study during the interviews as well (addressed in more depth later). The interviews were conducted during the third quarter of the teacher education program immediately before the participants began their student teaching experience. They were conducted in my office in one of the education buildings of the university and the date and time of the interviews were based on the availability of the participants. The
majority of the interviews were conducted on Tuesday and/or Friday mornings and afternoons due the similar course schedules of the participants. The interviews were originally scheduled for an hour and a half although many of them exceeded this time frame. Two of the eleven interviews extended into a second session.

The participants, who were assigned pseudonyms, shared some commonalities as a result of the teacher education program requirements. They were all from similar middle-class families who lived in suburban towns in the same state as the university. They all earned their bachelor’s degrees from the same university at which they were currently enrolled for the teacher education program. The admission requirements for the program required each of the participants to have earned a minimum 3.0 overall grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale in all previous undergraduate coursework as well as in their middle childhood content areas. They were also required to have experiences working with children in a learning situation, particularly with children whose backgrounds are different than their own. However, I later found this requirement to be somewhat deficient in that the children were rarely from backgrounds different from their own.

The participants’ uniqueness came through in the details within the aforementioned similarities. To further speak to some of the uniqueness of these details, I have included a brief biography of each participant below. The biographies of each participant are not in any particular order. They focus on the information most relevant to the study as well as some of my thoughts, feelings, observations, and experiences during the interviews and analysis of the interviews that are most relevant to the study.

**Participant Biographies**
Abby is a young, White, woman from a small town. Her family has resided in this same small town for the majority of their lives. According to Abby, her mom grew up on a farm and suffers from a small town mentality to which Abby attributes her negative perspectives on people who are different from her. Her sister shares the same perspectives for similar reasons. Throughout her interview, Abby reflected heavily on the opinions of these two family members and how it impacted her. Abby believes she is different from her family because she was able to “escape” the small town mentality when she left for college. She believes the diversity of her university has positively changed her perspective.

Abby discussed three different encounters with racism that occurred during her undergraduate and graduate school experiences. The first experience she shared concerned what she believed to be racist comments made by her mother and sister. The comments were in reaction to African Americans in the media. Abby admitted the comments bother her more now than they did before and she just recently attempted to talk with her mother and sister about these comments until a fight broke out and her sister cried as a result. She reflected on this encounter throughout her interview.

Her second and third encounters were inter-related. She described two negative experiences with African American graduate teaching associates at her university. Both of these African American graduate teaching associates were instructors for her courses. Her first negative encounter occurred during an undergraduate course. Abby believed the graduate associate did not value her opinions, perspectives, thoughts, and/or words because she is White. The second negative encounter occurred with an African American
graduate teaching associate who served as her university supervisor. Much like her first encounter, Abby did not believe her university supervisor valued her White perspective and simply attempted to force her African American beliefs, values, opinions, perspectives, etc. onto her.

Jody is also a young, White woman from a small town with little diversity. She described one of her first encounters with racism when her all White middle school girls’ basketball team traveled to an urban school and played an all African American team. After the game, her parents and the parents of her team members walked the girls to the bus. Jody interpreted this unusual demonstration of protection as racism. Jody’s second encounter with racism was also during her secondary education. Her high school government teacher attempted to have a conversation with the students in her class about racism. Much like the middle school experience, Jody described being uncomfortable in the situation.

During her undergraduate career, Jody encountered racism in a second writing course with an African American professor. Much like Abby, she was initially intimidated and uncomfortable with the perspectives shared by her African American professor. However, unlike Abby, Jody acknowledged that she learned a lot from this professor and she appreciated what the professor shared in the course. Jody also discussed her experiences in the teacher education program. She focused particularly on her urban school placement in which she was initially uncomfortable with the diversity of the students.
Rebecca, too, is a young, White woman from a small town that she described as segregated by a railroad track that ran through the town. She lived North of the railroad track which was, and she noted still is, the “affluent part of town in an all White neighborhood.” According to Rebecca, African Americans live south of the railroad track in the part of town lacking resources. Rebecca referenced the impact of this segregation on her life throughout her encounter descriptions. The first encounter she chose to discuss was actually this segregation in and of itself and the impact it had on her. For her second encounter, Rebecca focused on what she termed as a “reverse racism” situation her sister experienced in high school in which a bully accused her sister of being a racist. Finally, Rebecca described her first day as a substitute teacher in an urban district. At the conclusion of this “rather hard day of subbing,” a young, White, teacher asked her if anyone had died. In confusion, Rebecca responded, “no,” and the women laughed and said, “well, then you had a good day.” Rebecca described in detail her feelings and emotions in respect to this one comment and how it impacted her teaching experiences then and now.

Anthony is one of only two, White, middle-class males who participated in this study. Unlike the majority of his female peers, Anthony shared very descriptive and lengthy responses to each of the interview questions. Anthony described three different encounters with racism which focused on a common theme of separate and unequal treatment; first, of urban minority students who were bused into his suburban high school, second, of White students in his teacher education coursework, and finally of
diverse students in his suburban middle school placement in his teacher education program.

The amount of data I collected from Anthony was at times twice as much as the other participants. Although he rarely referenced his family, friends, and other personal connections, relationships, interactions, and background; his answers provided a clear understanding of his experiences. Anthony was also much more confident in his responses and spoke more specifically to some of his personal thoughts, feelings, and muddles regarding his educational experiences and encounters with racism. I must be honest in that I attributed much of his confidence to his position as a White, middle-class male. His responses further supported this opinion.

Martha, much like Anthony, was very articulate, descriptive, and lengthy in her responses. Unlike, Anthony, Martha is a middle-age, White, middle-class woman, wife, and mother of two grown boys, who returned to graduate school after serving as a substitute school nurse for many years. She grew up in a uniquely positioned suburb within the urban community of her graduate school university and the site of this study. Her life experiences, especially, were quite different than her prospective teacher peers. She focused on encounters with racism during her childhood, two separate encounters in the teacher education program with her peers, and a situation surrounding racism with her sons.

Sharon is the only African American participant in my study. This is unfortunately representative of the population of the teacher education program in which the study was conducted. However, Sharon is a young, middle-class woman, who was raised in a
predominately White suburban community and did not share many of the life experiences of her urban African American students. She was the only participant who did not focus on the experiences of the teacher education program. When she did reference the program, she was also the only participant who spoke highly of her experiences in the program. I will not attempt to assume any findings from these singularities.

Sharon shared three encounters in which she was the victim of racism. The first experience Sharon shared was during middle school when a young, White male classmate called her a “nigger”. Her second and third encounters occurred during high school; first, she was not awarded a soccer honor due to discrimination based on her race and, second, she was refused a babysitting opportunity based on racial discrimination against her. Throughout her interview, she described how these three encounters were unique to her because of the community she grew up in. She did not describe White people as racist. Instead she believed these encounters resulted from the specifically ignorant people she encountered. Sharon was the only participant who spoke often to the “conscientizing” effect of sharing these experiences with me. This was the first time she had talked to anyone other than family members about these encounters. I was surprised by this honest revelation.

Brad is the second of the two White, middle-class males who participated in my study and his encounters could not have been in greater opposition to Sharon’s encounters. At times throughout the interview and my analysis of his interview, it was hard for me to believe Brad was in the same urban-focused teacher education program as his peers who participated in this study. Based on my knowledge of Brad and his interview, I would
characterize Brad as colorblind and at the very beginning of his racial identity development.

Brad struggled throughout his interview to discuss his three racial encounters, one of which was eliminated from the study because it was not school-related as dictated by the prompt. The first racial experience he encountered was during middle school. He noticed the division of race between where he grew up and where he went to high school. He then spoke to how he currently viewed a school district near his hometown that became worried about urban kids moving in because they associate their school status dropping due to Black students who moved in from the surrounding schools.

Unlike Brad, Jill, a young White, middle-class woman, came into her interview very prepared to discuss her three encounters with racism. She not only knew which three encounters she was wanted to discuss she also knew which aspects of the three encounters she wished to discuss through the interview. The first encounter with racism she shared was through her own description more of a theme that she encountered in the immersion experiences during her teacher education program. She believed the schools did not adequately address multiple races which she defined as a “blatant form of racism.”

Jill’s second encounter with racism occurred during her undergraduate experience. She was on the phone with a male friend who was walking down the street, ran into an African American male, and in turn called him the N word. Jill described in depth how it negatively impacted her relationship with this individual and how it made her feel. Her third encounter also referenced people in her life that shared similar, although not as
blatant, racial views and how it negatively impacted her relationships with them as well and how it made her feel, especially in respect to her future as a teacher in an urban school. Jill was the only participant who did not address her elementary or secondary education. She was the only participant who did not discuss her encounters in chronological order.

Much like Jill, Tara, another young, White, middle-class woman struggled with encounters with racism that included the use of the N word. The first encounter she described was during junior high school when they read the book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and the conversation that occurred as a result regarding language and the use of the N word. Tara’s fourth encounter was also centered on the use of the N word. She had never experienced the frequent use of the N word until her middle school placement in the teacher education program. She described a conversation with her peers in which they debated about why it was acceptable for African Americans to refer to each other by the N word and not acceptable for White people to refer to African Americans by the N word.

The second and third encounters with racism that Tara discussed were in respect to relationships she had with people who were different from her. Her second encounter occurred during high school when she dated an African American male and the comments that were made about her as a result and how it impacted her relationships with family members, specifically. Her third encounter was a conversation she had with an Indian friend about the differences in their backgrounds.
Kara, a White, middle-class female, also discussed encounters with racism that occurred as a result of inter-racial relationships. Much like the majority of the participants in this study, she too came from a small, suburban town which consisted of a mostly conservative, White population. Although it was perhaps a bit more diverse than the towns of the other participants, she recalled when her and her cheerleader friends visited the inter-racial house of a fellow cheerleader. Her mom was White and her dad was African American. This was a shock to the girls, including Kara, and she discussed their reactions to this revelation.

The first encounter Kara shared was also an encounter in which she was surprised by the actions of someone who was different from her. In elementary school, a Vietnamese girl repeatedly stole from her lunch and even after her mom became involved in the situation, the school refused to do anything about it because they attributed the behavior to the girl’s culture. Kara described how this made her feel and how it influenced her interactions with others.

These same feelings were discussed in relation to Kara’s third and fourth encounters with racism which occurred in high school and then during her placement experiences in the teacher education program. In high school, she clearly remembered how the students were divided by race in the cafeteria and how this influenced her interactions with others and where she chose to sit in the cafeteria. Finally, she shared how she felt when an African American boy called a White girl in the class a “honkie” during her immersion experience in the teacher education program.
And, finally, Krista, a White, middle-class female from a similar background as Kara, shared too an experience with someone different from her in elementary school. However, the situation itself was different in that she was more of the peer-influenced aggressor toward the foreign exchange student who was different than her. She reflected on how her behavior made her feel then and now. Krista also shared an experience from high school. The students at her suburban high school returned from a break to find a bright red swastika painted on the outside of the gym. She described the reactions of her peers, the community, and herself. Finally, Krista recounted how she felt during her first placement in an urban school. She was one of the few participants who actually articulated her feelings of being the minority in her urban placement and how it made her feel.

**Definitions of Racism**

As is evident from the brief biographies, the participants described a variety of encounters they perceived to include racism. I intentionally did not define racism for them in the prompt. The prompt was as follows:

I would like you to think back to your most memorable encounters with school-related racism. Think of these situations from the time you started school until now recalling each one and describing it very briefly. We'll go back later and look at each of these situations in greater detail so all we need here is a brief description.

Therefore, the participants were required to personally define “racism” as a prerequisite for participation in the interview and the deconstruction of the encounters. For each
encounter, the participants were read the above-stated prompt again and asked to recall the encounter “very briefly.” The next question, “what leads you to call this situation racism?” specifically required the participants to define racism within the context of the encounter. Within the answers to this question, racism was most often defined in terms of the black/white binary, prejudice and stereotypes, and segregation.

The majority of the students equated racism as simply encounters between “Caucasians” and “African Americans.” The encounters did not necessarily need to include prejudice and/or segregation to be considered racist for the participants. Oftentimes the participants literally defined racism as a personal experience with someone racially different from them. For example, when asked “what leads you to call this situation racism?” Rebecca prefaced one of her descriptions with the statement, “well, it was obvious that there was a sort of racism coming into play. Because they are all African American students, she is a Caucasian teacher…” In another encounter, Rebecca depicted her emotional response to her students based on their race as a response to the question about racism.

It was just the feeling that I was coming in as a Caucasian teacher trying to relate and trying to *help* these students that are not of the same race and they probably feel that I am trying to put up that I know the feelings of their race, you know. They might think that here I am trying to act all cool and when I have no idea what they have been through, what they have gone through the feelings that they encounter every day with racism because I am from the majority and from the power race.
Jody included a similar response to the question when she recounted a situation in an undergraduate course in which she perceived racism from her Black instructor due to the content of the course.

I remember her bringing up the idea of the Black Bart Simpson and having that discussion about what would happen if we made Bart Simpson Black and so that was kind of race-related and also my feelings of being worried that my background would, was going to hinder how I did in class.

Sharon shared numerous counter narratives to the experiences of her White peers while she also questioned her thoughts and emotions throughout the interview in respect to the black/white binary. For example, she initially defended her White friends, “Black people say that White people are racist, but NO, they aren’t, I have tons of friends and I live in a great community.” However, as she continued to describe her encounters with racism, she questioned her initial defense of her White friends.

Then you hear something like that and you’re like OH, I guess there are people that don’t necessarily agree with the people that I, umm… deal with or have contact with…I am more aware… I was under the impression that the reason why I was not looked to for an award was because of my race… I was the only Black person on my soccer team and I think even in the whole league I was the only African American person in the entire league. Even though where I went there were Black people in our community the teams that we played were, I mean, they had no, they didn’t have any diversity or at least visible diversity in their community.
The participants also strongly associated racism with obvious prejudice and stereotypes between people of different races. Although they described racial prejudice at a variety of levels their definitions were analogous. For instance, when asked “what leads you to call this situation racism?” Abby responded:

I just think they [her mother and sister] view people different than them as bad almost, umm… or they have to point something out when a Black person does something really dumb. But, yet, if a White person does something dumb, oh, they are just being stupid.

Kara shared a similar reply, “Because I think they were making fun of her because she’s a different race than them. And, that was just a word that they thought related to that.”

Krista spoke to the obvious forms of prejudice but then started to address a more systemic perspective: “Other than the open, umm… racial slurs, umm… I would say just because it’s, it is almost like hatred toward people that are different.” When Tara answered the question, she referenced a kind of double consciousness within racial prejudice.

Just wondering why a simple fact of skin color can make a difference… you know, I’m a, you know, educated student trying to learn and people are not respecting me or talking to me just because of my skin color. They don’t, you know, why does it have to be based on that? Why can’t it be based on me and my personality and my accomplishments? Umm… it really makes me [long pause] consider, I don’t know, just people in general. It makes me look at myself and say, okay, am I treating anyone different because of their skin color. Do I look at
someone and immediately judge them? It really makes me reflect on myself as a person, and, you know, the values I have.

Martha’s encounters included how statements, like the one above, from her peers in the teacher education program were actually racist in themselves. For example, she described how one of her peers complained about the lack of discussions on White culture and the use of White resources in their urban school placements and why she believed it to be racism.

Because she [Martha’s peer in the teacher education program] doesn’t understand that, that the fact that she wouldn’t get, understand that these kids probably from the time, I’m sure by the time they were in kindergarten, they even know what racism is and they have even experienced racism and prejudice in their lives, that she would think that those kids need to be taught what it’s like to be White, which is the dominate, umm… majority in our country [pause]. And, so, I call it racism because, one, she is not admitting that there is a difference between what kids are learning in this culture and that she feels NO sense of, umm… I wouldn’t say duty, but that she as an educator, would want to do something about it and then even goes a step further to be complaining about it.

The participants believed racial stereotypes were most often related to assumptions about specific groups of people based on their outward, perceived racial group membership. However, the participants most often spoke to what they perceived as racial stereotypes or negative assumptions against their White group membership by people of other races.
For example, Abby described how a Black instructor made assumptions about her and the other students in the course.

I just think it goes back to assumptions. Umm… she [the Black instructor] assumed that, you know, just because she was African American that she’s [a Black girl in the course] dealt with a lot of these situations when she hadn’t and so she placed these assumptions on her without really getting to know who she was…

Abby made similar statements about her Black supervisor and how she believed she stereotyped her and her K-12 students.

Like she just definitely put a label on the students without knowing who they were and I think that label lead to her thinking of them as like stereotypical ways of their race when it’s labeled like automatically because he was African American he was showing that he was more talkative or more verbal than other students in the classroom when I see it as, you know, he’s a very talkative person that’s his personality. He likes to talk and be the center of attention and that is just him.

One of Anthony’s encounters of racism included the racial stereotypes he believed the teacher education program managers, supervisors, and faculty members, who were predominately Black, made about White K-12 students. He was very articulate and thoughtful in his descriptions of the racial stereotypes and how he believed they would impact him and his students.
I think there is an assumption that because kids are of a certain skin color that they will succeed in school, umm… because the school system and structure has been setup for Caucasian students. It’s [the program] not taking into an account their backgrounds, their socio-economic status, their culture or you know anything like that. It is really just assuming that, well, since these students all have the same skin color that they will be fine… I think it will really impact the approach that I have for my students who are White. Umm… I think it has impacted that because like I kind of mentioned before, like, I just, I even assume that they are, if they are, umm… Caucasian, if I know they are coming from a middle class or upper middle class, I will just kind of leave them more alone then I would other students. So, I think it has really affected my teaching. Umm… in that way but also I think it is starting to be able to counteract that tendency and say well, now, I want to really engage with these students to really know what else is going on in their lives even though they might not be raising their hand for help or even though they might be a B or above student, you know, I want to know what is going on. I just don’t want to leave them because, oh, they are going to do fine on the ACT test, so I am just going to let them be, because they’ll be fine. I want to really engage all the students in my class instead of say, well, where these students come from and how can I really identify, where they are coming from but also identify some strategic methods and ways to really engage with them.
Sharon spoke to how racial prejudice and stereotypes, *personally* affected her as a victim and she provided a very helpful counter narrative that I believe her peers would have benefited from understanding when she described an encounter in which she showed up to babysit for a White family and when they learned that she was Black would not leave their children.

I thought it was racism because I think she [the mother of the children] chose not to go out that night because she did not feel comfortable leaving her kids with somebody that was Black. So, I think by definition, she was being racist, she was just assuming that I was incompetent because of my… umm… race… it is just sad that someone would think that. I mean, I don’t care so much anymore because I’ve never seen them again or after that I never saw them again. But, I mean, for someone to come to those conclusions not based on anything else besides what you look like is kind of disheartening and sad.

Finally, the participants associated racism with obvious racial segregation in their responses to the question “what leads you to call this situation racism?” Many participants spoke to localized racial segregation that occurred in their hometowns. When asked “what leads you to call this situation racism?” Krista responded, “I think just the clear, defined, umm… areas of where people sat, just, it was clearly defined by race.” Rebecca described her hometown in much the same way.

It’s still very segregated. I mean, in this day in age, even when I was growing up, to have it so separate, I mean, it is not even equal in the sense that… I feel like we were given a lot more opportunity and we had the best resources and those kids
were left, you know, it was just really inequitable. And, you didn’t want to go to school there if you were from my school, sadly enough.

Brad responded:

If you could afford to move for better education or not and, I mean, just, you could see that there aren’t very many… where I went to high school, it is not very diverse. But, I mean, you associate the city schools with being all Black students verse suburban schools that are more or less all White. So, I guess it is almost segregation, unofficial segregation… you would conclude that, the more affluent White families would go to school in the suburbs or well to do schools whereas if you can’t afford it you are associated with being African American and being stuck in the city schools or the urban schools.

In three of his encounters with racism, Anthony highlighted segregation in his response to why he believed his encounters included racism. This was especially prominent in his encounters with ability-grouping in schools he grew up in and those in his teacher education program placements. When asked “what leads you to call this situation racism?” in respect to his encounter with urban students who were bused to his suburban high school Anthony responded:

I think it’s because you are limiting students’ opportunities or limiting their experiences based simply on them not being from the same area or these students not representing the culture or ethnicity of that the predominate one of the school community. It really limited experiences of collaborating with students of different cultures and, because I would go, you know, it would be, I would be like
oh, I didn’t even know that there were even students from different backgrounds until oh, at lunch, I would see all these different students but where are these students during the day? So, I think it just sets up the structure, even though, to kind of allowing these students to maybe have a different resource of what school they are going to and the district they are involved in I think it still really limits their opportunities based upon their race or based upon their cultural background...

He shared a similar response when asked the same question about ability groups in his teacher education program placement.

So, this one, you have two things. Kind of you have this idea of separation by, I don’t know, it’s basically ability grouping and then what occurs within the ability grouping on a multicultural or lack thereof, okay... with the grouping, specifically the ESL kids, these students who are enrolled in the ESL programs are, you know, make up, a fair amount of the minority, you know, population in the school. Umm... so, it’s a predominately Caucasian school, but, you know all the students who are enrolled in the English as a Second Language program are, umm… represent minority groups. And, so, they’re kept together, they are grouped together for their course work, for their curriculum, for their pretty much the majority of the school day. And, so, I think there is a real subtle racism with that. That they are separated, that their educations are different and I think that is really, umm… at the core, any separation, any different, any, any differences in how we are treating and teaching our kids, I think, at the core results in
discrimination in some way whether it is based on, whether race is involved or whether socio-economic status is involved or whether ability level is involved I think when you are separating kids from general education opportunities, umm… I think people can really, I think there is some type of discrimination there.

The way in which the participants defined racism contributed not only to the types of encounters included in their interviews but also the manner in which the definitions were reflected in their discourse throughout the interviews. Based on their definitions of racism, the participants collectively described three elementary school, five middle school, eight high school, eight undergraduate, and thirteen graduate school encounters with racism. The discourse within these descriptions was analyzed in further depth though John Paul Gee’s seven themes of discourse analysis and will be presented in this chapter within the seven themes.

**Discourse Analysis**

James Paul Gee’s introduction and interpretation of discourse analysis provided the data analysis framework for this study. Gee (2005) argues that discourse analysis provides the researcher with the opportunity to look for “patterns and links within and across utterances in order to form hypotheses about how meaning is being constructed and organized” (Gee, 2005, p. 118).” Each interview was analyzed independent of the others. The interviews were first coded for themes based on Gee’s seven themes of significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge and the corresponding questions for each theme. Therefore, this Chapter and the initial
discussion of this Chapter in the following Chapter are organized around these seven themes.

**Significance.** Gee (2005) defines significance as the component of any given situation that determines “how and what different things mean – the sorts of meaning and significance they are given” (Latour 1991; Levinson 1996; A. Clark 1997)” (Gee, 2005, p. 98). He further asserts, “we use language to make things significant (to give them meaning or value) in certain ways, to build significance” (Gee, 2005, p. 98). To better understand the significance of discourse, he provides five fundamental questions to be asked of the discourse:

1. What are the situated meanings of some of the words and phrases that seem important in the situation?
2. What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, bodies, people, objects, artifacts, and institutions relevant in this situation?
3. What situated meanings and values are attached to other oral and written texts quoted or alluded to in the situation (intertextuality)?
4. What Discourse models seem to be at play in connecting and integrating these situated meanings to each other?
5. What institutions and/or Discourses are being (re-)produced in this situation and how are they being stabilized or transformed in the act? (Gee, 2005, p. 111)

Gee’s definition and the five corresponding questions located the primary situated meanings of significance associated with racism in age and locale. In respect to age, the
participants believed people such as older family members, friends, peers, professors, graduate teaching associates, and teachers, who were of the previous generation to be more racist than the younger generation of the participant prospective teachers.

Throughout the interviews, racism was attached to the previous generation but not the current generation or the generation of the prospective teachers in the study. For example, Abby states, “generations before really looked down upon African Americans and so it could just be that kind of continuing without knowing because if you ask them they don’t consider themselves racist people.” In other words, many of the prospective teachers believe racism is situated before them not with or among them. Abby further describes, “sometimes I think that, it’s almost not to like put a generalization on the age group or whatever, she’s about the same age as my mom and I find that a lot of times like that generation it’s almost like they try and make up [pause] for their past or they don’t care and they’re just overtly I don’t even know if that is the right word racist.”

Sharon, the only African American participant in the study, supports a similar generational situation of racism in the descriptions of her encounters as well:

Umm… yes… other adults, specifically, umm… adults are interesting because sometimes they have beliefs that have been engrained in them when they were younger and even if their kids aren’t racist they may have parents that aren’t racist but when, you know, I might say, you know, people aren’t racist until their daughter brings home a Black guy, then, it’s a problem, you know what I mean and even grandparents too. So, like, around older people, umm… I’m kind of always wondering what they’re thinking, what they’re really thinking about me.
However, Sharon is the also the only participant who returned the generational situation of racism back to herself and how she personally makes meaning of it. The other participants simply do not consider themselves racist people. Racism is therefore *insignificant* to their generation and consequently they do not need to address it. Abby continually spoke to the need to “help” the previous generation but did not speak to the need to challenge her own thoughts, feelings, or behaviors.

Racism was not only generationally situated away from the participants it was also *literally* situated away from the participants. They situated racism within small towns in rural areas and *not* in the large urban city of the university. Many of them associate themselves within this new or different locale. Abby describes:

> But, I just think it’s that whole small town mentality that they don’t, they haven’t really experienced anything outside of specifically what they know. And, so I mean, like I really appreciate coming to a bigger university because I have gotten a little bit more diversity.

Much like Abby, Jody localized racism when describing one of her first encounters with Black people. She associated the racism that occurred and her corresponding feelings as being in an *urban* environment: “I mean, being from an all White school and being at an urban school. So, it was [pause]… I remember feeling scared that I wasn’t used to Black people and a different race.” When asked whether her experience was attributed to power issues or structures Jody continued to localize racism much like Abby: “no because that was the way I was raised. That sort of didn’t come until I probably came to college in a more diverse community… I realized that none of us really knew much about
racism because we’d never really talked about it in any of our classes or had to deal with it because we were pretty much from an all White community.”

Unlike, Jody, Rebecca’s small rural town was diverse enough to include noticeable segregation through a railroad track “division” that separated the two by Northern Whites and Southern Blacks and she spoke to the consequences of the segregation.

And, it made me realize that the friends that I have it was just all about location and geography rather than, you know, the people that go there… Basically, society had set up that these people were going to live in the southern part of the town past the railroad tracks and they were left to be of lesser value and of lesser power than the people that lived on the other side of the tracks. And, due to that, they received; you know, these feelings of inequality and you know, lack of resources, lack of funding, just based on a general location… And, that’s helpful to me as a teacher because I can help see how, you know, those African Americans feel inadequate because they are in a general location or other people perceive them a certain way.

Anthony spoke of a similar type of segregation in his school community. His suburban public high school included students who were bused in from the local urban high school. He reflected in great detail on how the school district segregated these urban high school students from Anthony and his suburban peers. He describes how, “these students were in a school like, we’re in a different school or even a nicer school or being around nicer resources or you know or what not that, umm… they, there was still a separation and these students probably felt just as isolated, if not more so, from their community and
their culture because they were thrown into this different setting, this different education setting.”

Although these prospective teachers primarily situated meanings of significance associated with racism to age and locale they were, for the most part, unable to speak to the impact this significance would have on their teaching. As Jill describes, “I think where people grow up that’s what they’re comfortable with and that’s what they want to stick to and I did grow up in a suburban area and my sister currently lives in a [city] suburban area, [name of suburb], and like it is just, since this is where we should live, it’s nice, it’s comfortable, this is where you should teach…” Brad further states, “I just noticed the division of race between where I grew up and where I went to high school. So, I like an urban and a suburban school… I don’t think there is anything I could have done in that situation. It was just an issue that I saw…” His peers echoed similar sentiments.

Martha, the only middle-aged participant in the study, did address how she thought this would affect her younger peers in the teacher education cohort:

I think it is really important that children only know what they experience. If kids grow up in a very homogenous environment, they’re not going to know anything differently. THEN, to add on to that, if they start hearing other ideas from family or peers they really don’t have anything to contradict that… I think it is a real disservice to kids to grow up in a real homogenous environment like I did. And, then, it makes me wonder if, are you going to be able to relate to people, I guess, what concerns me, how do you even think there is a need for diversity if you
didn’t experience it and if you didn’t experience it either in a positive or negative way, then, you don’t really have much to go by and you may then think, if you’re in college, that people are just trying to push some sort of agenda on you. Martha was the only prospective teacher to contradict the generational and localized situation of the significance of racism of her peers. She actually reversed both the age and local significance in that she believes the previous generation (which is *her* generation) could be more able to overcome racism because of their life experiences and in her specific case, experiences with desegregation and integration.

**Activities.** The participants not only situated their discussions on the significance of the age and locale of racism, they also spoke to the activities associated with racial discourse. Gee (2005) defines activities as a component of any situation wherein the participants are engaged in activities that make up a sequence of events. He further states, “we use language to get recognized as engaging in a certain sort of activity, that is, to build an activity here-and-now” (Gee, 2005, p. 98). The questions Gee associates with activities include:

1. What is the larger or main activity (or set of activities) going on in the situation?
2. What sub-activities compose this activity (or these activities)?
3. What actions compose these sub-activities and activities? (Gee, 2005, p. 111)

One of the most basic activities the participants spoke to in the study was racial discourse in schools. A feeling of superficiality surrounded their descriptions of their encounters with racial discourse in school. For example, as elementary and secondary students,
many of the prospective teachers in this study did not believe *their* teachers were capable of speaking to racism in the classroom or facilitating group discussions around racism. For example, Jody described a very uncomfortable experience in a high school government class:

He decided to have this discussion on racism and I just remember it just being very superficial. All of our ideas were based on what we heard our parents say and then we were still trying to be politically correct at the same time. So, but, yeah, very superficial... I felt awkward and very disconnected from the conversation, not willing to participate, and I usually participated in class discussions but that one I didn’t really want to say too much [laugh].

When asked about her feelings and how the experience was hindering to her, Jody continues:

I guess not being able to talk openly about the issue was hindering to our learning experiences in class because we were sort of scared so no one said anything and you don’t get anywhere when you don’t say anything so that was definitely hindering.

Tara similarly reflected on her experiences of racial discourse in school; however in a more positive light.

I guess it’s a big deal to be talking about that in school. You know now that I am a teacher, you look back and that was probably a tough conversation and discussion to have especially if there were other African Americans in the room or if there weren’t because, you know, sometimes in the school I grew up in
Caucasians wouldn’t understand, White people don’t understand why it would be such a big deal… I guess, just that it was a good thing. I guess I’m IMPRESSED, I will just say that, impressed that my teacher took the time to have the discussion... Now, I guess, it’s just, I guess it helped to know that I had a teacher that was willing to talk about race issues in class.

Although the participants spoke to numerous school-related encounters with racial discourse, they were unable to articulate how these encounters would influence their teaching other than they generally felt they could do it different or even better.

Recreational sport activities were associated with many of the prospective teachers’ first encounters with people of different races or racism itself. Rebecca describes “the only time you interacted with people from South was if you played sports with them or you did extracurricular activities where you competed against them.” For example, Jody vividly reflected on her first encounter with racism within sports.

My basketball team, we were all White the team we were playing was mostly African American [long pause] and then our parents walking us to the bus. That whole thing made it seem very racial for me back then. It was almost like they were scared for our safety because we were in this urban environment.

Kara shared a similar experience.

And then in high school, umm… I was a cheerleader and one of the other cheerleaders on our squad, her dad was African American and her mom was White and people, this was just so new to us, it was really different for us and I just remember people making comments about that.
Although Jody and Kara, as well as other participants, spoke to their first encounters with people of a different race and even racism in sports activities, Sharon was the only participant who spoke to repeatedly being the *victim* of racism in a sport activity:

Well, I was at an indoor soccer practice and my school soccer coach at the time who coached outdoor she came up to me after practice and she said, you know, we need to talk about awards for this year and I said okay. The year before I had gotten honorable mention or something for this soccer season and she came up to me and said, you know, we had this huge argument where a lot of people were saying a lot of inappropriate things and some of them believe [pause] that you did not deserve your awards for other reasons besides soccer. And, she said there are a lot of racist people in the area that you wouldn’t know if and I tried to defend you but, umm… they chose, you know, I am only one person, but in the end they chose that they were not going to give you an award for that year. So, I said, OK.

This was not a singular experience for Sharon. This was only her *first* encounter with racism from White people on the soccer field. She described another encounter.

Well, my senior year, umm… we were playing a team in the playoffs and somebody mentioned, it was [name of person] and, if you know anything about [name of person], they are abusive, anyway. Yeah, one of the girls on their team, you know, I played defense and she played offense and she was trying to dribble around me which was so sad because I got the ball and she was really upset apparently. And, she was just like do you, do you see any people out here that look like you, what do you think that means? You don’t deserve to be on the field
with me or something silly like that. Umm… so after the experience, I realized that there were MORE people that felt that way. It was kind of sad and upsetting. Although, most the participants in this study focused on sports activities in which they encountered people of different races or racism, Anthony spoke in great length in multiple encounters to repeated racism he encountered in the act of academic ability groups not only during his childhood but also throughout his teacher education program placement experiences. Although, his peers spoke to similar experiences with ability-grouping, Anthony was the most articulate in his descriptions and their effects on him and his students.

I think the separation by ability groups thus by race will continue. And, umm… if not continue to grow stronger and umm… so you will have students who, because I even see it already, the students who are in my classroom who are of the lower ability, who are pulled out, are friends. They don’t socialize too much with the general ed students because they are just not around them. And, umm… and there’s enough of these students with IEPs to kind of have their own click, to have their own, they can have friends. It’s not just one student getting pulled out or two students, it’s about seven or eight students. So, you have enough that they can build relationships together. Umm… and I think that’ll continue to happen more so and then, you know, even the students who are ESL, who, you know, maybe be different racially, or have a different diversity, but they are going to, umm… become, they are going to continue to be separated, umm… until they master the language at a certain level. And, I think really with middle school
being such a socialization heavy time, umm… I think the roots are being built here, you know, planted here that will continue on through the high school or, umm… what not. Both groups of students, the students, the minority students, the students, the Caucasian students do not have opportunities to interact with one another or their opportunities are limited and then two or three years down the road with this continual pattern, you know, the longer it goes the hard it’s going to be for those students to make those connections.

He further explained the connection between these experiences in his teacher education program and those from his high school.

I think the mixing, well, the lack of mixing of abilities, umm… was the same as my high school experience. The same kids, everyone is put in different tracks and socially if you were not on the same track, socially you didn’t, it was very rare for you to have opportunities to build friendships with students of different tracks. So, I think this is the same way, just that, the ability grouping that way too, umm… establishes a real subtle racist, like, African American kids are predominately on this track so they are going to be isolated and I think it is the same way with the students in my school who are in the ESL program who are, you know, who, you know, have special needs or you know these students become more and more isolated. So, umm… yeah, I think there is a real connection with that and I think part of that, you know, is that real subtle racism, well, like, these students are of a lower abilities, lower backgrounds, or that they have to be put together and they will learn together and they will be separated so I
think, I think the administration from my high school and the administration from this school are very similar in their methodology of that.

**Identities.** Discourse includes identities as any component of a situation. This was a particularly relevant in our conversations on race. Gee explains “we use language to get recognized as taking on a certain identity or role, that is to build an identity here-and-now” (Gee, 2005, p. 99). To better understand the identities of discourse, he provides five fundamental questions to be asked of the discourse:

1. What identities (roles, positions), with their concomitant personal, social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs (cognition), feelings (affect), and values, seem to be relevant to, taken for granted in, or under construction in the situation?
2. How are these identities stabilized or transformed in the situation?
3. In terms of identities, activities, and relationships, what Discourses are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways? (Gee, 2005, p. 111)

Anger was the strongest affect I encountered in the identity component of the situations described by the prospective teachers. They were simply very angry. I was honestly not prepared for the anger I observed throughout these interviews. The anger was still very real to me even through the transcription and analysis processes of this study. I could hear the way in which the words were said in anger. I could see the angry mannerisms of the participants. It has actually been one of the more challenging aspects of this study. While some of the prospective teachers were somewhat angered by family or friends, the majority of the participants were very angry with the teacher preparation program.
managers, supervisors, and/or faculty members. Many of them did not become orally or visually angry until they discussed their encounters with racism during their teacher preparation program. For example, Abby states:

Pent up anger [laugh] I can’t really express my anger to any one that’s really going to be able to make a change because like I said I’d be put back in my place and it would be even worse. So, just angry that I [pause] I feel like I’m paying so much money for this program and I can’t have my own opinion. Like, I’m forced on an opinion and I have no choice about it because if I want to get through the program I have to have that opinion and if I don’t I’m going to have wasted all this money on nothing.

Kara was equally angry about the program and the faculty and she spoke to the anger throughout the majority of her encounters.

It makes me hesitant to really bring in my personal opinion and experiences in class and group discussions through papers I write. I just, I really feel guarded in pretty much everything I have been doing… I really feel like I can’t bring out my true self in my coursework and in my student teaching right now… I also think it has to do with power issues of the people that are in charge of the program. I think that they are doing things in their best interest rather than ours… the fact that we can’t share our own opinions and ideas… we are confined to the ideas that we learn in class and the attitudes that are forced upon us… speaking for myself and other things that I have heard, I think we’re becoming resentful
because we feel like we are in a sense not being provided with the education that we thought we were gonna receive…

Although Anthony spoke to similar concerns he articulated his position as a middle-class White male within his concerns and as a reason to why he might not be likely to speak to them.

I think it, in the same way, I still, I, umm… feel like, umm… I have a hard time expressing my, what I view as my identity or my cultural identity because I feel like I am in power and if I do that I don’t want to marginalize people who are, who are coming from different backgrounds. Like I feel, guilty for expressing my cultural identity because it’s seen, I would, I think it’s viewed as the majority. Umm… so, I think that really affects my sense of self because I feel like I’m not able to communicate my sense of self with my students or if I have students from different backgrounds as me that they wouldn’t understand where I am coming from, umm… just as much as I don’t understand where they are coming from and I really don’t want to communicate that to my students because I don’t want them to think well, if I talk about, I just don’t want to sound like I am above them in anyway. So, I almost go too far, too far in regards to express myself because I don’t want to feel like, I don’t want to make a comment, for example, oh, like, you know, umm… the heat was so hot at my apartment, you know I was, I had a hard time sleeping and have a student like, I don’t have heat. You know, like, I think I just don’t want to make any comments like that just because, umm… to
put my students, make my students feel like I am placing myself about them. But, that leads me to not really share my identity because I, because of that fear.

This was true even of undergraduate experiences with African American professors or graduate teaching associates. There was an immediate feeling of anger for anyone who attempted to challenge the participants.

**Relationships.** Much like identities, all situations involve relationships that “the people involved enact and contract with each other and recognize as operative and consequential” (Gee, 2005, p. 99). More importantly, Gee explains how “we use relationships to signal what sort of relationships we have, want to have, or are trying to have with our listener(s), reader(s), or other people, groups, or institutions about whom we are communicating, that is, we use language to build social relationships” (Gee, 2005, p. 99). To better understand the relationships of discourse, he provides five fundamental questions to be asked of the discourse:

1. What sorts of social relationships seem to be relevant to, taken for granted in, or under construction in the situation?

2. How are these social relationships stabilized or transformed in the situation?

3. How are the other or written texts quoted or alluded to so as to set up certain relationships to other texts, people, or Discourses?

4. In terms of identities, activities and relationships, what Discourses are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways? (Gee, 2005, p. 111)
Oftentimes our generation, my generation and more importantly the generation I share with the participants is referred to not only as the technology generation but also a generation of relations. Relationships are important to us. This was a prominent theme in my conversations with these prospective teachers. The most important relationship that impacted the racial identity development of my participants is parental relationships. Many of their initial thoughts, feelings, emotions, values, opinions, and perspectives regarding race were attributed to their parents even when they were negative. For example, when Jody talked about one of her first encounters with racism at her middle school basketball game, she described how she felt based on her parent’s actions.

I guess sort of conclusions would be that definitely racism was involved because my parents were sort of giving us the impression by walking us to the bus that we SHOULD be scared and nervous about being in a situation like that… I guess the issues of our parents who were scared for our safety and them walking us to the bus and being really protective just shows that they think their White races are superior and less likely to cause trouble… I guess it was shaping us to sort of become racist ourselves… to fear the African American culture and the urban culture and African American schools.

Anthony more clearly articulated similar feelings in a reflection on his perspective of relationships as a result of the teacher education program.

It has definitely impacted my interactions with students but I think just people in general where I think it has really impacted where, umm… I don’t want to say ashamed to share my identity, but I am hesitant to because I don’t want to be seen
as, I don’t want to be seen as just someone who is just hording over the resources or power I have and I think that has really affected my interactions because I won’t express who I am and they miss out on me expressing who I am and there is a gaping hole in the relationships that I have whether that is peer-to-peer or student-teacher-to-student I think goes across a lot of boundaries, a lot of different boundaries for current relationships. But, I think it has really affected my openness to students or others, umm… in my interactions with them.

However, unlike her peers, Jody recognized her role in the relationship as well as her responsibility to change it. When asked how the above experience impacted her relationships with others, she responded, “well, it’s helping me see that a lot of times parents and our past influence what we think now and we have to work through those to understand that they are influencing and impacting the way we think.”

Sharon was the only participant who was able to share how her relationships with people changed as a result of the racism she encountered from them. In respect to an encounter she described when she was not allowed to babysit for a family because she was White, she focused not only on how it impacted her but how it impacted the relationships of the children.

I think it’s really unfortunate because even though it was rude what they did to me, I think what they are doing to their children is even worse. So, you know, you can only keep tabs on your children for so long until they you know, realize what the world is about. So, I think as far as, it was more unfortunate for her kids more than anything… who knows what they are doing now, I mean, I think
growing up in that type of atmosphere won’t be a productive place to grow up. So, I think it has probably impacted the children because they knew what was going on. They saw me, you know, they saw their parents react to this situation. So, I think that impacted them even more so than me.

The importance of strong, positive student-teacher relationships was also a common theme throughout the interviews. Many of the participants spoke to the need for these types of relationships before conversations regarding race and racism could be addressed in the classroom. Jody explains:

It goes into the idea of getting to know your students and building relationships with the students and making them feel comfortable in the classroom, in my classroom, so that they feel comfortable to have these types of discussions that we actually got to have in the end of, toward the end of the quarter in that class. However, she then admits that she would not feel comfortable speaking to racism in her classroom: “Yes, it impacts, umm… definitely in my urban placement, I still feel uncomfortable in talking about racism because I am White and have students that are Hispanic, or Hispanic-looking, and, but, the uncomfortableness…” stops her. Anthony shared similar feelings regarding his inability to address students who even look like him.

I think just not knowing how to approach students who are White, Caucasian or you know, just not knowing how to approach them with this type of mentality and bringing their culture into the classroom because I think that it’s just safely assumed that their culture is already there so we don’t need to bring it in. So, I think it’s been real hindering to me not knowing, well,
there is all the diversity and multicultural we are celebrating, well, how can I connect with students who may be the representation of the universal students.

Tara voiced her concern in her inability to build relationships with the students because of her race.

Sometimes I feel like they treat me differently because I would say three things: I am young, I am White and I am female in a place that is, you know, where I am a minority, where everyone is African American. And, I place a higher emphasis on being White because I have seen the interactions and attitudes between White teachers and students and with Black teachers and students and I don’t feel as if I get as much respect just because of my skin color.

Krista echoed these sentiments and shared how they impact her emotionally.

It is hurtful to know that there have been times, like; they’ll say something about me because I am a White, middle-class teacher, and they know that my background is not the same as theirs. Although that is something that I can’t control, umm… it’s just hurtful that they may or may not see me in a certain light whether that’s really who I am or not. There have been times where there have been comments, like, well, there was one kid, he’s a kid who really respects me and we have a good relationship, he has issues and will just come out and say, well, what would you know about this, you’re a White girl, and you’re in college, and it’s just hurtful race issues are such a big deal to these kids and to a lot of people in general.
Martha shared a similar concern but she immediately took the opportunity that her students are different from her to reflect on how she can learn from her students and their differences.

I feel pretty confident that I am on the pathway of learning and discovering what is right. Umm… and that [long pause] because of that I think that I am more, in that a more positive way, in my philosophy of education that developing a caring relationship with your students is one of the most important things to have, like having a good atmosphere in the classroom for learning. Part of that presupposes that I am going to care about the culture and the lives’ of these students that I have and that means if I have kids that are different than me, which I probably am, because like right now, they are all on a very low socio-economic status and I have kids that are from different cultures and minorities AND the culture of Appalachia which is where a lot of the kids come from. I think that I need to understand like what life is like for them so that I can figure out ways to help them learn better and relate learning to their lives… I think the more that I learn about this particular subject the more I am like ready to admit that I don’t know everything and, and, like going back to these two girls I mentor, they kind of keep it real. I realize that I have never had a cousin that was shot and killed on Broad Street. I have never had a father that committed suicide because he was in debt. I’ve never had, you know, my brother drop out of school because he couldn’t pass the [state graduation test]. I mean I just didn’t have those experiences and being willing to say I haven’t had them… I will never be able to like totally identify
with these, these two girls who I love and care about, let alone the 30 kids that are in my classroom.

For the majority of the participants, racism was more prominent in the student-to-student relationships not only in their elementary and secondary school experiences but also in the elementary and secondary school placements during their teacher education programs. These racialized experiences were most prominent in student relationships outside of the classroom. Kara recalls the racial segregation of her high school:

But, I think people just tended to divide themselves that is where they felt more comfortable. So, you always had the Black students in one area, and the White students in another, the Asian in another, and maybe the Middle-Eastern students in another. It was just seen as normal… where people choose to sit… I think that it definitely said something about the community and the society… just that it was still… it was still defined by race… I think this obviously carried out beyond the lunch room. I think that, you know, helped to dictate who your friends were and who you, you know, hung out with…

Anthony recalled similar experiences during his high school education. Students from the local urban high school that resided close to his suburban high school were “bused” into his high school. He was more reflective as to how he believes the experiences impacted him and the other students:

They, the students, would be bused in but looking back in all the courses that I took in high school and the activities I was involved with it seemed like I really didn’t have really much interaction with students from different backgrounds,
which that was different ethnic or cultural backgrounds or even different backgrounds when it came to socio-economic status that it seemed like the district and the school were really opening the doors for students to come in and attend these types of schools but really these students were really limited to the courses that they could take or the activities they were going to join. It just seemed like they were almost in a separate school in themselves while they were attending the same high school I was… I didn’t even know that there were even students from different backgrounds until oh, at lunch, I would see all these different students but where are these students during the day? So, I think it just sets up the structure, even though, to kind of allowing these students to maybe have a different resource of what school they are going to and the district they are involved in I think it still really limits their opportunities based upon their race or based upon their cultural background.

The participants also discussed their perceptions of the relationships between the K-12 students and their parents. Oftentimes, the participants described an encounter with racism which included their students and then blamed the students’ parents for the racism. For example, Krista described a racial argument between two students and then attributed the racism to their home life and parents.

It makes me wonder a lot about the kids’ home lives and their backgrounds and what their parents are teaching them especially thinking about the day and I mean and I do know a lot of the families of these students and it just makes me wonder what the parents are thinking. Like, why would you promote these actions and
behaviors? The responses from some kids are like, oh, well, my dad says it.

Well, that doesn’t make it okay. What is your dad thinking? Things like that.

Brad described his perception of the academic differences of students by race as related to their parents as well: “Students whose, parents, who wanted more out of their children. So, their parents wanted all A’s out of their students so they were hard working students verse the non-hard working students.” While Anthony made similar connections between the students and their parents, he was the only student to speak to a systemic problem as opposed to an individual parental problem based on race.

It is communicated that way but I think there is a real prevailing thought that, you know, we can basically sort of half-ass their education because their parents don’t really care, so, we can pull them out and because they are not really going to care that their kids are separated… I think there is a real issue of how schools are structured based on how involved really your family is how they can really fight for you in that school where I think there are a lot of students who are pulled out based on their ability, if they are lower ability, it’s almost like the families are given up them, there’s the thought that well the families are given up on them so we can almost, we can only do so much, so we can’t do all that much for them.

Relationships outside of the classroom were also prominent in the participants’ encounters with racism. The relationships included those with immediate family members, friends, and romantic partners. Most of the participants described inter-racial romantic relationships that resulted in encounters with racism from their immediate
family members and/or friends. Tara described her family’s reaction when she dated a Black man in high school.

In high school, I dated a Black guy for nine months and I guess the specific racism I experienced would be, umm… it was just from my brother and sister who, it was really just teasing me about dating a Black guy and being like my aunt, one of my aunt’s is married to a Black man. So, they would say, oh you are just like aunt you know. And, even though it was just teasing I feel like that was still a form of racism.

Martha described a similar experience when her older sister dated a Black man while she was in high school and her family’s reaction.

So, my family influences me a lot. But, I do remember in high school my older sister, who was kind of a little more the rebel in the family. She told my parents that she was going to be marrying a Black man. She had never dated anyone who was Black. But, she told them she was going to marry a Black man. And, I clearly remember us having a debate about whether that would be right or good. My parents didn’t think there was anything wrong with it but it wouldn’t be best. I remember my sister and I going around and around with them about why they could say there was no difference between Black and White and that was a line they were kind of uncomfortable with crossing.

The participants also described their families’ reactions when they shared their teacher education placement experiences in urban schools. For example, Jill explained the influence her parents have on her decision to choose an urban district to teach in.
I think they kind of hinder me in the sense that I do want to please my family so it’s hard for me to want to stand up to them especially since I am the youngest. So, umm… I guess it hinders me in the sense that they are trying, inadvertently, I don’t think they realize it, but, they are limiting my options and, umm… I almost feel like I’ll get a sense of disapproval if I do chose a C position...

I think when I hear that I say, you know, I don’t think that’s a good school district or I really don’t want you teaching, I really don’t want you to have to teach in C schools I think that impacts me and makes me second guess myself. And, I think oh, maybe I am not, umm… for lack of a better word, competent, to teach in those schools and meet their needs or, you know, they say I wouldn’t last. So, I think they make me doubt myself.

Jill was particularly articulate in how she believed her family to be racist in their feelings toward different groups of students and urban schools. When asked “what leads you to call this situation racism?” Jill responded:

I think it’s racism in the sense that it’s lack of knowledge about the different types of schools and essentially all schools are the same. They all have problems. They all have good things about them. They’re all, all the students, you know, need and want to be taught and I think it’s racism because it’s obvious that urban schools have a high concentration of African American students and when I hear that statement that just makes me think that you don’t want me teaching Black kids or not necessarily or even Black kids or poor kids too because that can go on to socio-economic status.
Politics. Gee defines politics as “the distribution of social goods” in which “any situation, involves social goods and views on their distribution as a component (Gee, 2005, p. 100).” He believes “we use language to convey a perspective on the nature of the distribution of social goods, that is, to build a perspective on social goods” (Gee, 2005, p. 100). To better understand the politics of discourse, he provides five fundamental questions to be asked of the discourse:

1. What social goods (e.g., status, power, aspects of gender, race, and class, or more narrowly defined social networks and identities) are relevant (and irrelevant) in this situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and operative in the situation?

2. How are these social goods connected to the Discourse models and Discourses operative in the situation? (Gee, 2005, p. 112)

The majority of the White participants in this study perceived their race to lack power in comparison to those of a different race and they therefore believed these political power relationships to be very relevant in the situations they encountered with racism. The participants were overwhelmingly angry about their perceived lack of power. In her description of a negative encounter with a graduate teaching associate who was in her own words, a “recovering racist” as was everyone in the class, Abby spoke to how her race defined her value in the course.

I guess just the way she saw the entire class. Like, almost, I felt like I didn’t really have any value in the class because I wasn’t of a particular race. I was, you know, I feel like [pause] almost as if White has no heritage or culture. It’s the
invisible. I mean not necessarily invisible but umm… you know, I just didn’t feel like I was valued in the classroom. Like my opinion didn’t matter because I was White and you know obviously I’m not going to have anything to say about racism.

Individual voice was also defined by race in the participants’ encounters in their teacher education program. Many of the prospective teachers did not believe they had a voice because they did not hold the power of a minority voice in a teacher preparation program that focuses on the voice of the minority. Abby described:

Umm… I think, like I said, this is the first time that I have NEVER been able to really say what my opinion is and so [pause] I mean it goes back to I guess the last example where I just don’t feel like I have a voice. I have to take on someone else’s voice because I don’t have a choice right now. I just need to get through what I am going through and then maybe learn from it after.

The White participants felt as if there was a real lack of power associated with their White race. They believed they lacked power because they were not in the minority. Abby was one of the most vocal and visibly angry in her descriptions. As a result of her lack of power, she just conformed to those in power (her university supervisor particularly) to get through the program.

I mean, yeah, I haven’t been able to really get what I think could be fulfillment out of this program because I can’t have my own opinion. Umm… I think it’s made me a lot more stressed out than I should be and that’s hindering my learning because right now, I just don’t CARE anymore. I don’t care because I know that
in a couple weeks I won’t have classes anymore. I know that they’re not going to fail me because it would make their program look bad. So, I could be doing much more quality work but because I am stressed out, I’m angry, I’m bitter about the whole thing and I know for a fact that they’re not going to fail anyone but I just don’t care anymore. So, I mean it sucks but right now I’m just kind of in survival mode so that I can just get through it and do what I want to do in my classroom and make it the way I see fit. I mean I’ve taken a lot of ideas and I’ve learned a lot but I think I could have done so much better in the program if I didn’t have all this added stress that really isn’t necessary… I couldn’t really have my opinion and then I completely bs’ed my next reflection because I didn’t want to have another meeting which had to do with how the White students in my classroom had power because they had knowledge over the African American students in my classroom who did not necessarily have that.

Although Anthony was not as visibly angry as Abby, he shared similar emotions about the teacher education program, program managers, supervisors, and faculty in respect to his race and lack of power.

I think it, I think it, in the same way, I still, I, umm… feel like, umm… I have a hard time expressing my, what I view as my identity or my cultural identity because I feel like I am in power and if I do that I don’t want to marginalize people who are, who are coming from different backgrounds. Like I feel, guilty for expressing my cultural identity because it’s seen, I would, I think it’s viewed as the majority. Umm… so, I think that really affects my sense of self because I
feel like I’m not able to communicate my sense of self with my students or if I have students from different backgrounds as me that they wouldn’t understand where I am coming from, umm… just as much as I don’t understand where they are coming from and I really don’t want to communicate that to my students because I don’t want them to think well, if I talk about, I just don’t want to sound like I am above them in anyway. So, I almost go too far, too far in regards to expressing myself because I don’t want to feel like, I don’t want to make a comment, for example, oh, like, you know, umm… the heat was so hot at my apartment, you know I was, I had a hard time sleeping and have a student like, I don’t have heat. You know, like, I think I just don’t want to make any comments like that just because, umm… to put my students, make my students feel like I am placing myself about them. But, that leads me to not really share my identity because I, because of that fear.

Anthony also described, in detail, how he believed his teacher education program will impact his ability to teach and his K-12 students.

I think there’s been a real, I think the course work and student teaching and the time of student teaching has been, I have really focused on the kids that have the needs and the kids who are coming from different backgrounds. Umm… while the kids who are maybe seen as like, umm… having, like, the, having the power in society or just having a lot more resources, I kind of leave alone because I feel like they are okay. They don’t need my instruction or help as much. Umm… as opposed to the student who, umm… maybe coming in with a different
background or even coming in from a completely different, you know, language, umm… I focus more on helping them and just kind of safely assume that the other students are fine, you know. And, I don’t think that is, I think that is a very bad consequence to just assume those students are fine. And, umm… to just say, well, okay, since, because, since so-and-so is not asking me questions, or you know, or making comments about something, he or she must be understanding this and getting this. Umm… they must not have any problems, their lives must not be a problem, they must be, everything must be great at home, you know, everything is fine, so, I think it’s really, I think it is really a consequence that I assume where I assume that kids from different backgrounds have rough home lives who need my attention and my support more than anybody else. I think I almost see that, I think that has been a real negative consequence, that I will start viewing, that I will start viewing or categorizing students and start applying strategies to every student. If, I’ll apply the same strategy to every African American student or every student from different cultures and I think that really hurts the students and really affects my teaching.

Tara also expressed the lack of power she perceived as related to her White race in her placement at an Afrocentric school.

I can see that it is almost like a reversed power struggle. In the school, it is, you know, the principal and some teachers trying to say, you know, we should have more power because we, you know, it’s Afrocentric. We are following the school and you know, it’s almost like you’re not welcome here… this is very
different than any past experience I have ever had. I have never been in a
situation where I was the minority and that, you know, that I had to worry about,
you know my race. I never... I have never had to worry about that or worry about
being called names because of my skin color.

Not all of the participants perceived their White race as a hindrance. Kara did not portray
herself as lacking power. Quite the contrary, she referenced her race as the “superior”
race when she described the racial power struggle between her, as the White educator,
and her students, as the African American learners.

Well, obviously, I am from a race that is seen as superior to their inferior race.
And, they are considered the minority and me the majority and I’m coming in to
try to teach them. So, it is kind of me feeling like I was imparting power over
them. And, again, that sense that I was better than them.

However, she shared the same feelings of anger in respect to the teacher education
program managers, supervisors, and faculty when she could not be the “superior” race.
I think that it’s [social justice] a topic that definitely needs to be addressed but I
also think it has to do with power issues of the people that are in charge of the
program. I think that they are doing things in their best interest rather than ours.

Kara was not alone in the association of her White race as a “superior” race. Some of the
participants were very vocal in the acknowledgement of White power in school-related
encounters with racism. Rebecca described her first substitute teaching experience in
which one of the White teachers made a racist comment about the predominately Black
students.
I would say with her, she was a Caucasian and felt that she was above the students she was teaching. I think that she felt that if she was at a suburban district or even at another school in that district that she would not have to put up with the things that she did at this certain building. And, that she was above it all. So, she felt the power both with her race and her profession.

Krista and Anthony illustrated how White power influenced their elementary and secondary educational experiences. Krista describes:

I mean, yeah, it’s kind of like a whole superiority thing. I mean, if you’re not like the majority of the public and in my town at the time, you know, we were mostly middle class, Caucasian, Anglo-Saxon community and it just sort of drove home the point that, oh, we’re White, we’re better, or we practice this religion, we’re better.

Anthony related a similar experience.

I think that not knowing a lot of the bigger, maybe political, you know, issues that were around that were kind of focused around this issue of diversifying the schools, so, I think I was kind of like, almost in a sense, a real, umm… almost like, an envy, like, why do they get to have this nice, why do they get to go to this nice school now but like I’m still here? What do I get? You know, what does this school, what can this school district, or the actual school itself do for me?

I think the real, so, I think that was really the issue of power, that we [pause], that we [a suburban school] can simply just open up our door and these [urban]
students are going to be better because they are here as opposed to somewhere else.

Martha believed these thoughts, opinions, and emotions, as shared by her peers in the teacher education program were one of her encounters with racism. She did not share these thoughts, opinions, and emotions, and rather spoke to the anger she felt when they shared them.

There have been several incidences in the master’s program where other students, fellow students, have complained about why we have to be so concerned about diversity and why they feel there is an agenda possibly [at the university] about Civil Rights, about racism, and they feel like it’s really not their problem and why are they being made to feel guilty about something that really doesn’t affect them or that they just have nothing to do about… I am part of the majority, I do have, it’s like, it is more of my effort, I think to get to know how people that are minorities think and feel as opposed to them needing to, umm… shout loud enough to tell me. I think my, umm… because it’s like the way of the world that I need to be the one that wants to get to know them and I think that’s possibly why a lot of my classmates, they bump up against, they feel like that’s their problem. Their family never had slaves so why should they feel like they owe something and I don’t know where along the way I started thinking that’s not right and that’s not the attitude to have but it was possibly shaped by feeling that I appreciate the privilege of being in a majority and I appreciate the fact that I didn’t experience racism or umm… profiling growing up. And, I think that a lot of people who are
White don’t realize, umm… how easy it is, I guess you could say, that they had it, in that experience.

Martha related her peers’ experiences directly to White power and a reaction to their first cognizant experiences without that White power.

I think that that is unfortunate which is why I think sometimes now like when, for example, when a school that is trying to create pride in African American children and are having like Black authors there is that sense of like uneasiness on the part of some of my fellow students because they are thinking, well, why do they get to have all this power, why do they want to have all this power, which totally ignores the fact that they have always had power and you never have to be in a classroom where none of the posters look like me, none of them, you know, none of the books that we read have kids that look like me, I mean it’s frustrating…

Sharon did not speak to her peers directly when she shared her experiences with White power but she did address her reactions to similar experiences.

Middle school was interesting for me, like I said, it was, umm… I was one of very few Black people in my school, so it was kind of this constant, well, I mean, you’re not really Black though, Sharon, so, I don’t know, because you act so White, whatever that means, I don’t know.

More specifically, she described her reaction to an experience she had in middle school in which a White student called her the N word when she accidentally bumped into him.

I mean the society was predominately White, he was White, so he thought umm… that he had the power to say something like that, that it was okay to say something
like that, because he had the majority on his side and I don’t think any of the people around us would have said, C that was a bad thing why did you say that. So, he kind of knew that he would either not say anything, or you know, he just thought he could say something like that because he was the majority at the time… I think just the way that our society is set up I think some people feel entitled that they can say those types of things or they’re in a position to say those types of things even though it may not be the case it’s just kind of how our society is… where the majority thinks they have the power over the minority.

Sharon also provided a counter narrative to White power that she experienced outside of the classroom that influenced her interactions within the classroom.

Well, I was at an indoor soccer practice and my school soccer coach at the time who coached outdoor she came up to me after practice and she said, you know, we need to talk about awards for this year and I said okay. The year before I had gotten honorable mention or something for this soccer season and she came up to me and said, you know, we had this huge argument where a lot of people were saying a lot of inappropriate things and some of them believe [pause] that you did not deserve your awards for other reasons besides soccer. And, she said there is a lot of racist people in the area that you wouldn’t know if and I tried to defend you but, umm… they chose, you know, I am only one person, but in the end they chose that they were not going to give you an award for that year. So, I said, OK. …The coaches had, you know, power over their soccer players and as the coaches they felt and as the majority, since all the coaches were White, they felt that they
had the power to keep me from something I deserved and this was their opportunity and they were probably upset because they lost to C because they always did and they thought this was their one way of kind of getting back at me or at my coach or at the team, so. And, because they were of the majority they had the ability to actually do something about it and my coach didn’t.

**Connections.** The connections theme is perhaps one of the most important to this study and the analysis of the data in that the primary questions to be addressed by the study are: How do prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others? How do prospective teachers make meaning of their encounters with racism? In other words, how do prospective teachers connect their previous encounters with racism to their future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others? Gee argues “in any situation, things are connected or disconnected, relevant to or irrelevant to each other, in certain ways…” (Gee, 2005, p. 112) “we use language to render certain things connected or relevant (or not) to other things, that is, to build connections or relevance” (Gee, 2005, p. 100). To better understand the connections of discourse, he provides five fundamental questions to be asked of the discourse:

1. What sorts of connections – looking backward and/or forward – are made within and across utterances and large stretches of the interaction?

2. What sorts of connections are made to previous or future interactions, to other people, ideas, texts, things, institutions, and Discourses outside the current situation?
3. How is intertextuality (quoting or alluding to other texts) used to create connections among the current situation and other ones or among different Discourses?

4. How do connections of the sort in [1, 2, and 3] help (together with situated meanings and Discourse models) to constitute “coherence” – and what sort of “coherence” – in the situation? (Gee, 2005, p. 112)

Three primary themes emerged from the analysis of interview data under Gee’s connection theme: 1) the participants made a positive connection between their encounter with racism and their future encounters as an educator, 2) the participants made a negative connection between their encounter with racism and their future encounters as an educator, and 3) the participants were unable to make a connection between their encounter with racism and their future encounters as an educator.

Many of the participants were able to make positive connections between their encounters with racism and their future encounters as an educator. Sharon made the most positive connections between her experiences of a victim of racism and her future encounters as an educator.

I am a firm believer in respect and you know, I think having these experiences, especially around race, will impact how I treat people in my room how I want people in my room to treat each other and I think I am just more aware of, you know, those types of situations. And, also, if I decide to teach in an all suburban district I will be again one of few African Americans in the building and there might be one or two African Americans in the school and I think I will be able to
kind of help those students as well because I know what it feels like to be them… you know, like I said before, every situation you’re in impacts you in one way or the other and I think having an adult who is supposed to be more knowing than a child say those types of things to me… it was really hurtful and it affected me the most out of all of those. So, I am obviously going to bring that to my teaching as far as respecting other people and, umm… and talking about the importance of respect and just the importance of teaching other cultures and you know, I think, especially in a suburban school, it is just as important to talk about other cultures and other groups of people even more so, not even more so, maybe even equal to an intercity school because those kids, those White students in suburban schools, they are the majority and if we can get them on board and thinking about multicultural education and respect of other groups of people than that’s going to really be a big, that is really going to shift people’s thinking as a whole.

Krista made a positive connection between her encounter with racial slurs between her students and how she will attempt to address similar situations in her future classroom.

I mean it’s going to make me; it already does make me really aware of it when it takes place in the classroom. Kids will say things and at my school it is very diverse that I am student teaching in now and there are issues like this every day and whether they are kidding or they are serious, that, I mean, it’s just sort of the whole idea of racism and the words that they say and how that can have more of a harmful affect than they think. I just always sort of find myself somewhat offended and always like trying to find ways to stop that in the class. So, yeah, I
think it actually affects my teaching and it kind of encourages me to teach more about diversity and social justice and the things that I have learned in the program now.

Kara shared similar sentiments in respect to a similar situation between her students.

I do think that it will impact my teaching and I think because [pause] you cannot ignore anything… any little comment whether or not students seem offended by it, other people who were not even involved directly in the situation could be offended. You need to approach it head on.

In respect to her encounter with the use of the N word, Tara is very confident that it will have a positive impact on her future encounters as an educator and her students.

Yes, because if I ever have a conversation, you know, if students ever use this word in the classroom, I am going to sit down and have a conversation with the whole class. We are going to address issues with language and race and what is appropriate in the classroom… I definitely think that talking about different “isms” in my classroom will be present whether it’s sexism, racism, you know, and just bringing up the inequalities in my classroom and having the students discuss them and, umm… you know, really consider how their actions affect different groups of people.

In my opinion, Martha understood and articulated the influence her encounters with racism will have on her future encounters as an educator.

I feel that because I have a real passion for equality and all that that means and I think that I have a pretty broad sense of what equality means and the importance
of it. And, because I think I am willing, I am willing to see the prejudice and the institutionalized racism that still is in our community and our country and I think that it will help me be a better teacher especially because I am White… because of all of that… it makes me want to be a teacher that acknowledges what kids struggle with and I think if you’re a child and you’re a minority you have another layer of struggle in your life and I think the more that I can understand that I can be more sympathetic or empathetic I can be to it the better.

In contrast to Martha, Abby was the most verbal participant in respect to her negative connection between her encounters with racism, particularly in her teacher education program, and her future encounters as an educator.

Like I said, I just don’t see myself being the person that is going to force my opinion on students. And most of the time I don’t even think it’s necessary for me to even say my opinion to students. Like I’d rather be the devil’s advocate on both sides and throw out ideas so that students can create their own meaning. And, it’s funny because I think that’s what this whole program is teaching us to do. But, yet, when it comes to them teaching us that’s not how it comes out. They are all about fighting back on bureaucracy and yet we have this whole infrastructure in place and we can’t budge it. So, I mean like I’ve said I’ve learned more not what to, what not to do than, you know, examples of HOW to teach. I mean, give or take; there’ve been a couple classes that have been really good. But, I think overall we’re just being forced to go through the program. And, it’s sad because so many people were really excited about everything when
they came in and like our attitude in getting work done and everything in the 
summer. I think it has changed so much since then. I think then everyone was 
still excited and people were turning in quality work. I mean I took a decent 
amount of time on projects and stuff and now I’m like whatever, I’m almost done. 
So, I mean really the only class that I’ve really continued to work hard in is my 
math methods course because she’s shown that she actually cares about our 
opinions, what we’re going through in the program, what we’re going through in 
the classroom so I think in that instance that’s shown me more how to teach than 
anything else. To make my classroom a place where learning is fun but also 
engaging and fun and not challenging to the point where people are burnt out 
because I think when they are burnt out they just hit a wall. I mean, I just don’t 
want to do anything anymore. I’m done. So, I just don’t want to become that 
teacher that, you know, I want to challenge students but I don’t want to challenge 
them to the point that they can’t think anymore because I think that’s what’s 
really impacted me.

Anthony was not necessarily as angry as Abby but he certainly shared the same thoughts 
and opinions.

Like, there is a tension what I am learning I’m not seeing. Umm… what I’m 
learning in the course work, I’m not really seeing in my placements. So, I think 
that in a certain sense it’s really a threat to my learning. It’s really a threat to my 
learning since I’m not seeing it practically played into life I’m having a hard time 
seeing the theories or whatever, methodology in my course work play into the
I don’t have a vision of, since I’m not seeing it, I don’t have a real vision of what full inclusion is, or, umm… how to teach, how to use multicultural literature or how to do all these things. I mean, I can read you where in my textbook where, or I can read you in my notes and tell you who said these things, but at the same time I don’t see it so I think it’s really affected how I can really incorporate that.

Although she made positive connections between her encounters with racism and her future encounters as an educator, Martha was among the participants who made a negative connection between her encounter with racism and her peers’ future encounters as educators.

When my Caucasian classmates won’t even acknowledge that there has been disparity in the past or that they should be concerned about it because they personally didn’t have anything to do about it and they don’t acknowledge that African American people in our country just [long pause] I have not talked to any Black person who doesn’t feel like it doesn’t permeate their lives that it is something that they have not had to deal with and that there has not been some sort of racism and prejudice in their own life. So, to me, when my fellow classmates kind of say, what’s the big deal, why do we have to be that concerned about African American children feeling proud about Martin Luther King Day or a Black author, to me, it’s just kind of burying their heads in the sands and to me that is a form of racism. It might not be as explicit as say they might want to call it but to me it questions their deep kind of attitudes about it.
The participants who were unable to make a connection between their encounter with racism and their future encounters as educators most often were still colorblind. For example, Jill summarizes, “I don’t feel like I encounter racism a lot because I am what would be considered the norm, besides being a woman but that’s a whole other topic, but being the White norm.” Despite her anger throughout the interview, Abby was unable to recognize the connection between her encounters with racism and her future encounters as an educator.

I see people for who they are and I try to take that into account for their learning styles. Like I don’t like to go into a classroom and like label someone as African American or Latino or something because it is [pause] like sometimes you can be a certain heritage but you have no connection to that. And, so, I don’t think going into a classroom and labeling someone as that is going to be helpful to the classroom… I want all students to feel like they can have a voice and have a say in the classroom regardless of what race they are or what class they are. Umm… I just want students to feel valued and knowing the feeling because I guess that was the first time I had been in a classroom where I didn’t feel valued so knowing that feeling I can say that I don’t want students to have to feel that way. I just don’t think any learning comes out of that situation.

**Sign Systems and Knowledge.** Finally, the participants identified social language as a relevant component to their encounters with racism. Gee situates language within the sign systems and knowledge in any situation in which “one or more sign systems and various ways of knowing are operative, oriented to, and valued or disvalued
in certain ways” (Gee, 2005, p. 101). He further states, “we humans are always making knowledge and belief claims within these systems. We can use language to make certain sign systems and certain forms of knowledge and belief relevant or privileged, or not, in given situations, that is to build privilege or prestige for one sign system or knowledge claim over another” (Gee, 2005, p. 101). To better understand the sign systems and knowledge of discourse, he provides five fundamental questions to be asked of the discourse:

1. What sign systems are relevant (or irrelevant) in the situation (e.g., speech, writing, images, and gestures)? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant and in what ways)?

2. What systems of knowledge and ways of knowing are relevant (or irrelevant) to the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

3. What languages in the sense of “national” languages like English, Russian, or Hausa, are relevant (or irrelevant) in the situation?

4. What social languages are relevant (or irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

5. How is quoting or alluding to other oral or written texts (intertextuality) used to engage with the issues covered in questions [1-4]? (Gee, 2005, p. 113)

The sign systems and systems of knowledge associated with education are made very relevant in respect to racism. Those who are deemed educated are in the words of the majority of these prospective teachers less likely to be racist. If they are educated and
still racist there is a curiously unresolved dissonance. For example, Abby spoke of her encounter with her African American undergraduate teaching associate.

…sometimes I just wonder how people have gotten to be so educated but yet so not. Like she is working on her PhD and she’s done all this research and a lot of her research is through early childhood reading. So, I mean maybe, I don’t know, I would think there would be racism issues through books and stuff but it just, you know, it just sometimes seemed like [pause] I just don’t know how you could be supposedly so educated on paper but yet come across as so ignorant.

Martha spoke of her educated peers as supposedly more enlightened in respect to their understanding of race and racism.

I guess I thought most people who are more ENLIGHTENED or whatever and would be in this program would think that way. I have kind of processed that I sincerely hope that several of my fellow students don’t end up teaching in an urban district because of the fairly insensitive things I have heard them say about Black students or negative about the program in that they feel it is kind of pushing diversity down their throats… I guess I thought that perhaps people that went into teaching would be a little more open-minded than your average, umm… college graduate. AND, because I know that State really promotes diversity in their application process so it wasn’t a surprise that that was going to be kind of talked a lot about here. So, it has been a little surprising that some of the people are slightly quiet and maybe a little afraid to talk about it or when they do talk about
it as far as them feeling racist, they are not racist and what’s the big deal. To me it’s just kind of speaks for itself and I find it kind of disconcerting.

Many of the participants were also concerned that they did not know the “correct” language to use with African American people, particularly professors and/or graduate teaching associates during their undergraduate and graduate educational experiences.

Tara explains, “I guess it was just more the language… that word [the n word] is used in negative forms… so we had to have a specific discussion in class for our teacher to, I guess, justify why we were reading a book with such language in it.

Jody described:

It was still a small class but we were still mostly White from suburban schools and it was my second writing course and the professor was African American and we had to write about topics about reading and so she always brought in a lot of, umm… of her culture and the African American culture to discuss and again that feeling of being uncomfortable sort of came up and being worried about what to say and what to write in my papers that I might get dinged for saying something that she disagreed with so there was a sense of, and, I wouldn’t even realize it at the time that I was writing it but I just remember at the beginning of the quarter it was a really uncomfortable space…

The N word was also a very relevant aspect of language that occurred in some of the prospective teachers encounters with racism. Tara explains “it was just based around the thought of racism that, you know, some African Americans find it, umm… they find it, let’s see, unacceptable for White people to use the N word but then, you know, in some
contexts that’s okay.” For Tara, her first encounter with the N word occurred in junior high school.

I remember reading the book. I don’t have too specific of memories but I remember that we had a discussion about the use of the N word in the book. And, I remember just talking about, you know, why it was appropriate or what the author was trying to convey by using such strong language in the book. And I really… that is about as detailed as I remember.

Jill shared a different experience in which one of her friends called a Black man the N word during a phone conversation.

It was late at night and I was on the phone with this person, it’s a guy, and he was walking and something, I don’t know what happened, but he passed someone who I’m assuming was African American and he said, he got mad, and he said, f’in and the N word… I was confused because I didn’t really consider him to be racist and I still don’t consider him to be racist but I also don’t think he realizes the impact that word can have on people… I feel like there is this power issue within the room and if someone can use that word they feel like they can stay on top and feel like the dominant person. So, I don’t think that that experience affected power issues but it did represent how using a derogatory statement like that could bring, give somebody a sense of power and try to give them that authority or dominance over somebody else or the authority, I guess.

Sharon was a victim of the use of the N word.
We were coming out of class and I think I bumped him or he was just like really unhappy with life in general I don’t really know. But, he mumbled under his breath the N word to me and I heard it and a few people around me heard it. I kind of ignored it, not because it didn’t bother me, but just because I didn’t want, I didn’t really know what to say, I had never been called that before, I haven’t been close to being called that so… and I was young and I didn’t really know what to think and I wasn’t friends with him so I kind of just ignored it. Some people felt kind of awkward, I felt awkward, and we just kind of moved on.

**Conclusion**

While Gee’s introduction and interpretation of discourse analysis provided the data analysis framework for this study as did his seven themes of significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge for the presentation of the data, he notes: “the analyst interprets his or her data in a certain way and those data so interpreted, in turn, render the analysis meaningful in certain ways and not others” (Gee, 2005, p. 113). In Chapter Five: Interpretation of the Data, I will introduce and interpret the themes that emerged from the presentation of the data in this chapter and how the analysis is meaningful to the participants in this study and the teacher education community in general.
Chapter 5: Interpretation of the Data

Gee’s introduction and interpretation of discourse analysis provided the data analysis framework for this study. Gee (2005) argues that discourse analysis provides the researcher with the opportunity to look for “patterns and links within and across utterances in order to form hypotheses about how meaning is being constructed and organized” (Gee, 2005, p. 118). More specific to the analysis process, Gee (2005) states:

Essentially, a discourse analysis involves asking questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to construe the aspects of the situation network as realized at that time and place and how the aspects of the situation network simultaneously give meaning to that language (remember reflexivity).

Institutions, in turn, create forces (e.g., laws, disciplinary procedures, apprenticeships) that ensure the repetition and ritualization of the situations that sustain them. Studying the way in which situations produce and reproduce institutions, and are, in turn, sustained by them, is an important part of discourse analysis. (Gee, 2005, p. 102)

Each interview was analyzed independent of the others. The interviews were first coded for themes based on Gee’s seven themes of significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge and the corresponding questions for each theme. From the synthesis of the seven themes, a framework emerged in respect to the prospective teachers’ definition of racism and how
they believe racism influences the social, emotional, and political position of those involved. Chapter Five: Interpretation of Data presents this framework as supported by the participants’ encounters with racism.

**Prospective Teachers’ Construction of Racism**

The prospective teachers in this study were required to personally define “racism” as a prerequisite for participation in the interview and the deconstruction of their encounters. For each encounter, the participants were read the prompt:

> I would like you to think back to your most memorable encounters with school-related racism. Think of these situations from the time you started school until now recalling each one and describing it very briefly. We'll go back later and look at each of these situations in greater detail so all we need here is a brief description.

They were then asked to recall the encounter “very briefly.” The next question, “what leads you to call this situation racism?” specifically required the participants to define racism within the context of the encounter. Within the answers to this question, racism was most often defined in terms of the black/white binary, prejudice and stereotypes, and segregation. However, their specific answers varied immensely within these themes as discussed in the previous chapter.

Throughout the interviews, the participants defined racism through the overt behaviors of specific individuals or groups of individuals. For example, when Sharon described the “racist” parent of the children she was supposed to babysit, she defines racism by the actions of the parent:
I thought it was racism because I think she [the mother of the children] chose not to go out that night because she did not feel comfortable leaving her kids with somebody that was Black. So, I think by definition, she was being racist, she was just assuming that I was incompetent because of my… umm… race… it is just sad that someone would think that. I mean, I don’t care so much anymore because I’ve never seen them again or after that I never saw them again. But, I mean, for someone to come to those conclusions not based on anything else besides what you look like is kind of disheartening and sad.

In other words, the mother of the children was one individual who “was being racist” because of her overt action to make assumptions about Sharon based on her race.

The majority of encounters with racism described by the participants included descriptions of overt behaviors of individuals such as the one described above by Sharon. Abby detailed the racist comments of her mother and sister. Martha explained the racist conversations with her teacher education program peers. Jody described the racist actions of her parents and her college instructors. Rebecca illustrated the racism that occurred as a result of a school bully and a young teacher.

The individuals who committed the racism in the encounters described by the prospective teachers varied in race, gender, sexual orientation, age, social economic status, etc. Yet, the only common thread was race. The prospective teachers perceived overt actions of racism were against the person or persons of the binary opposite race. They did not describe any encounters of racism outside of this binary. For instance, the eleven prospective teachers in this study referenced White people by the term “White” 127 times.
throughout their interviews. They also used the term “Caucasian” to describe White people 44 times. They referenced Black people by the term “Black” 95 times and as “African American” 117 times. There were 13 references to “Hispanic” people but not in relation to the racist encounter. However, they did not speak to any other racial groups outside of Black, White, and Hispanic.

As stated above, from the analysis of the seven themes of discourse analysis: significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge, a framework emerged in respect to the prospective teachers’ definition of racism and how they believe racism influences their teacher education institution and the social, emotional, and political position of the people involved. This framework was the foundation from which the prospective teachers understood how their previous encounters with racism will influence their future teaching, learning, and interactions with others, specifically their students.

Figure 1. Prospective Teachers’ Racial Framework
The framework begins in the center of the Figure 1 with the definitions and descriptions of racism presented above by the prospective teachers. They defined racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals. The person or persons who committed the racism, as defined by the participants, was referenced by the participants as “racist.” Those who committed the racism were perceived as either White or Black by the prospective teachers. The behaviors were also termed “racist” and these behaviors in turn impacted the institutions and social, emotional, and political positions of the people involved. As Bonilla-Silva explains (1997):

I reserve the term racism (racial ideology) for the segment of the ideological structure of a social system that crystallizes racial notions and stereotypes. Racism provides the rationalizations for social, political, and economic interactions between the races (Bobo 1988). Depending on the particular character of a racialized social system and on the struggles of the subordinated races, racial ideology may be developed highly (as in apartheid), or loosely (as in slavery), and its content can be expressed in overt or covert terms. (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 474)

This definition of racism provided the criteria by which the participants chose their encounters with racism to include in the interview as well as how they believe racism influences their teaching, learning, and interactions with others. Therefore, the analysis of discussion will follow according to the framework in the figure above.

**Prospective Teachers’ Perception of Social Change as a Result of Racism**

The prospective teachers in this study believed the racist behaviors of a specific individual or individuals influenced the social interactions around them. The participants
did not reference themselves as the racist individuals or the individuals who committed the racist behaviors. For the majority of the prospective teachers, they perceived they were merely innocent or neutral in the encounter. The exception would be Sharon, who was the victim of her racial encounters. However, all of the participants described how they were socially impacted by the encounter with racism.

In perceiving themselves as innocent and neutral in their encounters with racism, the White prospective teachers did not speak to their White identity and how it influenced their perception of their encounters with racism. Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes:

White identity is a significant social category by which individuals are given preferential treatment in reward allocation and benefit of the doubt in drawing inferences about traits and actions over out-group members. It becomes a set of deliberate practices used to coordinate and advance the interests and positions of whites. (p. 232)

Despite this reality, of the ten participants who self-identified as White, only six of them referenced themselves as White in their interviews: Abby, Jody, Krista, Brad, Tara and Martha. Of those six, Abby, Brad, and Martha only referred to themselves as White once throughout their entire interview and Krista and Tara did so only twice. Within the six references, the actual discourse around their individual whiteness was even more troubled. Brad explains:

I mean, it is probably really not an issue because I am White. And, it doesn’t seem to be an issue for me. Sadly enough, I don’t think about it as much. But, if
I was in that situation, I mean, it would probably play a bigger part of what I do. I mean not actually encountering it myself, I mean, I don’t know what to think of it. Jody was the outlier in that she spoke of her White identity *eight* times in her interview. However, her discourse was not much different from that of Brad. For example, she clarifies her position within one of the encounters: “I just felt like, a White, middle-class student and not really affected by racism and didn’t really feel part of the, racism didn’t feel like it was a part of me, so I didn’t think I needed to address it.” In other words, in over twelve hours of interviews in which the topic of conversation was encounters with racism, the White prospective teachers only referenced their personal race fifteen times or once every 50 minutes and of these fifteen times the discourse was reflective of a “dysconscious racism” as described by King (1991):

Dysconscious racism is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness (that is, not unconsciousness) but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness. Uncritical ways of thinking about racial inequity accept certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages White people have as a result of subordinating diverse other. (King, 1991, p. 135)

The social implications of *this* reality are enormous. Gillborn (2009) argues “one of the most powerful and dangerous aspects of whiteness is that many (possibly the majority) of White people have no awareness of whiteness as a construction, let alone their own role in sustaining and playing out the inequities at the heart of whiteness (p. 55). In other
words, the White prospective teachers in this study were not aware of their whiteness. Therefore, they were unable to determine their role in sustaining and participating whiteness within the encounters of racism they described. More importantly, within this ignorance they were unable to determine their future role in sustaining and participating in whiteness as an educator. In other words, because the participants did not understand their White identity and their position within the historical and societal racial hierarchy they were unable and at times, very resistant, to question their personal connection and relationship to racism and those who are different from them.

Bonilla-Silva (2003) elaborates on Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” to further elucidate the implications of this ignorance of the prospective teachers. He defines White habitus as:

A “racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites’ racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters” (Bonilla-Silva 2003:104). This socialization guides whites’ identity and sense of group memberships through overt (e.g., parental and teachers’ guidance) as well as subtle mechanisms (e.g., messages conveyed on TV, etc.). White habitus promotes in-group solidarity and negative views about non-whites. (p. 233)

The White habitus enables prospective teachers, such as those in this study to further normalize their existence while simultaneously “othering” those of other races. Gillborn (2009) explains:
Whiteness draws much of its power from “Othering” the very idea of ethnicity. A central characteristic of whiteness is a process of “naturalization” such that white becomes the norm from which other “races” stand apart and in relation to which they are defined. When white-identified groups do make a claim for a white ethnic identity alongside other officially recognized ethnic groups (e.g., as been tried by the Ku Klux Klan in the US and the British National Party in England) it is the very exceptionality of such claims that points to the commonsense naturalization of whiteness at the heart of contemporary political discourse. (Gillborn, 2009, p. 54)

Frankenberg, 1993, further characterizes the whiteness of these prospective teachers by their “unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions (Frankenberg, 1993).

**Prospective Teachers’ Perception of Emotional Change as a Result of Racism**

Although the prospective teachers were unable to situate themselves in their social role within their encounters with racism, they were very articulate about their emotional role within their encounters with racism. *All* of the participants described their emotional reactions to their encounters with racism: the most common emotion of which was their anger. Anger was the strongest affect I encountered in the identity component of the situations described by the prospective teachers. While some of the prospective teachers were somewhat angered by family or friends, the majority of the participants were very angry with the teacher preparation program managers, supervisors, and/or faculty
members. Many of them did not become orally or visually angry until they discussed their encounters with racism during their teacher preparation program. For example, Abby states:

>Pent up anger [laugh] I can’t really express my anger to any one that’s really going to be able to make a change because like I said I’d be put back in my place and it would be even worse. So, just angry that I [pause] I feel like I’m paying so much money for this program and I can’t have my own opinion. Like, I’m forced on an opinion and I have no choice about it because if I want to get through the program I have to have that opinion and if I don’t I’m going to have wasted all this money on nothing.

Abby was not alone in her articulation of her anger, especially in respect to her teacher education program. However, Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005) argue: “The maintenance of this focus on the self, their feelings of discomfort, guilt, anger, frustration, etc., serves to ensure that there is limited space and energy to address the needs of other groups whose very existence is mixed in oppression and inequity” (p. 155). In other words, they would argue, as would I, that prospective teachers like Abby focus their efforts on the anger they feel toward the program to avoid the realities of the program. They justified their anger to “protect their beliefs based on their ideological tools or hegemonic understandings” (Picower, 2009, p. 209). Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005) found similar results in the words and actions of their participants:

> The candidates’ formulation is left at the level of white people rather than moving to an understanding of systems of whiteness. This conflation of whiteness and
white skin (Levine-Rasky, 2000a) makes it difficult for students to move beyond their feelings of anger and frustration to develop a clearer understanding of the way in which whiteness is also a constructed category, and one that comes with significant forms of capital that is seldom afforded to marginalized groups. (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell, 2005, p. 159)

In addition to their anger, the White participants also spoke to how they felt guilty and ashamed for their White identities. They also believed they were forced to feel guilty and ashamed as a result of the “racist” teacher education program faculty. Anthony articulates the feelings of the majority of his peers: “like I feel, guilty for expressing my cultural identity because it’s seen, I would, I think it’s viewed as the majority.”

**Prospective Teachers’ Perception of Political Change as a Result of Racism**

Historically the classification of a people in racial terms has been a highly political act associated with practices such as conquest and colonization, enslavement, peonage, indentured servitude, and, more recently, colonial and neocolonial labor immigration. (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 471)

The prospective teachers defined racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals which impacted the political positions of those involved. Power was an especially powerful component of the politics of racism for the participants in this study. Power here is defined as “a racial group's capacity to push for its racial interests in relation to other races” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 470). In other words, the “racist” individual(s) and/or the “racist” behavior influenced the political power of the other individuals in the encounter. For example, Rebecca described her first substitute teaching
experience in which one of the White teachers made a racist comment about the predominantly Black students.

I would say with her, she was a Caucasian and felt that she was above the students she was teaching. I think that she felt that if she was at a suburban district or even at another school in that district that she would not have to put up with the things that she did at this certain building. And, that she was above it all. So, she felt the power both with her race and her profession.

In Rebecca’s encounter, the “Caucasian” teacher had the power, as perceived by the prospective teacher. Her power influenced not only the students in that school but also, Rebecca, who was only in the school for one day as a substitute teacher.

Although the prospective teachers in this study were able to speak to the power of other White individuals in their encounters, they did not verbalize their own White power in their encounters. Quite the contrary, many of the participants perceived their White identity as lacking power, especially in respect to their experiences in the teacher education program. For example, Kara states, “I also think it has to do with power issues of the people that are in charge of the program. I think that they are doing things in their best interest rather than ours…” Abby further describes her lack of power: “I can’t really express my anger to any one that’s really going to be able to make a change because like I said I’d be put back in my place and it would be even worse… I’m forced on an opinion and I have no choice about it because if I want to get through the program I have to have that opinion and if I don’t I’m going to have wasted all this money on nothing.” Anthony explains, “I have a hard time expressing my, what I view as my identity or my cultural
identity… I feel, guilty for expressing my cultural identity because it’s seen, I would, I think it’s viewed as the majority.”

Tara expressed the lack of power she perceived as related to her White race in her placement at an Afrocentric school.

I can see that it is almost like a reversed power struggle. In the school, it is, you know, the principal and some teachers trying to say, you know, we should have more power because were, you know, it’s Afrocentric. We are following the school and you know, it’s almost like you’re not welcome here… this is very different than any past experience I have ever had. I have never been in a situation where I was the minority and that, you know, that I had to worry about, you know my race. I never… I have never had to worry about that or worry about being called names because of my skin color.

Tara described how the racism she encountered was a result of the power the African American administrators and teachers acquired as result of their location and racism within an Afrocentric school. She perceived herself as lacking power because of her White identity.

The prospective teachers understood racial identity as a political form of power, much like that described by Harris (1995) in her discussion of property rights. However, the prospective teachers failed to recognize themselves as the possessors of whiteness and therefore they were unable to perceive their inherently privileged position of power and the power or “property rights” afforded them. More specifically, these property rights “include transferability, the right to use and enjoyment, reputation rights, and the right to
exclude others” (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009, p. 101). Conversely, the prospective teachers viewed the African American faculty in their teacher education program and the African American administrators and teachers in some of their placements as those with the property rights. They were particularly disturbed by the transferability right and the right to exclude property they perceived in these African American individuals. As illustrated above, Tara believed the African American administrators and teachers in the Afrocentric School held the power and within that “the right to establish a system of exclusivity which withholds or confers opportunities, access and rights based on race” (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009, p. 104). The participants failed to understand that unlike the property rights of Whiteness, the perceived property rights of these African Americans did not exist outside of the school walls. Therefore, they were not power-based property rights at all.

**Prospective Teachers’ Perception of Institutional Change as a Result of Racism**

But the enactment [of domination] is quite simple: set up a system that benefits the group, mystify the system, remove the agents of actions from discourse, and when interrogated about it, stifle the discussion with inane comments about the “reality” of the charges being made. (Leonardo, 2009, p. 272).

Only one of the eleven prospective teachers spoke to the systematic power of racism or institutional racism. As stated in the previous sections, the majority of the participants perceived racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals which impacted the social, emotional, and political positions of those involved. In their interviews, the prospective teachers spoke to their more individualist personal and
emotional reactions to the encounters with racism and therefore avoided the acknowledgement of a larger more structural system of racism (Leonardo, 2009). As Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005) illustrate, “when racism is read as acts on the part of individuals, the marking of the self as not being a racist, precludes any real examination of the system” (p. 159). Vaught and Castagno (2008) found similar results when they studied White teachers: “white teachers understood White privilege as singularly an individual experience and failed to recognize its systemic, structural component” (p. 101).

Martha was the only participant who spoke to the institutional component of racism. She explains:

I feel, of institutionalized racism is that in our country, white males are kind of like top and have a top level of society and have the power and make the laws and that there is a lot more cultural power for them. AND, that people of other races, such as African American or Asian, Latino, or other immigrants have much less power

However, even Martha was unable to speak to the implications of systematic or institutional racism in respect to her other encounters with racism and more importantly how she believed these encounters with racism would influence her teaching, learning, and interactions with others. Her conversation around institutional racism was more specific to her understanding of the suburban community imbedded within an urban city center that she grew up in. Bonilla-Silva (1997) explains the implications of the
individual verse systematic or institutional view or racism on the behalf of the prospective teachers.

If racism is not part of a society but is a characteristic of individuals who are "racist" or "prejudiced"—that is, racism is a phenomenon operating at the individual level—then (1) social institutions cannot be racist and (2) studying racism is simply a matter of surveying the proportion of people in a society who hold "racist" beliefs. (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 467)

**Conclusion**

Even when critical analysis takes white experience as its unit of analysis, this must be subjected to the rigors of the analytics of the oppressed. That is, there is a difference between analyzing whiteness with an imagined white audience against an imagined audience of color. (Leonard, 2009, p. 265)

Throughout my analysis of the conversations with the participants interviewed for this study, I illuminated issues of White identity, privilege, and whiteness to provide a framework foundation to better understand how race is defined by the prospective teachers as well as how this definition influences the social, emotional, political, and institutional positions of the people involved. I was constantly cognizant of Sheets’ argument that “focusing on white people (their sense of self, their interest and concerns) has become such a fashionable past-time within parts of the US academy that there is a danger of whiteness studies colonizing and further de-radicalizing multicultural education (Gillborn, 2009, p. 53).
While I acknowledge my position as a white researcher within this study, my utilization of critical race theory as a framework for the methods, analysis, and discussion of the findings, provide me with “the rigors of the analytics of the oppressed” (Leonard, 2009, p. 265) necessary to critically speak to the racial framework described by the prospective teachers as well as the reconceptualized racial framework that I will argue is crucial for the future of teacher education in the next chapter. I believe as Frankenberg (2010) argues: “by examining and naming the terrain of whiteness, it may, I think, be possible to generate or work toward antiracist forms of whiteness or at least toward antiracist strategies for reworking the terrain of whiteness” (p. 522).
Chapter 6: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

But because of the current context of race in our society, scholars studying whites as racial actors face several difficult theoretical and methodological challenges, including how to avoid essentializing race when talking about whites as a social collective, how to tap into the differential ways that whites experience and perform race, and how to recognize the complex ways that racial discourse or "culture" intersect with material realities. Only by attending to and by recognizing these challenges will empirical research on whiteness be able to push the boundaries of our understandings about the role of whites as racial actors and thereby also to contribute to our understanding of how race works more generally. (Lewis, 2004, p. 640)

Conclusions

In the previous chapter, the analysis of the data revealed a racial framework through which the prospective teachers defined racism and how they believe racism influences the institutions (specifically, the educational institutions in this study) and the social, emotional, and political position of the people involved. This framework was the foundation from which the prospective teachers understood how their previous
encounters with racism will influence their future teaching, learning, and interactions with others, specifically their students.

The prospective teachers defined racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals. The person or persons who committed the racism, as defined by the participants, was referenced by the participants as “racist.” The behaviors were also termed “racist” and these behaviors in turn impacted the institutions and social, emotional, and political positions of the people involved. The participants believed the racist behaviors of a specific individual or individuals influenced the social interactions around them. However, they did not reference themselves as the racist individuals or the individuals who committed the racist behaviors. For the majority of the prospective teachers, they perceived they were merely innocent or neutral in the encounter. In over twelve hours of interviews in which the topic of conversation was encounters with racism, the White prospective teachers only referenced their personal race fifteen times or once every 50 minutes and of these fifteen times the discourse was ignorant. The White prospective teachers in this study were not aware of their whiteness. Therefore, they were unable to determine their role in sustaining and participating in whiteness within the encounters of racism they described. More importantly, within this dysconsciousness they were unable to determine their future role in sustaining and participating in whiteness as an educator. The students rendered themselves as both invisible and victims such that their definitions did not include themselves. Because they organized racism away from themselves, and they did not identify themselves as racialized, they did not find value in the purpose of racial discourse in the teacher education program.
All of the participants described their emotional reactions to their encounters with racism: the most common emotion of which was their anger. Anger was the strongest affect I encountered in the identity component of the situations described by the prospective teachers. In addition to their anger, the White participants also spoke to how they felt guilty and ashamed for their White identities.

The prospective teachers defined racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals which impacted the political positions those involved. Although the prospective teachers in this study were able to speak to the power of other White individuals in their encounters, they did not verbalize their own White power in their encounters. Quite the contrary, many of the participants perceived their White identity as lacking power, especially in respect to their experiences in the teacher education program. This was an especially powerful component of the politics of racism for the participants in this study.

Finally, the majority of the prospective teachers perceived racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals which impacted the social, emotional, and political positions of those involved. In their interviews, they spoke to their more individualist personal and emotional reactions to the encounters with racism and therefore avoided the acknowledgement of a larger more structural system of racism (Leonardo, 2009).

**Implications**

The implications of the findings from this study demonstrate a strong need to reconceptualize the racial framework of prospective teachers in our teacher education
programs. We cannot expect them to comprehend or even begin to question their own racial identities and how this identity may influence their students until we, as teacher educators, have helped to shift their foundational understanding of race. First and foremost, Lewis (2004) argues, “studies of whites as racial actors then must engage with issues of power—how larger historical patterns, institutionalized process, and every day practices make white identities even possible, much less relevant” (p. 625). More specifically “ideas about race need to be understood in relation to structures, institutional and cultural practices, and discourses, not simply as something which emanates from certain individual beings” (Hall, 1990, p.7). The visual representation of this framework shift is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. From the Prospective Teachers’ Racial Framework to a Reconceptualized Racial Framework

As indicated in the first image above, the prospective teachers viewed racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals. The racism of those
individuals than impacted the educational institutions, primarily the teacher education institutions, and the social, emotional, and political realities of the educators and students involved with the institutions. However, the prospective teachers need to be challenged to view racism as situated within these institutions to wholly recognize the “larger historical patterns, institutionalized process, and every day practices” (Lewis, 2004, p. 625). Racism must be understood within the institutions, such as education, through which it has been constructed and maintained. Bonilla-Silva (1999) explains:

I argue that races exist as a social phenomenon wherever a racial structure is in place—that is, wherever there are social, political, and ideological practices that produce differential status between racialized social groups (races). Racial (and class or gender) consciousness is always a contingent matter in all social collectivities. Consciousness thus cannot be taken as the factor determining whether races have a social existence. (Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 900)

Thus, the initial step in an understanding of racism that eradicates the individual and the overt actions of the individual as the primary operatives is to focus more purposefully on the institutions through which the social, emotional, and political constructs of racism may be further deconstructed.

Racism through this framework is understood as located within, not separate of the institution. The prospective teachers in this study not only defined racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals but they believed the behaviors were “racist” and these behaviors in turn impacted the institutions and social, emotional, and political positions of the people involved. They were only cognizant of
the influences of racism on the institution and failed to see the influences of the
institution on racism. Bonilla-Silva (1997) elaborates:

In contrast to race relations in the Jim Crow period, however, racial practices that
reproduce racial inequality in contemporary America (1) are increasingly covert,
(2) are embedded in normal operations of institutions, (3) avoid direct racial
terminology, and (4) are invisible to most Whites. (p. 476)

Through the reconceptualization of the racial framework described by the prospective
teachers in this study, each of Bonilla-Silva’s racial practices that reproduce racial
inequality as covert, normal, inadvertent, and invisible are more readily illuminated.

More specifically the social, political, and emotional positions through this framework
are understood as mechanisms within racism as opposed to their localization as individual
mechanisms outside and separate of racism. Furthermore, institutional influences are
considered not only from a systematic view of racism but also on the social, political, and
emotional positions within racism. However, Gould (1999) cautions:

When the major institutions in society are constructed within the culture and in
the interests of one group instead of another, even when the subordinate group is
included within those institutions, its performance will be, on average, less
proficient than the dominant group. Organizations may systematically favor the
culturally constituted performances of one group over the developmentally
equivalent, substantively different, performances of another group. (p. 172)

The participants believed the racist behaviors of a specific individual or individuals
influenced the social interactions around them. However, they did not reference
themselves as the racist individuals or the individuals who committed the racist behaviors. I would argue this was attributed to their conceptualization of racism as an individual behavior that influences the separate entity of social interactions. In other words, they not only could view themselves as not one of the individuals who committed racism but also not one of the individuals affected by racism in their social interactions (hence; the findings). If the prospective teachers were able to re-envision the concept of racism as occurring within institutions and social interactions as an element within racism in an institution, they would be less inclined to view themselves as simply an individual outside of institutions, racism, and/or social interactions. Lewis (2004) elaborates:

Race is not reproduced from scratch; existing racial schemas, understandings, and rules of interaction fundamentally shape and constrain what is possible. Understanding the relationship between the daily performance of race and larger racial structures is key to our understanding of how race works more generally and to how it shapes the lives of whites. (p. 629)

Similarly, the participants could then view their own emotional reactions to their encounters with racism, anger, guilt, and shame of their White identities as another component of racism within the institution. These emotions then become an explicit developmental constituent in their further question and deconstruction or racism and their own racial identities. Anger, guilt, and shame are normal and to be expected as part of the transition through racial understanding and reconciliation as opposed to emotions to be battled and utilized to distract racial discourse from its purpose.
Finally, the prospective teachers defined racism as an overt behavior committed by an individual or group of individuals which impacted the political positions those involved. Although the prospective teachers in this study were able to speak to the power of other White individuals in their encounters, they did not verbalize their own White power in their encounters. Within an understanding of social, emotional, and political positions as mechanisms within racism, the prospective teachers may better understand “all social divisions based on race are intrinsically about power and lead inevitably to divergent interests among the races” (Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 903). More particular to the participants perception of their White identity as lacking power, especially in respect to their experiences in the teacher education program, they may be more readily able to analyze “the connections between white daily lives and discursive orders may help make visible the processes by which the stability of whiteness – as location of privilege, as culturally normative space, and as standpoint – is secured and reproduced” (Frankenberg, 2009, p. 528). Therefore, they inherently have the power within their position as Whites to their further need to study their whiteness to “expose white lies, maneuvers, and pathologies that contribute to the avoidance of a critical understanding of race and racism” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 265).

Recommendations

Curriculum

First and foremost, the curriculum of teacher education must include from the inception of prospective teachers into the program, a focus, application, implementation, and evaluation of the racial framework discussed in the previous section. Prospective
teachers cannot continue through the quarter prior to their final placement, such did these participants, without the ability to see the social, political, and emotional as mechanisms within racism as opposed to their localization as individual mechanisms outside and separate of racism. How can we reasonably expect our prospective teachers to even identify encounters with racism let alone speak to the future implications on their teaching, learning, and student interactions without this foundation?

A curricular expectation must not only be the discussion of this framework but also the application, implementation, and evaluation of how the prospective teachers perceive themselves as raced individuals within the social, emotional, and political landscape of educational institutions. Lewis (2004) explains:

> Part of what it means to talk about race as having “depth” is exemplified by the social fact that no person living within a racialized social system can escape being racially marked. That is, all those living within society’s structure by race are thought to belong to one (or more) racial groups and that belonging is thought to have meaning. (p. 631)

Lewis specifies an understand of Whiteness within racial conversations such that “as part of a central force in the functioning of white supremacy, hegemonic whiteness is not a quality inherent to individual whites but is a collective social force that shapes their lives just as it shapes the lives of racial minorities” (Lewis, 2004, p. 634). Tatum (2007) further argues:

> The good news is that those who have engaged in a process of examining their own racial or ethnic identity, and who feel affirmed in it, are more likely to be
respectful of the self-definition that others claim, and are much more effective working in multiracial settings. It is these members of our society who can help us move beyond the regressive state of our current educational system, and move us forward into the twenty-first century with hope. (p. 38)

**Teacher Educators**

We have attempted to ensure that in our role as teacher educators, we provide spaces for change, which necessitates the examination of multiple contexts, spaces and the inclusion of multiple voices. These carving out of ‘spaces’ mean reenergizing and restructuring mainstream teacher education programming to advance whiteness and anti-racist theories, in addition to establishing inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary partnerships within the academy and outside organizations (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell, 2005, p. 166).

If my primary argument is the curricular inclusion of a reconceptualized framework examination of racism within teacher education, there is an inherent reality within this argument that teacher educators will be able to focus, apply, implement, evaluate and even more so, research this framework. The power of teacher educators within teacher education programs is too often overlooked. Gordon (1982) explains:

> Another interesting issue to be addressed by the university community is that there has been no serious critique of what college and university professors pass on as linguistic and cultural capital in teacher training programs to preservice and inservice teachers. Such a critique seems long overdue, since we train and certify the faculties and administrators who populate the same schools which we criticize.
for perceiving Black, other minorities, and the poor as social deviants and inferior. (p. 100)

It has been my experience, almost thirty years later, through my personal post-secondary and graduate education to find critical self-reflection on their personal identities, specifically their racially identities, lacking in teacher educators. Howard (2010) argues:

Critical self-reflection within a diverse cultural context requires education practitioners and researchers to engage in one of the more difficult processes for all individuals: honest self-assessment, critique, and evaluation of one’s own thoughts, behaviors, cultural patterns, methods of expression, and cultural knowledge and ways of being (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Critical reflection and self-assessment draw on one’s ability to seek deeper levels of self-knowledge and to acknowledge how one’s own worldview shapes one’s perspectives and beliefs about oneself as well as one’s students, their families and their communities (Schon, 1982). (p. 114)

How can we expect our prospective teachers to critically reflect on issues as relevant as race to the institution of education in America if we cannot first do so ourselves? Howard continues: “The practice of reflecting on race in teacher education becomes superficial if facilitators of discussions are not clear and comfortable with both their own identities and those of others” (Howard, 2010, p. 125). More specifically:

Being able to effectively initiate and facilitate critical reflection about race and race-related issues requires the ability to critically examine one’s own personal beliefs, opinions, and values about racial identity, and the race of others, as well
as the ramifications of these intersecting and colliding values and beliefs.

(Howard, 2010, p. 124)

Within these critical discussions on race teacher educators must understand and be readily capable of helping prospective teachers anticipate, understand, and challenge their emotional reactions. In other words, “feelings have to be respected [before] educators can establish the conditions for radical empathy… anger is also a valid and legitimate feeling; when complemented by clear thought, anger is frighteningly lucid” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 39). Anger, especially, must be confronted within a racial framework in which it is situated as a component of understanding racism within the institution. Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005) explain:

Preparing the student for these expectations can serve two primary purposes: (a) they will realize that their behavior or responses is normal and acceptable depending on the stage they are in their analysis of issues regarding oppression and; (b) it also prevents them from using their experience and emotions as a rational for not engaging in the anti-racism work that needs to be done (p. 164).

Once the social, emotional, and political components of race are understood and critically reflected upon as located within the racism of the institution of education, then teacher educators: “must actively engage preservice teachers in discourses about how race plays out in schools, how students make meaning of race, and to what degree race and race-related issues influence students’ prospects for learning” (Howard, 2010, p. 125). More specifically, Howard (2010) argues: “What is important within a critical reflection and self-assessment framework is for educators to ask themselves the important question,
Does “who I am” contribute to the underachievement of students who are not like me?” (p. 114).

To conclude, teacher educators must understand and continually challenge their own personal role within the social, emotional, and political implications of racism within the institution of education before they can begin to confront their a similar likeness in their prospective teachers. This includes understanding “the importance of prior knowledge of the teacher candidates; providing spaces within the program wherein which they can address their questions and concerns; preparing them for the range of emotions they may experience; and providing concrete strategies for including anti-discriminatory practices in their classroom” (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell, 2005, p. 162).

**Prospective Teachers**

If a teacher is truly interested in arriving at a space of equitable teaching, reflection, and analysis, a commitment to both racial awareness and cultural competence should be a lifelong process. This process consists of listening to the stories, experiences, histories, struggles, and setbacks of marginalized groups. It involves thinking about the possibility that the manner in which one may have viewed the world, and people’s circumstances in it, may be grossly inaccurate or outright wrong. It may require readjusting and recreating perceptions. This process may also involve constructing new lenses and frameworks through which to view individuals and their experiences. Critical reflection can be tedious as a teacher builds new knowledge and reprograms age-old thoughts, replacing them
with more informed data sets that can be used as a framework to guide transformative thoughts and behaviors. (Howard, 2010, p. 119)

Prospective teachers should have opportunities to interrogate race and racism within their teacher education programs. Much like the teacher educators before them, they should be encouraged to focus, apply, implement, and evaluate the social, emotional, and political as components of understanding and challenging racism within the educational institution. And, through this new understanding prospective teachers should be encouraged to ask the tougher questions: “Who am I racially? What do I believe about other racial groups?” and “Does who I am and what I believe about race have ramifications for the students I teach?” (Howard, 2010, p. 122).

Prospective teachers need to be able to anticipate, understand, and challenge their emotional reactions to answering these questions. More specifically, they need to recognize:

The development of cultural competence and racial awareness is painful, difficult, and frequently avoided by many people in general, and practitioners in particular:

It requires opening oneself up to critical inspection, harsh criticisms, and condemning opinions of others, and it entails having to listen to the unflattering assessment of one’s own actions (Howard, 2010, p. 118).

And, regardless of their emotional reactions, prospective teachers must continue and be challenged to “interrogate some of their prior exposure and ideas regarding varied racial and ethnic groups as well as their understanding of the ways in which these perceptions may inform their future work in the schools, can become an entry point into the
discussions of privilege and oppression” (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell, 2005, p. 162). Howard further argues:

Moreover, different methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks that contribute to this diversity in how young people experience race can be fundamental in generating new knowledge about race and schooling. These efforts should recognize the importance of young people in naming, describing, and critiquing their own experiences. Student voice is imperative in such efforts (Howard, 2010, p. 109).

And, much like teacher educators, prospective teachers must be engaged in a continual process of critical self-reflection that they recognize as fundamental to their role as an educator. In other words, “perhaps the most important aspect of developing cultural competence, critical reflection, and the adaptive unconscious, and of dismantling privilege, is to recognize that neutrality is equivalent to acting against equity, fairness, and justice in the classroom” (Howard, 2010, p. 119).

**Limitations**

The purpose of this study is to increase the research knowledge of how prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others. The limitations of the study are specific to the sample size and type. The teacher education program of the participants included specific admission criteria established by the primarily white, middle-class teacher educators of the college and university and the admission criteria they believe are relevant to teacher candidates such as a high GPA. Therefore, the
participants in this study reflect many of the ideologies of those who established the program admission criteria.

In addition, the sample consists of only a small number of prospective teachers who were studied in one Midwestern state. The findings cannot be generalized to all prospective teachers. The study does not evaluate the prospective teachers’ preparation program. However, it should be noted that the use of a critical framework and methodologies focuses on a challenge to societal power inequities and that prior scholarship suggests localized narratives, such as those presented in this study, do have “implications for the larger, national, cultural system from which the localized practices emerge” (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 97).

**Future Research**

We can use our spheres of influence to interrupt this backward movement. Those of us in higher education have a particular obligation to do so. The decision makers of the future are the college students of today. They need to have an understanding of the social history that has shaped their current context of racial isolation, and the choices they can make to change it. (Tatum, 2007, p. 109)

The purpose of this study was twofold: to provide prospective teachers with an opportunity to make meaning of their encounters with racism and how they believe these encounters shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others and to provide the teacher education inquiry community with research that demonstrates the power of narrative in teacher education and more importantly the power of teacher education as a narrative (Cochran-Smith, 2004).
Guiding questions for this study included:

1. How do prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others?

2. How do prospective teachers make meaning of their encounters with racism?

The analysis of the data revealed a racial framework through which the prospective teachers defined racism and how they believe racism influences the institutions (specifically, the educational institutions in this study) and the social, emotional, and political position of the people involved. This framework was the foundation from which the prospective teachers understood how their previous encounters with racism will influence their future teaching, learning, and interactions with others, specifically their students.

The implications of the findings from this study demonstrate a strong need to reconceptualize the racial framework of prospective teachers in our teacher education programs. And, yet, how do we begin to challenge their current racial framework? What are the unforeseen implications of this challenge? How can we prepare them for this challenge? How do we continue their ability to challenge once they are in the classroom?

The social, political, and emotional positions through this framework are understood as mechanisms within racism as opposed to their localization as individual mechanisms outside and separate of racism. However, there are, of course, other components that have perhaps been overlooked in the simplification of this framework. What are the other components that necessarily need to be addressed to further understand this
framework? How could this framework be further expanded to include other aspects of the institution and racism?

The recommendations of the study include a curriculum of teacher education that from its inception of prospective teachers into the program encourages a focus, application, implementation, and evaluation of this racial framework. In addition, teacher educators must critically self-reflect and be able to focus, apply, implement, evaluate and even more so, research this framework and finally prospective teachers should be challenged to similarly critically self-reflect and focus, apply, implement, evaluate this racial framework. In an era of accreditation and standardization, how do we challenge and begin to reform the current curriculum of teacher education? How do we ensure critical self-reflection of all teacher educators in our programs? How do we ensure they focus, apply, implement, evaluate and research racial frameworks such as the one proposed in this study? Finally, how do we determine if our prospective teachers do the same and know that in fact these theoretical recommendations and modifications do in fact improve the educational endeavors of our young people?
Bibliography


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Appendix A

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Racial Identity in Prospective Teachers: Making Sense of Encounters with Racism
Researcher: Nicole V. Williams
Sponsor: N/A

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is twofold: to provide prospective teachers with an opportunity to make meaning of their encounters with racism and how they believe these encounters shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others and to provide the teacher education inquiry community with research that demonstrates the power of narrative in teacher education and more importantly the power of teacher education as a narrative necessary for informing teacher education curriculum.

Guiding questions for this study included:
1. How do prospective teachers believe their encounters with racism shape their past, present, and future experiences in teaching, learning, and interactions with others?
2. How do prospective teachers make meaning of their encounters with racism?

Procedures/Tasks:
Prior to the interview, participants receive the following prompt to consider:

I would like you to think back to your most memorable encounters with school-related racism. Think of these situations from the time you started school until now recalling each one and describing it very briefly. We'll go back later and look at each of these situations in greater detail so all we need here is a brief description.
After the participants reflect on the prompt, they are asked to participate in the interview. The interview follows the predetermined interview instrument which includes the questions of a personal nature such as the examples listed below for each situation from the prompt.

1. Start by describing this situation in which you encountered racism.
2. How old were you in this situation? What led to this situation? What were the circumstances?
3. What leads you to call this situation racism?
4. What feelings or emotions did you experience?
5. How did what was happening relate to your past experience?

Participants may choose to complete the Helms Racial Identity Attitude Scale upon the conclusion of the interview. Participants may choose to skip any of the interview or voluntary survey questions and/or terminate the interview at any time.

Duration:
The interview should take approximately 1.5 hours to complete. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:
The following risks could occur as a result of participation in this study: minimal psychological stress and a minimal breach of confidentiality. Minimal psychological stress could occur as a result of the participants answering questions regarding their encounters with racism. A minimal breach of confidentiality could also occur as a result of the study through the data collection and analysis process. Specific protections that will be used to minimize the identified risk of minimal psychological stress will be the use of participants previously known to the investigator, the disclosure in the consent form that participants will answer questions of a personal nature (with examples), and participants may choose to skip any questions they do not wish to answer or end the interview at any point. The specific protections that will be used to minimize the identified risk of a minimal breach of confidentiality will be the immediate removal and deletion of the audio-recorded interview data from the recording device after the successful copy to a password protected computer for transcription. All identifiable information from the interview will be removed during the transcription. The participants will be assigned a code to connect the interview and survey results. The possible benefits are discussed in the purpose statement above.
Confidentiality:
Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:
There are no incentives for participation in this study.

Participant Rights:
You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Nicole Williams at Williams.2505@osu.edu or Dr. Beverly Gordon at Gordon.3@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Nicole Williams at Williams.2505@osu.edu or Dr. Beverly Gordon at Gordon.3@osu.edu.

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**Signing the consent form**
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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**Investigator/Research Staff**
I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

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Appendix B

THE SENSE-MAKING LIFE-LINE INTERVIEW
FOCUS: RACISM

SECTION A:
CRITICAL ENTRY AND LIFE-LINE SITUATIONS
I would like you to think back to your most memorable encounters with school-related racism. Think of these situations from the time you started school until now recalling each one and describing it very briefly. We'll go back later and look at each of these situations in greater detail so all we need here is a brief description.

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SECTION B:
TRIANGULATION LEVEL 1: TRIANGULATING EACH SITUATION ON THE LIFE-LINE
Now we are going to go back over each of the situations you described and look at them in more detail. As we proceed you can still add situations if they come to mind.

SITUATION nn.1
NAME: Start by describing this situation in which you encountered racism.

ENCOUNTER: How old were you in this situation? What led to this situation? What were the circumstances?
REASON RACISM: What leads you to call this situation racism?
Looking at the first situation you described when ____________________________
[REPEAT WHAT INFORMANT SAID]. In this situation....

a. What questions, muddles, or confusions did you have?
THEN:
NOW:

b. What ideas, conclusions, or thoughts did you have?
THEN:
NOW:

c. What feelings or emotions did you experience?
THEN:
NOW:

d. How did what was happening relate to your past experience?
THEN:
NOW:

e. How did what was happening relate to your sense of self, how you thought about who you are?
THEN:
NOW:

f. Did you see what was happening as relating in any way to power issues or power structures in your family or community or society in general? How?
THEN:
NOW:

g. At this point in time was anything helpful to you? What and how?
THEN:
NOW:

h. At this point in time was anything hurtful or hindering to you? What and how?
THEN:
NOW:

i. Were there any other impacts or consequences? What?
THEN:
NOW:
j. If you could have waved a magic wand, what would have helped you [even more] in this situation? How would it have helped?

THEN:

NOW:

CONCLUSION:

a. INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS: Looking back at your most memorable encounters with racism, do you think they impacted your interactions with others?

THEN:

NOW:

b. LEARNING: Looking back at your most memorable encounters with racism, do you think they impacted your learning?

THEN:

NOW:

c. TEACHING: Looking back at your most memorable encounters with racism, do you think they impacted your teaching (if applicable)?

THEN:

NOW: