

Problematizing Teacher Identity Constructs: The Consequences for Students

Master's Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of Education Teaching and Learning of The Ohio State University

By

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2009

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Abstract

The existing body of research has found that the dichotomous imposition of teacher identity as private and public marginalizes teachers whose specific identity markers do not fulfill the dominant cultural script. Small scale and qualitative in nature, this case study draws upon observation and interview to examine the identities of two White female teachers and the consequences upon student privilege. The first participant, bound by dominant academic expectations, upholds historically inscribed hierarchies of authority, knowledge, and success. The second participant, informed by personal reflection, deconstructs dominant power and academic structures. Analysis suggests that a teacher's identity construct, either fixed or fluid, directly affects student opportunities to engage in critical reflection and understanding of multiplicity.

Dedication

To my teachers and fellow teachers, I offer gratitude for all that I have learned from each of you. May we all come together to critically engage in reflection and collaboration to create a responsive, relevant, and constructive learning environment for our students.

To my past and future students, you are my inspiration. Always believe in your potential and your worth.

Acknowledgments

Dr. Adrienne Dixson, my advisor, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you for the conversations, opportunities, and support that you provided in facilitating my academic and personal growth while at The Ohio State University. Your personal dedication to youth, education, and the field of critical pedagogy is inspiring.

To Dr. Valerie Kinloch, committee member, I appreciate your willingness, flexibility, and support in taking on yet another commitment. I truly respect your work.

Deserving of a very special thanks are the teachers who participated in this exploration. I genuinely appreciate the invitation into your instructional spaces and the sharing of your personal and planning time to speak with me. Your honesty and enthusiasm for my project was critical to its success.

Finally, to my colleagues, professors, friends, and family, thank you for your ongoing interest and opportunities to share and reflect on my work. And to my biggest supporter, without your constant support, encouragement, and pride I would not have made it to the end. Your passion and inquisitive nature are inspiring and I hope to offer equal support in the amazing future that lies ahead of you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Educational landscapes are traditionally structured to be spaces that support the acquisition of knowledge. Historically, this knowledge is conceptualized as objective facts within specific content areas: reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. The widespread implementation of standardized curriculum objectives and standardized multiple choice assessments are clear indications of the expectation for and value of perceived objectivity (Sleeter, 2005). Propelled by a desire for objectivity, education exists within a framework of oppositional dichotomies. There are correct and incorrect answers, right and wrong behaviors, a standard and a non-standard language system, appropriate and inappropriate clothing styles, and proper and improper discussion topics. The list could continue. Claiming these oppositional dichotomies as essential boundaries that guide the priorities of and intention to create comfortable and safe learning atmospheres is misleading. Academic institutions are in truth reproducing arenas of biased dominant ideology (comfortable and safe learning environments to members of the dominant culture), avoiding recognition and critical questioning of systemic structures of Whiteness and marginalization.

Central to understanding Whiteness is first acknowledging that it is a system of privilege that is not exclusively associated to all individuals categorized as White. Class, gender, religion, sexuality, ability, language, and other components of identity influence

this system. Further, individuals who are not categorized as White may also participate in the privileges and/or reproduction of Whiteness to varying degrees (Cooks, 2003). Fundamental to Whiteness is the silent acceptance of the unsaid tenets of participation within this group resulting in unearned assets (McIntosh, 1988). Membership is exclusive, yet historically flexible, as determined by those in the dominant culture, in order to maintain power. Often, White individuals are quick to dismiss quantitative and qualitative data demonstrating significant racial discrepancies in political, economic, and social opportunities and services (Harris, 2003; Lipsitz, 1998; Roediger, 2001) as an ill of a specific race's intrinsic characteristics instead of hierarchies of structural racism. Smitherman (1999) offered the metaphor, "... some folk don't believe fat meat is greasy" (p. 150) for the denial of existing research when she described the negative backlash to the Ebonics resolution in Oakland, California and the King v. Federal Court case in Michigan. The silent, possessive investment in Whiteness precludes critical observation or response to the marginalized situation of 'othered' groups in order to pass the blame to larger structures in which they (members of the dominant culture) claim are beyond their means. Clearly, Whiteness provides a method for creating an 'us' versus 'them' in order to avoid loss of power and responsibility for inequities (McIntosh, 1988).

Subsequently, the dichotomies of education are strategic attempts to create borders of control, the 'us' versus 'them'. In their wider discussion of transgendered individuals, Luschen and Bogad (2003) referred to Duncan (1996) as he argued that "the public/private dichotomy ... is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress ... by preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures" (p. 128). The exclusion of private identity therefore exists as a means to devalue specific marginalized memberships and reinforce solidarity of membership to the conceptualized norm. Within the educational setting,

this manifests in the adoption of a professional identity. As a professional, teachers do not claim, nor are they encouraged to claim, associations with marginalized groups or reveal any elements that contradict a neutral teacher identity. This professional identity, a silent avoidance and ignorance, unifies teachers to commonly and collectively deliver the dominant culture's desired objective curriculum without questioning truth or disrupting authority.

The delineation of private identity and public identity as isolated entities, while recognizably reductive, is also problematic. Private and public are typically divided in a seemingly natural separation. Private refers to what is 'in here' and public refers to what is 'out there' (Fenstermacher, 1997 in Coulter, 2002). Simply defined, this characterization may be widely agreed upon and employed by the general public. Problematic, however, is the implied simplicity. Luschen and Bogad (2003) confirmed vague borders of categorization as they illustrated a woman's pregnancy as an originally private situation that transforms into a public text through visibility. Loss or termination of the pregnancy further confirms the difficulty in mediating the border of private and public. This example clarifies the relative nature and shifting interpretations of private and public even within a short time frame.

Fundamental to the undergirding framework of this paper, and in recognition of the relatively ambiguous and variant interpretations of private and public, I will avoid selecting one concrete definition of private and public. Acknowledging and considering multiple denotations and connotations that credit the spectrum of variety and complexity of private and public is essential to interrupting the control that dichotomies historically provide. Instead of designating private and public within a limited focus, they should instead be seen as dynamic and context bound. However, in light of this exploration's focus on the present conception and impact of private and public identity within schools and for clarity of discussion, hereafter private will

generally be recognized as an association with the personal or small group of family or friends and public as an association with the wider community or population. Within the complexity of a public identity exists the professional teacher, a politicized identity infused with hierarchical systems of power and imposed by dominant authorities as a mechanism of Whiteness.

It is within this complexity of private identity, public identity, professional identity, and the educational setting that this exploration originates. While the existing body of research has examined the marginalization of teachers through imposed identity, this exploration seeks to understand how students are affected by a teacher's identity. Specifically, this study looks to how the present imposition of a neutral teacher (professional) identity influences hegemonic structures and the implicit consequences for students.

Research Questions

In light of the existing body of teacher identity research and the lack of consideration of students, the following questions guided this study.

- a. How do teachers understand their own identity?
- b. How does teacher understanding of identity influence student privilege?
- c. How can alternative views of identity alter marginalization of disempowered student groups?

Significance

The educational system is deeply entrenched in structures of hierarchical power that embrace oppositional dichotomies to support authority and dominance. The adverse consequences associated with Whiteness, as manifested in private, public, and professional identities, are significant for teachers (Pitt, 2000; Sleeter, 2005). Missing is the extension of these studies to consider how students are implicated in the expectation for teachers to fulfill

essentialized identities. This exploration will not produce a document of delineated measures to follow in order to disrupt systems of privilege. Instead, this case study is an attempt to draw attention to how students are marginalized or privileged through teacher identity. Further, it is the intention that this work will argue for more reflexivity amongst educational stakeholders in order to disrupt rather than reproduce marginalization within the student population.

Chapter 2: Review of Research

The review of research for this study focused on four areas: identity as a social construction, identity as protection, identity as power, and identity as a point of critical reflection.

The Social Construction of Teacher Identity

In a review of research on teachers' professional identity Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) identified a variety of frameworks for understanding professional identity. They began by differentiating between Erikson's (1968) conception of identity as, "not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life" (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, p. 107) and Mead's (1934) belief that identity, "is developed through transactions with the environment" (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, p. 107). Despite the variations in identity definition, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop found that each view centered upon identity as a dynamic attribute existing in relation to context (see also Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Volkman and Anderson (1997), in their examination of a first year chemistry teacher's professional identity, similarly concluded that novice teachers' identities are formed by teaching and the educational contexts in which they exist. Teachers' identities, while initially existing as a premature "opacity" (Jackson, 1999, p. 38), inevitably incorporate unique aspirations into their professional identity. By location in social contexts, teachers also implicitly or explicitly embrace privileged identity markers,

such as association with school traditions or unquestioned acceptance of adopted curriculum, in order to construct a sustainable professional identity (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Learning and employing the norms for how to linguistically engage in a community of practice was the focus of Smith's (2005) examination of a novice teacher entering a new educational setting. Smith found that higher education prepared the participant with content and skills necessary for instruction, but learning the culture required social participation and on-the-job experience. Family, observation, teaching, policy, tradition, and acquired understanding were recognized as major influences on teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Positive social value is another motivating factor prompting teachers to story their identities in ways that censor and construct socially acceptable images (Convery, 1999; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs & McEachen, 2002; Volkmann & Anderson, 1997). Problematic, however, is the friction that may occur as a result of a drastic separation of the personal and professional when teachers underestimate the effect of the personal on the professional (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). For example, a veteran teacher may disagree with national implementation of new policies. Without reflection of the impact on the personal and professional level, the teacher's classroom performance may be negatively affected due to their discrepancy in beliefs versus professional expectation. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop extended these findings to demonstrate the power of a positive professional image. In their review of research on teacher professional identity formation, characteristics, and storied (re)presentation, a positive perception of professional identity countered poor working conditions.

As a teacher negotiates their desired social perception, they make informed and specific choices in their affirmation of affiliations and distinctions (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Ultimately, these decisions are what Moore, Edwards, Halpin and George (2002) explain as the

“constructing and marketing [of] their educational ‘identities’” (p. 551). Due to the socializing mechanisms within education, those teachers who adopt the dominant narrative of a neutral teacher void of ‘othered’ identity markers such as race or sexual orientation, also believe their perception is absolute reality (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). The construction of idealized (from the dominant perspective) identities decreases alterity and increases perception that teacher identity is a homogenous state of being one in the crowd (Hirst & Vadeboncoeur, 2006). This construction of identity has material consequences for those who accept and for those who reject the dominant narrative of disassociating the personal from the professional. Hartung (1990) found in her study of women’s studies teachers that teachers who stepped beyond their expected exclusively academic role were negatively judged on a personal level versus their ability as an educator. The greater exposure of the personal identity positions teachers as less valuable, vulnerable, and lacking control (Aveling, 2001).

As many teachers exert effort to establish an effective teacher identity, tension mounts between the separation of the personal and requirements of the wider social structure (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). This expectation for assimilating into an accepted professional teacher identity is critiqued from the feminist perspective of Dillabough (1999). Her analysis suggested that a professional identity is ambiguous, instead being a method of compelling teachers to fulfill objective standards of practice, expecting a detached sense of self. Dillabough believes that the abstract expectation for neutral teacher identities constrained by competency standards is unrealistic as identity is actively produced and transformed within locations of intersubjective contexts of meaning. With a conception of how professional identity is constructed this review now turns to understanding why professional teacher identity is constructed.

Identity as Protection

Complex boundaries contrived for appeasement of the school's surrounding community are central to the constant tension of becoming a satisfying (neutral) teacher (Pitt, 2000). Parents from the school's outside community impose expectations of appropriate and inappropriate teacher identities, implicitly communicating valued and devalued affiliations (Hollins, 1990). These topics range from emotional to physical sensitivities (Freedman, 1990) but are often undergirded by the same fear of dealing with diversity and what parents believe is unacceptable for their children (Hollins, 1990). This outside pressure promotes the exposure of safe stories and avoidance of elements that challenge the dominant narrative. This filtering of teacher identity is a mechanism of protection in order to escape marginalization by perceived authorities (Pitt, 2000; Sharkey, 2004). It is here where teacher identity is created to protect the personal self.

Allen (1995), in her examination of self-disclosure in the classroom, explained how a teacher who departs from the normalized cultural script is seen as deviant and often reduced to that singular identity marker. Allen, who personally exposed her homosexuality in class commented, "I no more want to ignore that I am a lesbian than I want to ignore that I am 40, female, White, a mother, a feminist, a partner, or any other meaningful aspect of my life" (p. 136). The disregard for identity markers comes as a need versus a want (Pitt, 2000) in weighing the risks of concealment and disclosure (Allen, 1995; Pitt, 2000). In a society and educational system saturated in narrow worldviews, the personal presents unwanted complications (Pitt, 2000). It is the fear of oppression and formal or informal punishment that compels teachers to create a storied identity within the dominant cultural script.

Identity as Power

Socially constructed at a local level and historically maintained, Dlamini (2002) found that neutralized professional teacher identity promotes separatism, essentialism, and a hierarchy of oppression. The erasure of identity complexity normalizes systems of power in order to mobilize, bolster, and reaffirm romanticized narratives and invented tradition central to creating imagined communities consistent with the dominant cultural script. This is exemplified in Heidenreich's (2004) analysis of the elimination of overt power and enhanced politically correct nature in the storied construction of the state of California's history. When diversity of being is replaced with mythologies of heroic deeds and a linear past (Heidenreich, 2004) the individual teacher is pressured to relinquish subjectivities to demonstrate to the community a willingness to comply with the dominant ways of knowing and doing (Dlamini, 2002). The teacher complies as learned survival strategies (Johnson, 1997) and the dominant structure is maintained.

Identity as a Point of Critical Reflection

Davidson and Langan's (2006) examination of the negative backlash received when a guest lecturer in a university class breastfeed her hungry baby while lecturing provides a strong example of the dominant culture's suppression of multiplicity. While the guest lecturer was empowered as balancing being a mother and an academic, her choice to expose her maternal responsibilities contradicted the accepted, expected, and privileged role of academic. She was caught between two worlds and the crossing of identities was unsettling for members of the dominant culture. This desire for abstract and unattached humans is contradictory to Freire's (1970) belief in education as an act of freedom (Johnson & Bhatt, 2003). The struggle over identity dualities that define and limit, prompted Johnson and Bhatt (2003) to call upon all teachers to "challenge the essentialisms that are (re)inscribed in our ... actions" (Lee, 1998, p.

298 in Johnson & Bhatt, 2003, p. 232). To respond to this challenge, Beattie (1995) believed teachers should be active participants in their environment by questioning, reconceptualizing, and engaging in reflexivity over the historical establishment of hegemonic social structures.

Allard (2006) extends the call for reflexivity so that teachers within the dominant culture are able to move beyond popularly endorsed dichotomous discourses to first recognize and subsequently react to teacher and student difference. Lea (2004) found that while teachers are often rhetorically committed to ideals of multiculturalism, they understand their role to be outside of multiculturalism as opposed to infused with multiple identities and subject positions (Sleeter, 2008). Teacher actions are empathetic but not critical or transformative in nature. This emotional distance from ‘othered’ cultural scripts is a mechanism to establish consistency and stability according to the teacher’s comfort zone (Lea, 2004) and perceived unified identity (Sleeter, 2008). Reflexivity is vital to overcome this dysconsciousness, the uncritical habit of mind that accepts the existing order without critical consciousness (King, 1991). For most members of the dominant culture, their privileged identities are unquestioned (Thomas, 2007; Lea, 2004) and unproblematic (Sleeter, 2008) prompting classrooms to maintain the historical hierarchical systems of power. Disrupting teachers’ construct of identity as fixed is where Johnson’s (2002) examination of post-personal reflection suggests as an effective starting point for reflection. Johnson’s conclusion and the present exclusion of implications for students, especially those in kindergarten through twelfth grade, in the existing body of teacher identity research is the starting point for this examination.

Chapter 3: Methods

Participants

This case study drew upon the observations of and interviews with two teachers, Olivia Davidson and Whitney Case (pseudonyms). Due to the prolonged period of observation and focus on Olivia and Whitney, the following provides a physical description of each woman based upon my own observations as well as self-reported identity markers and educational history from each of the participants. In addition, two colleagues of Olivia and Whitney, Julie Walt and Ana Laross (also pseudonyms), provided further perspective and opportunities for triangulation exclusively through interview. Basic self-reported identity markers and educational history are included for Julie and Ana.

Olivia

Within the second one-on-one interview I asked Olivia Davidson to convey what she believed her students ‘knew’ about their identity. Olivia stated:

A little more uptight and focused on getting past stuff... but they would immediately say that I am laid back because I am laid back about a lot of things... and they would also say that I am nagy about liberal things – recycling, and recycling, and getting involved in the world – things like that ... They would say that I am higher level as in more than another teacher... and then they would probably say I know nothing about technology and I need to get a date probably... They all want me to go on Bachelorette. But I’m

like, 'I'm sure they really want a liberal, green, high school teacher.' (Interview, December 12, 2008) At the time of research Olivia was approximately 5'3" to 5'5" tall with a medium sized body frame for her height. Her straight brown hair fell slightly above her shoulders and framed her light skinned face. I was unable to discern if Olivia wore make-up due to her very natural appearance. Her style could be described as professional yet comfortable. For example, one occasion she wore cream pants with a green sweater and brown belt; another occasion she wore casual gray pants with a black hooded shirt and jean jacket with trendy tennis shoes. Olivia also had visible tattoos of undistinguishable designs on her ankle and upper back.

Olivia spent her kindergarten through twelfth grade years in a small Mid-Atlantic town. She had taught exclusively in her present district, a small suburb of an urban Midwestern city, for six years, four of which at her present high school. She self identified as a thirty-six year-old, heterosexual, White, native English speaking woman, indicating no physical disabilities, and liberal Democrat as her political affiliation. Olivia further identified, "a nice blend of Catholicism and Buddhism and a tree-hugging hippie" as her religion and "middle-ish, \$53,000.00" as her socio-economic status (personal communication, January 15, 2009). Olivia had an Associate's of Art in English Education from a two-year Midwestern Community College and a Bachelor's and Master's of Art in English Education from a large four-year Midwestern State University. Additionally, she had thirty documented hours of graduate work beyond her Master's degree. During the time of the observations Olivia taught four College Preparatory English classes and two freshman English classes, one of which was an inclusion class for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP). She was also the advisor for the after school Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered group.

Whitney

During the second one-on-one interview with Whitney Case, I also asked her to convey what she believed her students ‘knew’ about their identity. Whitney reflected, “I think some students misinterpret me... Now they [students] can assume they believe me to be very liberal, very left, because that is what you assume” (Interview, December 16, 2008).

Whitney Case was approximately 5’7” to 5’9” with a medium body frame for her height at the time of research. Her brown hair fell below her shoulders and had golden highlights. Similar to Olivia, Whitney’s medium complexion was natural looking and therefore I was unable to discern if she wore make-up. Whitney’s style was casual professional typically mixing more casual pants with a more formal shirt or vice versa. On one occasion, for example, Whitney wore black pants with a gray printed t-shirt coupled with a long gray sweater and black Converse shoes.

Whitney spent her kindergarten through twelfth grade years in two Midwestern states and one Mountain state. At the time of this study, Whitney had taught in four different Midwestern states totaling twelve years of experience. Seven of those years were spent at her current high school in the same small suburb of an urban Midwestern city as Olivia. Whitney self-identified as a thirty-three year-old, heterosexual, Caucasian, native English speaker, Christian woman with no disabilities. She politically identified as an Independent and within the middle class socio-economic status. Whitney was certified and had a Master’s degree in Education and Theater. During the time of the observations Whitney taught three College Technical English courses while simultaneously being the Theater Director.

Julie

Julie Walt spent her entire life in the same Midwestern state. She grew up in one suburban town later teaching in that same school district in addition to one urban and two suburban school districts in the same geographic region for a total of twenty-one years. Julie had spent seven years at the same school as Olivia and Whitney, at the time teaching Advanced Placement III English Language and Composition and College Prep English IV. Julie self-identified as a fifty year-old, straight and married, White, Christian, native English speaker with no disability. She identified as a moderate Democrat within the middle class. Julie possessed a Master's degree plus forty to fifty graduate hours.

Ana

Also teaching in the same community as the other participants, Ana Laross spent her Kindergarten through twelfth grade years in a Mid-Atlantic state. Having taught for six years at the time of the research, Ana taught Modern World History and 20th Century Topics with a certification and Bachelor's of Art in Integrated Social Studies, grades seven through twelve. Additionally, she possessed a Master's of Art in Teaching and Learning with a specialty in Drama, Language Arts, Literature and Reading Education from a large Midwestern University. Self-identified as a twenty-seven year-old, heterosexual, White, able, non-denominational Christian woman, Ana also indicated that she spoke "standard (kind of Appalachian) English" (personal communication, February 10, 2009). She further indicated that she was a "left leaning" Independent and within the middle class, although clarifying that is "so vague" (personal communication, February 10, 2009).

Context

All observations took place within Mainland High School (pseudonym). Four of the six interviews took place at Mainland High School, while two of the interviews took place at a local coffee shop as per the request of Olivia and Ana due to their evening availability for interview. As interview participants, I did not observe the classrooms of Julie and Ana. The data collection period took place October 9th through December 18th, week 7 through week 17, of a 39 week school year. The ten week time period provided opportunities for prolonged engagement and was established based upon researcher and participant availability.

Mainland High School

Mainland High School (MHS) opened in the fall of 2002 as the fifth high school within this sixth largest school district in their Midwestern state. Current enrollment was approximately 1,600 students. MHS was situated within a suburb of an urban Midwestern city. The United States Census (2000) indicated the town population was approximately 27,000 residents within a 14.0 square mile radius. Census data from 2000 also indicated the racial makeup of this suburb to be as follows: 96.2% White, 1.5% African American, 0.2% Native American, 0.6% Asian, 0.0% Pacific Islander, 1.2% Latino, and 1.1% from two or more races. The average household size in this town was 2.61 and the median household income was \$52,064.00. The census data recognized 4.6% of the population as living below the poverty line.

The exterior of the two story MHS building was tan and brown with a non-descript but modern design. Inside, clean hallways with cinderblock walls and tiled floors were neutral in color with occasional accents of the school color, blue. Student artwork and posters from presentations occasionally decorated the walls. MHS's library doubled as the community library in which students and the general public had access to the books, computers, and resources.

Academic, computer, fine art, and physical education spaces were spread throughout the building. Julie, in her interview, clarified that departments were purposefully organized to be intermixed throughout the building in order to decrease exclusivity with colleague collaboration and relationships. MHS categorized the English classes I observed as freshman English, College Technical English, and senior College Preparatory English. According to the online MHS student handbook, College Technical courses are for students who, “are planning to begin post-high school education at a community college and/or begin their career for which they prepared in their high school technical program” and College Preparatory courses, “are designed to prepare students for the rigors of a four-year university that they are planning to enter soon after high school graduation” (Mainland High School*, 2009).

Olivia’s classroom

Olivia’s classroom was on the second floor. Thirty desks were arranged along two opposite sides of the room in two equal groups, five rows of three desks, facing each other. Olivia’s desk sat in a front corner near the whiteboard. One window and fluorescent lighting illuminated the space where ‘respect’, ‘honor diversity’, and ‘acceptance’ posters hung on the front wall. Portraits of the following individuals: Harriet Tubman, Clara Barton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Church Terrell, and Louisa May Alcott hung alongside Apple’s ‘think different’ posters including: Amelia Earhart, Jane Goodall, Gandhi, Jim Henson, Albert Einstein, and others hung on the back wall. Student work, schedules, and drawings hung on the whiteboard in the front of the room. A rainbow flag hung on her door along with student work.

Whitney’s classroom

Immediately next door to Olivia’s classroom was Whitney’s classroom. Only using this room for her English classes, Whitney shared the classroom with a math teacher, as evidenced by

the math posters hanging from the walls. The space mirrored Olivia's classroom with thirty desks arranged along two opposite sides of the room in two equal groups, five rows of three desks, facing each other. Whitney's space also had one window and florescent lighting. Her desk was positioned under the window in a front corner of the classroom alongside the front whiteboard and in front of filing cabinets. Student work decorated cabinets along the back of the room.

Class Compositions

This study's focus on teacher identity prohibited me from documenting student work and responses or examining student files. In light of these restrictions, information about the class composition is unavoidably vague – including racial and gender categorization. None of the students self-reported race/ethnicity or gender nor did I ask the students, teachers or consult school files for such information. Additionally, variations in attendance (for assumed illness or school punishment) caused daily changes to the group demographics. Based on my observations, Olivia's freshman Inclusion English class' composition was as follows: 14 White males, 2 Latino males, 2 African American females, and 6 White females. Due to the label as 'inclusion' this course also included students who possessed Individual Education Plans, yet due to the potential invisibility of this identity marker I was unable to approximate this demographic. Olivia's senior College Preparatory English class' composition was as follows: 4 African American males, 6 White males, 7 White females, and 1 Latina female. Whitney's College Technical English classes included sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Whitney's first class that I observed had a composition as follows: 7 African American males, 7 White males, 1 Latino male, 2 African American females, 6 White females, and 1 Latina female. The second class I

observed included: 1 African American male, 11 White males, 2 African American females, and 10 White females.

Procedure

Framed as a single site case study of two teacher participants and two contributing informants, this qualitative investigation's main goal was to observe spontaneous teacher-student interaction and regulated one-on-one interview responses in order to provide rich description in understanding (Beatti, 1995) the influence of teacher identity on student privilege and marginalization related to race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, (dis)ability, and overall ability to possess and share diverse opinions.

Participant Recruitment

My target population included White, in-service teachers who self-identified as being cognizant of multicultural and equity issues. These were key features due to my interest in examining how Whiteness is (still) maintained or deconstructed by teachers who claim awareness of privilege and marginalization. Small scale in nature, this investigation included the participation of four White, female, in-service teachers. The first recruited participant was Ana, a classmate of mine from The Ohio State University's Education Teaching and Learning Winter 2008 Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice course. While Ana matched my target population, I sought two additional participants for the prolonged observation and interview component that I had never met so that previous rapport would be less likely to influence observation. Ana provided the names of Olivia and Whitney, two of her teaching colleagues that she felt matched the target population. I solicited the women by email and both agreed to participate in this study. Lastly, Whitney suggested Julie, another colleague of the three

teachers, as an additional informant to offer triangulation of observation and interview. Again after email solicitation, Julie agreed to participate in this study.

Data Collection

Observation and interview comprised my primary methods of data collection as observed teacher practice mutually informs teacher narrative (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Olivia and Whitney's instructional periods, lasting each approximately one hour in duration, were the context of all of my observations. In addition to Olivia's observed classroom sessions, three observations occurred in the computer lab and one in the library. I observed six sessions of Olivia's freshman English class and six sessions of Olivia's senior College Preparatory English class. All of Whitney's observed class sessions occurred in her classroom. Of these observations, five were with one group of College Technical English students and five were with a second group of College Technical English students. Simultaneous to keeping a journal noting non-verbal and physical context observations, I audio recorded each session for later clarification and elaboration of my notes. In total, I observed Olivia on twelve separate occasions and Whitney on ten separate occasions over the ten week period.

The second component of data collection, interview, occurred on six separate occasions, each ranging from one to one and a half hours in duration. My initial interviews with Olivia and Whitney took place during their planning periods and the fifth week of the data collection period. I chose the fifth week of observation for the initial interviews with Olivia and Whitney as I felt I had successfully built a rapport that would lend itself to open and honest responses.

Additionally, I had established an important foundation of observation to frame my questions and examination of their pedagogy. Richards (1998), in discussion of learning from observation, asserted that, "...what we can expect to gain from observation is dependent upon how we

understand the nature of teaching” (p. 141). In order to understand the catalyst for teacher actions, my initial interviews focused on seeking general reflection from Olivia and Whitney based upon specific classroom observations. Recognizing that participant words or actions were context dependent, the interview prompted each participant to explain, extend or reflect upon a series of snapshots of their comments made during instructional periods (see appendix A and B). My intent was to allow participant voice to provide insight and meaning into how and why the teachers reacted and interacted as observed in the particular context (Biklen & Casella, 2007; Johnson, 2002).

The second interviews with Olivia and Whitney took place during the tenth, and final, week of the data collection period. Whitney’s interview again took place at MHS during her planning period and Olivia’s interview took place at a coffee shop as it better fit her schedule to talk after school hours. In these second interviews, I asked Olivia and Whitney to respond to an identical set of questions, undergirded by issues of teacher identity, intended to explore rationalization for their personal construction of self (see appendix C).

Julie and Ana, as colleagues of Olivia and Whitney, served as additional voices to confirm or dispute what I observed and learned through interview with Olivia and Whitney. Interviews with Julie, at MHS, and Ana, at a coffee shop, occurred after the initial data collection period in order to provide triangulation to themes evoked by observation and interview and identified through analysis. Both individuals were asked to respond to an identical set of questions (see appendix D) about MHS and teacher identity.

All interviews were based upon pre-determined questions. My use of one-on-one conversational strategies such as continuers (‘uh huh’, ‘yes’, ‘ok’) (Johnson, 2002) allowed the participant to feel comfortable in sharing their version of reality with me. My notes indicated

participant use of objective markers (reference to specific classroom moments) that enabled them to establish credibility (Convery, 1999) in their words. My efforts to fold back on the conversation by asking for clarification or suggesting connections between responses manifested in Olivia and Whitney's preservation of their narratives, only changing in the provision of more detail. This maintenance of participant narrative reinforced the stability of their accounts as perceived truth versus a romanticized approach (Johnson, 2002) potentially provided to fulfill what they perceived to be my expectation for response.

Data Analysis

I recorded data in the form of ethnographic notes, including all that I heard and saw during the observation and interview sessions. Due to the focus on the teacher as participant (versus the students), my notes centered on teacher verbalization and actions. I integrated my reflections and questions throughout my notes. I also transcribed the audio-recordings of each observation and interview in their entirety. When available, I collected teacher handouts as artifacts.

Analysis of the data followed an initially linear, and subsequently cyclical, pattern of reading to become familiar with the data, describing the contexts and participants to provide in-depth accounts, and classifying the data to identify categories and themes (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). Through this process I located recurring themes of affirmation, critical methodology, identity, knowledge of the students, and success. Affirmation refers to the participants' responses indicating acquisition of support from others. Critical methodology, in this case, refers to the participants' references to critical questioning and reflection of self that prompted relevant and engaging instruction infused with non-traditional perspectives of knowledge. Participants' references to identity was specific to their private or personal self.

Knowledge of student responses indicated what the participants claimed to know about their students. Lastly, responses related to success indicated the participants' perceptions of achievement. Coding the data in light of these themes prompted questioning and examinations of why, when colleagues, and initially myself, classified the two women as similar in approach and focus in instruction, do the participants dichotomously exist on the spectrum in each of these areas? Return to the verbatim transcripts supported analysis of teacher language and their class structures, academic orientations, teacher roles, and student roles. These themes are further clarified and discussed as: teacher as academic, affirmation as divergence, academic and critical methodology, and positivist and interpretative worldview.

Researcher and Representation

Recognizing that I, as researcher, am as much of a contributor as the participant in the research process (Volkman & Anderson, 1997) is vital to understand that analysis and conclusions are situated as a single interpretation from the my private epistemological lens (Lea, 2004; Volkman & Anderson, 1997). As data is unable to produce literal descriptions of participant reality, the chosen format and words convey my preferred meaning (Johnson, 2002), guiding the reader through one interpretation (Biklen and Casella, 2007; Moore, Edwards, Halpin & George, 2002) and allowing the reader to devise alternative explanations. Even as my voice is saturated throughout the investigation, frequent direct participant quotation facilitates recognizing and honoring participant voice. Finally, the conclusions derived are able to promote critical reflection and further analysis but are not intended to be generalizable (Lea, 2004) as they are meaningful only within social or discursive practices of particular socio-historical contexts (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Edwards & Blake, 2007).

Vague boundaries also arose due to my utilization of interviewing as a method. It introduced, "... a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully" (Dexter, 1970; Hyman et al., 1954; Mishler, 1986 in Seidman, 2006, p.95). As a guest in the participants' classrooms I purposefully crafted a relationship built upon positive rapport in order for the participants to feel comfortable exposing philosophy and reflection on the very personal act of instruction to myself – a teacher insider yet relatively unknown outsider. This sharing of participant narrative was critical as it provided me access to privileged information, divulged participants' knowledge and beliefs, and captured participants' voices (Convery, 1999).

However, my establishment of confidence with the participants' often imposed an obligation to accept and affirm participant beliefs (Convery, 1999) during observation, interview, and analysis. For example, during my second classroom observation and after I introduced myself to the students in Olivia's class, with a smile she asked aloud, "What is something that I've done well? Praise me" (Observation, October 16, 2008). Similarly, Whitney, during one of her interviews, indicated feeling an initial need to rationalize her teaching as I was perceived as an evaluator of her teaching ability. Whitney's fear demonstrated the perceived power of a researcher to publically judge participants (Lea, 2004). In light of the participants' expectations and my established warm rapport, I struggled with my emerging themes that suggested some participants maintained inequitable privileges within their class and subsequently wider society.

Sharing these conclusions in what may be perceived as a less than celebratory account (Convery, 1999) prompted me to feel anxious with the potential affect upon the participants if they read this examination. Specifically, I realized that the informed consent did not prepare my participants for the possible "bad news" associated with their stories (Lea, 2004, p. 121).

Trustworthiness

According to Guba (1981 in Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006), qualitative research needs to fulfill four criteria to establish validity. The four criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Within this investigation, credibility was achieved through ten weeks of prolonged participation, peer debriefing with academic and non-academic peers, and asking participants to review and clarify transcripts and observations as member checks. Detailed descriptions of data and context provided transferability while the overlapping methods of observation and interview established dependability. Confirmability was sought through triangulation of observation, interview, additional informant interviews, and review of classroom artifacts while I constantly engaged in reflexivity of methods, analysis, representation, and conclusions. In addition to these strategies, verbatim transcriptions and the establishment of rapport prompted descriptive validity in accurate quotations and interpretative validity in my ability to accurately interpret participant comments, including understanding non-verbal communication such as sarcasm (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006).

Chapter 4: Descriptive Data

Class Structures

Olivia and Whitney had almost identical physical classroom spaces and utilized the spaces similarly as well. Both teachers also had assigned seating charts for their students, and requested on most days that the students sit in those seats although Olivia and Whitney were comfortable with the students moving beyond the arrangement of rows of desks for particular activities. The two women also shared the belief that their individual classrooms were best described as controlled chaos due to their comfort with an increased level of classroom noise as a result of students talking. This was confirmed during my observations as most days in each class there was a time when students freely spoke in small groups or excitedly within large group conversation creating a sense of ‘controlled chaos’.

Beyond these similarities, Olivia and Whitney organized the 45 minute class periods in different ways. Olivia did not have a regular schedule for each period but followed a consistent approach. She began with a short greeting or commentary such as, but not limited to, giving a quiz reminder, providing grade information, sharing the status of her sick dog, and discussing the weather. Transition to the planned academic activity would generally occur by Olivia asking content-based recall questions pertaining to the present topic of study. After brief recall and/or instructions the students almost always began independent or small group work which occupied the remainder of the period. Olivia would move around the classroom checking in on the students and providing

support as requested or needed. I often heard Olivia tell the students to “dig in a little more”, “marinate on that” or “take it to the next level”.

Whitney also did not have an identical daily schedule but followed a consistent approach. One feature that did occur at the beginning of almost each class period that I observed was what Whitney called the “bell ringer”. The bell ringer was a question or statement in which the students responded to in their composition notebooks. This writing activity provided Whitney an opportunity to get the class settled as well as encourage ongoing student opinion pieces that could be elaborated into future writing pieces. Examples of the bell ringers include, but are not limited to: “What do you think this quote means: Sharing dark skin doesn’t necessarily make two men brothers” (Observation, October 16, 2008); “Just in case you are tardy, write an exaggerated, fantastic excuse for yourself. Be as creative as you can. In about 150 words, convince me your excuse is a valid reason for being tardy” (Observation, October 23, 2008); and “Give me an update. On anything! At least a half a page. – Case” (Observation, November 6, 2008). After responding to the prompt Whitney invited the students to share their writing with the class. At least three students typically responded to each invitation to share and more often the sharing evoked a larger class discussion about the topic. The class appeared easily excited by discussion, as evidenced by Whitney’s frequent need to limit final comments, in order to transition to the planned academic activity. While the resources and content varied, almost every activity began as a large group guided by Whitney with heavy student participation. Independent or small group work and/or reflection typically followed the large group activity.

Academic Orientations

According to the Ohio Department of Education’s Academic Content Standards for K-12 English Language Arts (2003), there are ten standards that together comprise literacy. Those

standards are: Phonemic Awareness, Word Recognition and Fluency; Acquisition of Vocabulary; Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies; Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text; Reading Applications: Literary Text; Writing Process; Writing Applications; Writing Conventions; Research; and Communication: Oral and Visual. The indicators within each standard are statements of expectation for grade level performance based not upon specific texts, but skills. Therefore, students are not expected to recall specific textual knowledge on high-stakes achievement tests but demonstrate application of literate skills in a variety of contexts.

I begin with this description of the Ohio Department of Education's Academic Content Standards for K-12 English Language Arts in order to highlight the flexibility in how skills are taught as long as students are able to acquire and apply the skills. During the ten weeks I observed Olivia and Whitney I witnessed a variety of methods and resources. From my observations, it appeared that Olivia's approach to instruction was centered upon content. This is presumed because as she focused on two major units, the novel *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers and *The Odyssey* by Homer, as well as one smaller unit on Scottish traditions, the assignments and activities typically focused upon content knowledge. Examples of these activities included: teacher read aloud with questioning, independent reading, outlining facts, answering a packet of questions, identification of character traits, and student presentation of researched information. I noted evidence of critical thinking, perspective, and communication when the students wrote a persuasive essay based upon *The Odyssey* and took part in a debate based upon evidence from *Monster*. In general, Olivia drew upon the internet, a trade book, and a text book as her resources for instruction.

My observations of Whitney, on the other hand, suggested that her academic orientation was skills related. I understood this to be accurate as she utilized a variety of resources to elicit academic skills versus prolonged engagement and focus on the content of a singular text. The resources I observed being used included: the poem *A Song in the Front Yard* by Gwendolyn Brooks, an Oprah episode, the song *Scarecrow* by Melissa Ethridge, biographies and pictures of individuals who are homeless from www.housemate.org.uk, a speaker from a local homeless organization, a MHS graduate speaker, the short story *Monkeyman* from *145th Street Stories* by Walter Dean Myers, a descriptive narrative about a home, a webquest, the film *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy* by PBS, the play *To Kill a Mockingbird*, popular culture movies, and personal student and teacher experience. After interaction with these resources Whitney asked the students to discuss, write responses, create photo captions, generalize and apply vocabulary definitions, present short and full presentations, create visual aids, take part in a group budgeting exercise, create a collage, brainstorm ideas, research, recall personally significant learned information, write a narrative, and create a map. As a result of these methods and resources the students in Whitney's class appeared to engage in critical thinking, comparing and contrasting, vocabulary building, communication, perspective, critique, negotiation, and identification of dramatic elements.

Teacher Roles

Olivia and Whitney both articulated their investment in being an educator as more than a disseminator of information. Olivia clarified that as a teacher:

It comes from our heart. And if you work for a corporation and put in your 8 hours and come home that is fine. They're not interacting with kids. They [students] are

the future of our America. We need to put a little more into it. (Interview, December 18, 2008)

Also alluding to the role of a teacher beyond strictly academic was Whitney's reflection when she said, "I think one of my biggest weaknesses as an educator is one of my biggest strengths: that I really do care beyond the surface" (Interview, December 16, 2008).

My observations of the two teachers confirmed these expressions of dedication. For example, both women immediately apologized to their students after being absent themselves. The women clarified that they were only absent due to family matters (defined as a child or a pet) and always make every effort to be in school if possible. Olivia elaborated on her apology for her absence and commented on her role as a teacher when she explained to me:

I don't like to be out frequently and I wanted to remind them of that as freshman so they continue to feel confident in their teacher and in the organization because they really, really need that as freshman... Freshman need something different [as opposed to seniors] and I've learned that through the years of teaching freshman is that they need that well organized, on the ball teacher... I don't want to get to the point yet where they like me too much yet or any type of lack of confidence in me as a teacher. (Interview, November 10, 2008)

This comment suggested additional features that Olivia believed important to her role as a teacher – stability and consistency. Olivia achieved these characteristics by limiting the exposure of personal information in favor of content related discussions. In one observation Olivia shared with her students that a mouse nest was found in her home's ventilation system. Later, she told me, "So, today they [students] got way more information than they needed, but the rest of the day we got our Scottish traditions done" (Interview, December 18, 2008).

Similarly, while partly joking, Olivia maintained her inclination to focus on academic tasks when she told her students of the, “Joy [in] testing student knowledge” (Observation, October 9, 2008).

Despite Olivia’s preference to filter private information from the students and focus on academic content, on more than one occasion the public visibility of her tattoos prompted her students to question what Olivia considered a private matter. Olivia’s response to one instance with her tattoos suggested two additional roles of a teacher. In our first interview Olivia shared:

There are certain things I don’t want them [students] to know but they also know I am human. The first couple weeks of school they saw a tattoo on my leg and they are like, ‘Oh, teachers aren’t supposed to have those’ and I was like, ‘I also have a dog and a car’... But yes, sometimes I do shelter because this is also a conservative environment, conservative Christian environment. (Interview, November 10, 2008)

This response indicates that as a teacher Olivia believed she should establish a level of humanity with her students simultaneous to filtering content based upon the community. Whitney also reflected on the different opinions that exist in the community and effect on instruction.

Whereas Olivia chose to filter content, Whitney took on the role of promoting critical thinking. She explained:

There are a lot of kids that maybe come from families that don’t agree [with social issues] which is why I try to make the point, ‘I’m not trying to change your mind, your view, make a decision for you. I’m trying to help you think and then understand. We can always agree to disagree but we can always treat each other with respect.’ (Interview, December 16, 2008)

Whitney also echoed Olivia’s assertion of the role of a teacher to establish a sense of humanity, but from a different perspective, when she said:

It [teacher identity] helps students to know that teachers are people. I think there is a lot you have to be careful of. But the idea that on the outside people appear to be very confident and have it together and this is who they are. But to understand that even teachers still care what their administrators think or other teachers think – you are trying to help them [students] differentiate. Because I think that is why students sometimes struggle with how they see authority. (Interview, December 16, 2008)

Dissimilar from Olivia, Whitney thought teacher humanity encouraged perspective versus Olivia's method to rationalize teachers' personal choices.

Returning to Olivia's constant negotiation of private and public due to the visibility of her tattoos, a second situation demonstrated the shift from Olivia's initial response focusing on being 'human' as rationalization to establishing her role as an academic and a consistently higher level thinker as self-protection. Olivia shared:

Yesterday I was doing something, I guess you could see one of my higher back tattoos. And of course I am totally against that, I was really embarrassed. But they asked about it and they wanted to know how many. So I said, 'a few' when I actually have a lot and I explained what they meant and I tried to take a more serious route. Instead of like, 'yeah, I got a tattoo, a needle to the skin', I tried to make it more of a higher level thinking for myself like I thought it out, I thought of the artwork, that type of thing. (Interview, December 18, 2008)

I further witnessed Olivia's sense of responsibility to suppress her private identity markers in order to fulfill a professional role when she described the following:

I want my principal to think of me as one thing – a highly educated, extremely intelligent teacher doing my job and that is it. I don't trust them enough to know

anything else about me... They need to think I'm fabulous. Because if something was to happen with a parent then all they are going to be able to say is academic, academic. They are going to look at me as an academic, highly intelligent, highly qualified professional. That is all I ever want them to see me as, end of subject.

(Interview, December 18, 2008)

Whitney, in opposition to Olivia, believed that exposure of private information not only established a necessary feeling of humanity to disrupt authority, but invited her students to share their own relevant personal experiences. In doing so she believed she disrupted the expectation for the teacher's role as the creator of a neutral learning environment. For example, on one occasion the students were creating a budget for an imaginary family to understand how individuals can quickly accumulate debt and potentially become homeless. In conversation about moderating costs Whitney told the students:

Now, whenever I fill up my car – it all depends on how much you get to the gallon – but mine is more because I have a van. It costs me like \$58 every time I fill up...

Now, guys, there are months when my husband and I controlled our electricity by using as little electricity as possible. Don't use your air. Turn your heat really low.

Use less water. (Observation, October 30, 2008)

Another example not only further illustrates Whitney's willingness to share personal information, yet, by her equal participation in the assigned task she demonstrated her belief that a teacher's role should be to decenter the expected role of an authoritative teacher as the 'giver' of work.

For instance, this is one thing I would write, when I was little in my neighborhood I believed for my birthday that I would have a parade that would come down my street.

I knew what it would look like and there would be a sign – Happy Birthday to me – but it was just my grandparents – that was my surprise. (Observation, December 18, 2008)

Olivia and Whitney agreed that a teacher's role is to treat students as valuable individuals and to establish themselves as a person beyond a teacher. They also agreed that the community is a relevant consideration in their role as teacher. However, Olivia and Whitney also seemed to view their role, or identity, from different lenses. Olivia utilized her identity as a model for academic achievement in being clearly seen as a traditional teacher. She encouraged academically informed conversations that reflected her commitment to higher level thinking. Whitney utilized her identity as a bridge to connect, collaborate, and engage with the students. She understood her role to be a guide in fostering a safe space for students to explore their own opinions while learning. Both women, although they experienced the same contextual influences as English teachers at MHS, possessed different identity constructs within the classroom resulting in differential student roles.

Student Roles

Both Olivia and Whitney articulated an understanding that students adapt their discourse strategies to the various contexts, including teachers, they encounter throughout the day. Observation and interview confirmed that student members of these two classroom contexts were actively expected to 'know' their teachers' identities in order to recognize how to effectively interpret, respond to, and engage with teacher language and actions. Olivia articulated:

They know... they change more than I do. They change and they adapt as they walk in each door because they know what each teacher is like, what they can get away with... the old idea of *Horace's Hope* by Theodore Sizer that he goes in a certain way

so he can adapt to be successful. And if they go to that one teacher 2nd period that is kinda off her rocker, they know what to do and what not to do. (Interview, December, 18, 2008)

In the same interview Olivia stated that her students, "...know they are going to get two thumbs up or critical responses, honest responses" (Interview December 18, 2008). Similarly, Whitney, in response to a discussion about stereotyping, asked her students, "Can I make an example? And you will understand because you know me" (Observation, October 16, 2008). Olivia trusted that her students, in knowing her identity, were able to anticipate academic support. When Whitney provided examples, she depended upon student knowledge of her own identity to supplement understanding of her intended meaning. To both teachers, student awareness of teacher identity was a crucial element of student success.

This 'knowing' also represented a teacher assumption that students make accurate interpretations of exposed identity markers. Furthermore, the act of students' 'knowing' their teacher suggests factual and absolute interpretation of teacher identity. Without interrogating identity, Whitney and Olivia relied on an unsaid construct of teacher identity presumed to be valid. Allen (1995) discussed the problematic nature of these presumptions in her silent presentation of identity to what she offered to her own classroom discussion. As a result of mentioning she was married, the dominant societal expectation prompted her students to assume she was heterosexual and married to a man, despite never saying those words aloud. This example highlights the subjective nature of expecting and assuming that students are able to fully 'know' a teacher. While inherently subjective, Whitney and Olivia's investment in 'knowing' is critical to the classroom experience as what students 'know' of a teacher, or student perception, influences how and what is learned.

In addition to knowing their teachers, Olivia believed that her students have to know the expectation for life after high school graduation. She said there are, “things they need to care about in society” (Interview, November 10, 2008). Olivia, in elaborating her role as a teacher, explained what it is that she expected the students to know as a result of her class:

I also identify as understanding the big picture real well. I have a good grasp on the overall academic picture. Because I know what is going to happen when they get out. I know some will break out of that, but the boss has already been set; the line has already been created. There are many of them that will break out, and I encourage them just the same. So, I have a good hold on the big picture. I don't have all the answers but I do know what, as a teacher, their world is going to be like out of there.

And I reiterate that a lot. (Interview, December 18, 2008)

In addition to Olivia expecting the students to understand her interpretation of the world after graduation, her expectation for the students to model her understanding of content and skills was evident in her description of the Scottish traditions presentations. She told the students, “Let me give you a couple examples of what creative looks like” (Observation, December 15, 2008). Generally, my observations and interviews suggested that the student role in Olivia's classroom focused on knowing particular knowledge, completing academic tasks, and preparing to enter an academic world.

Whitney approached the students' classroom roles from a different position than Olivia. Whitney believed that teachers should be, “able to let students have an opinion. Let students teach and learn” (Interview, November 13, 2008) so that students know, “their opinion counts; it matters what they say” (Interview, November 13, 2008). With this knowledge and freedom Whitney believed students should be able to form their own opinion, think critically, demonstrate

respect, and connect knowledge to their own context. As a result of these expectations, Whitney believed students would gain independence. In the first interview, Whitney shared an example of how she articulated her expected student role to a small group of her students. She told a few of her male students, “You have to realize, ‘Man, she does this for me. Now I’ve got to get my own self motivation and get myself going’. We can’t do it for them, you know” (Interview, November 13, 2008). In all, Whitney’s expected student role appeared, from my observations and interviews, to be focused on engaging in scaffolded support from the teacher during the formative high school years in order to develop independent thinking skills founded in respect of difference.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Research Practices

Discussion

At the onset of this study, I presumed Olivia and Whitney to be similar teachers. They were both in-service high school English teachers who independently supported social justice causes. Olivia and Whitney were White, females in their thirties from the middle-class who had similar left leaning political and Christian religious affiliations. Olivia and Whitney even expressed similar clothing styles. Ana, in the initial suggestion to solicit the participation of her colleagues, Olivia and Whitney, for this study, also indicated belief that these women were similar in nature and approach to teaching. Observation and interview reinforced similarity between the two teachers; however, it also discerned significant differences in their class structure and content. It is within these differences that Olivia and Whitney's oppositional identity constructs and the implications for students became apparent.

With illustrations from the field of African American English, the following will elaborate the differential outcomes of Olivia and Whitney's understandings of identity and subsequent approaches to teaching. I will begin by discussing the similar awareness Olivia and Whitney had for the call to be an academic/professional oriented teacher. Next I will discuss how opposing forms of hierarchical affirmation prompted Olivia and Whitney to take divergent approaches to methodology and worldview. I will conclude with a discussion of the consequences these manifestations have for students.

Teacher as Academic

Privilege is generally afforded to individuals who perform the correct representation of self. The ‘correct self’ is that which the dominant culture embraces – White, heterosexual, able bodied, male, Christian, (upper) middle class socioeconomic status, and a speaker of Standard American English. Pitt (2000) explained the invention of personal stories as the intentional method to protect and rationalize that which we care about and fulfill the correct expectation of others. Her use of the child’s game Hide and Seek as a metaphor for the constant push and pull of identity reinforces how protecting the private and performing for the public originates out of the imposed discomfort with marginalized group identities. Implicit and explicit societal narratives validate, authenticate, and normalize dominant characteristics while simultaneously oppress others.

Turning to the field of language to illustrate, the push and pull of public expectations and non-dominant group memberships is explicitly found in the work of Filmer (2003) in her study of negotiating African American English (AAE) and Standard American English (SAE) as a university professor. In this study she uses an auto/ethnographic approach, providing insight into her thought process as a speaker of SAE instructing three high school female speakers of AAE during a summer university enrichment program. Filmer, a self proclaimed “university-educated, Anglo-American woman who speaks SAE as [her] ‘mother tongue’” (p. 254) finds herself ethically driven to inform her three students about the power hierarchy of language in light of recent grammatical corrections of their AAE (by another university faculty member) used on a writing assignment. The issue of corrections aside, Filmer reflected on her physical location within a university classroom and her status as an educated speaker of SAE. Before engaging in support of the girls’ use of AAE in writing she thought to herself, “I’m glad that the

classroom door is shut. Some kinds of boundaries are exceedingly useful” (p. 257). Filmer, although motivated to verbalize her encouragement to the three students, was fearful of exposing an opinion that is forced to be ‘private’ because it is inconsistent with the dominant culture’s preference for an oppositional opinion (exclusively valuing SAE). This example reinforces the claim that private space exists as a method to control and maintain domination over others. In this case, the teacher/professor’s support of non-dominant language is marginalized because it is relegated to a private and contained space, devaluing it as anything intellectual. Furthermore, her acceptance of this marginalization of language maintains her privileged status as speaker of SAE and professor.

The professor’s feelings in Filmer’s study exemplify the push and pull of a dichotomous identity involving academia and parallel the experience of Olivia and Whitney. Olivia’s fear of negative consequences for her liberal perspectives also led her to emphasize her academic role by withholding personal identity affiliations from her colleagues, administration, and students. Olivia adopted a strictly academic focus insisting that members of the MHS community only think of her as, “academic, highly intelligent, highly qualified, and professional” (Interview, December 18, 2008). Early in Whitney’s teaching career she enacted the value-based assumptions of her colleagues by separating her undervalued role as the Theater Director from the more academic and privileged role of an English Teacher. Whitney could not deny the existence of either role as both were visible associations, yet she embellished her position as teacher to acquire and maintain community approval. Olivia, Whitney, and the exemplar from Filmer’s study all recognized that identity matters. Their actions indicated academic identity is a crucial element of teacher professional achievement, prompting private identity to be purposefully filtered and cautiously exposed.

Affirmation as Divergence

Thomas (2007) in a reflective essay exploring Critical Race Theory and ethnic privilege in teaching described, “the gatekeepers of [his] neighborhood’s status quo,” (p. 149; see also Coldron & Smith, 1999) as a parallel to the invisible systems that maintain inequitable structures for ‘othered’ teachers. Olivia and Whitney similarly received affirmation from privileged colleagues validating appropriate academic choices in establishing and maintaining particular identity constructs. To both teachers, their perception of the possibilities of identity, as established through hierarchical affirmation, was crucial in determining their practice.

Olivia’s constant reiteration of portraying an academic self was rationalized as a method to ensure constant administrative support. Drawing upon a previous experience as example, Olivia indicated that a particular principal possessed a negative perception of her based upon her clothing style. During a subsequent principal observation Olivia established credibility when she implemented specific methodology supported by the principal. She indicated that the principal never again critiqued her clothing because he believed she was knowledgeable and a higher level thinker, no longer caring that her clothes did not fit into the dominant expectation. To Olivia, her verbal and non-verbal affirmation of self from a person in a position of power (principal) protected her own identity and reinforced the value of an academic self.

After struggling with the balance between her role as Theater Director and English Teacher, Whitney began to seek validation and comfort in critical reflection. She gained alternative perspective, yet she still felt cautious in modifying historically valued educational units such as Julius Caesar. All of Whitney’s colleagues maintained the academic expectation to teach Caesar in its entirety, and while a teacher who personally enjoyed Caesar, she was unable to rationalize the value for her students. A conversation with her university advisor and

professor was the turning point in supporting her interrogation of academic units. The professor, a person in a perceived position of power, reinforced Whitney's alternative to the historically established instructional unit. While she valued an academic self, Whitney's desire to vary her instruction in response to student needs was reinforced as acceptable. This affirmation encouraged Whitney to position student multiplicity as central to teaching and her role as adaptive and malleable. Olivia and Whitney similarly experienced pressure to fulfill the dominant teacher narrative, yet affirmation of unique identity constructs was the catalyst for divergent outcomes.

Pedagogy

Academic. Undergirded by structures of absolute knowledge, the education system frames teachers as neutral disseminators of knowledge bound by specific methodology and truth. It is suggested that teachers whose identity construct fulfills this exclusively academic identity engage with students in a basic and concrete question and answer format without in depth discussion or questioning to explore multiple perspectives or implications. The teachers monolithically approach issues with a bias to singular interpretations geared toward the dominant culture and in line with features of Whiteness. Also important to note is the lack of organized space that specifically prompts or encourages consideration of (what is associated as) private space. The dichotomous arrangement of identity, which implicitly deems given topics (in)appropriate and (un)productive, restricts multiplicity of perspectives.

Implementation of such methodology is expected to be consistent, rule-governed, and based upon the dominantly accepted ideals. As Olivia met these expectations, she positioned narrow interpretations of academic effectiveness as central to teaching. However, Edwards and Blake (2007) cautioned:

In positioning ‘effectiveness’ solely as an evidence-based, rational or commercial matter and thereby appearing to offer a ‘secure’ foundation for the making of pedagogical judgments, these discourses absolve new teachers from their responsibility for shaping and contesting practices, for acting upon ethical conviction and from the burden of action without the fail-safe ‘rule-book’” (p.42-43).

While Olivia’s effectiveness of content instruction was not examined during this case study, it can be inferred that Olivia’s isolated focal point for the purpose of affirmation negated potentially effective, engaging, and relevant instructional approaches that addressed the needs of non-dominant students. The expectation of an omnipotent teacher and singular academic focus creates exclusionary classrooms void of student distinctiveness.

An analysis of the editing, or correcting, of written work in African American English and Standard American English (a common practice in many educational settings) provides an exemplar for the consequences of an academic identity construct. Rationale for written corrections may include a variety of responses. Many times, however, teachers allude to the social mobility that is afforded to individuals who are fluent in, or at least able to fluently code-switch to, SAE – the academic language. The first problem with this ideology is the undergirding assumption that one form (SAE) is inherently better than the other (AAE), which returns to the previous discussion of utilizing dichotomies as a means of power and control. By reinforcing oppositional dichotomies, marginalization and oppression are maintained. Second, and possibly more directly harmful to students, is what Lippi-Green (1997) refers to as explicit threats and unfounded promises. The threat is the lack of social mobility without the ability to employ the academically preferred language system (SAE). This argument is consistent with Olivia’s expressed motivation and desire to want to provide students with the best possible career

opportunities that require mastery of established academic skills. She expressed knowledge of what, “their world is going to be like out of there” (Interview, December 18, 2008) and therefore pushed them to “dig deeper” on academic tasks to attain higher level achievement. Julie similarly believed that, “Go to college or not go to college, the fact is they need to read, organize, and write cohesively and coherently and present. And those are the skills” (Interview, January 22, 2009). Reading and writing are admittedly relevant skills in this society, yet the narrow focus on achievement and effective skills negates multiple notions of intelligence and success that otherwise could manifest in students. Conversely, the unfounded promise is that the implied promise of ‘success’ is not guaranteed. An African American individual’s use of SAE does not counteract the complexity of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic status or other factors that are also working against their job opportunities, nor does Olivia’s academic focus consider other systematic obstacles the students will encounter. While Olivia clearly recognized that, “They [students] don’t look like me at all. They don’t act like me or think like me” (Interview, December 18, 2008) she disregarded how this will affect their lives and academic success differently than her own experience.

Sledd (1969), in examination of the underlying factors of the inability for African American speakers of AAE to acquire jobs, attributed it to White individuals disliking the skin color of African Americans yet suggesting it was their use of AAE as an excuse. The expectation for language assimilation by the dominant culture and promoting SAE as the only effective means of communication is false and destructive. Furthermore, career opportunities aside, the research of Taylor (1989) as cited in Smitherman (1999) clearly indicates that the incorporation of AAE into language arts instruction yields higher learning outcomes in a shorter period of time. In a reading program combining ‘Black Vernacular’ and ‘Standard English’

students gained 6.2 months in a four month period while a program exclusively using ‘Standard English’ reported only a gain of 1.6 months in four months, therefore negative progress. The explicit avoidance of empirically founded positive correlations between using AAE in language arts and academic achievement, such as the work of Taylor, is additional evidence of the unwillingness to incorporate traditionally marginalized content and views into the academic sphere because it would validate non-dominant identities.

Julie shared in her interview (January 22, 2009) that she minimized controversial topics in their conservative environment by relating content to what was familiar to students. She clarified that what was familiar to students was school. While her rhetoric suggests movement towards culturally relevant pedagogy, it is suggested that Julie’s practice denies value of student life beyond academia. In Olivia’s classroom she heeds caution with her understanding of controversial content due to her belief that, “I know I’m not going to create change. I know that: 1. They really don’t care; they just can’t wait for the bell to ring; or 2. Maybe they don’t understand everything” (Interview, November 10, 2008). It is suggested that Olivia is enacting Whiteness as she sees change beyond her individual means. Furthermore, Olivia is minimizing student interest and understanding of her (read: dominant) knowledge and marginalizing their individual (read: non-dominant) knowledge.

Critical. Empowered by the affirmation of an individual perceived to be in a position of power, Whitney found the courage to engage in reflection-oriented instruction. She did not seek comfort in historically maintained and little questioned methodology but insisted on a personal responsibility to respond to student individuality. In sharing her reflection over extremely negative teacher reaction to students’ use of various technologies in class Whitney reflected aloud, “The cell phones I can understand a lit bit more, but why do we fight it [technology] so

much when it is 100% part of a student's culture?" (Interview, November 13, 2008). Nietzsche (in Edwards & Blake, 2007, p. 51) elaborated the importance of this responsibility to self to engage in reflexivity when he declared, "If we are not accountable...we shall wander the world seeking someone to explain ourselves to, someone to absolve us and tell us we have done well." Ultimately, Whitney used affirmation as a point of divergence from the dominant curricular narrative. She broadened her perceptual base of education and her role within the classroom to create a counter-culture of instructional approaches and measures of student potential. Whitney continued her reflection on technology by explaining her use of 'Cha-Cha', a mobile phone search engine, in one of her classes. She shared, "They are texting, they are online, they are listening to music. So somehow I feel, why do we fight it if they are going to learn best through those mediums?" (Interview, November 13, 2008). Ana echoed Whitney's sentiments when she described her willingness to let her students pick content and methods that are most relevant to their lives. She asked, "Why force it [traditionally upheld content]?" (Interview, February 3, 2009).

Returning to the field of language, the examination of another language study illustrates the impact affirmation of the non-dominant can have student on identity. Jonsberg (2001) examined a university freshman composition course, finding that a group of African American girls and fluent users of AAE demonstrated embarrassment for their use of AAE in the classroom and general disrespect for AAE. The girls were taught to despise their natural language tendencies because they were inconsistent with the academically expected dominant language structures. Sledd (1969), in his analysis of bi-dialectalism, explored the impact of the dominant culture as it imposes language hierarchies, similar to the experience of the freshman in Jonsberg's work. Sledd suggested that language serves two functions. The first is shared group

identity and the second is society's means to reinforce the dominant linguistic model and isolate the non-dominant linguistic model as strange, suspicious, and inferior. This domination, according to Sledd, is able to maintain oppression through dialect differences because the marginalized population is made to despise their own speech and accept a subservient role. The girls understood their identity to the community of AAE speakers but adopted feelings of inferiority and attempted to relegate their language use to non-academic settings in order to perform the accepted dominant academic narrative. Jonsberg later associated this disrespect with the users' lack of knowledge about the history and legitimacy of AAE. Upon sharing a couple passages from the work of James Baldwin, Jonsberg found the girls' attitudes regarding AAE to improve. The infusion of accurate information and respect for language from a validated source, as with Whitney, (see also Blake & Cutler, 2003), improved the opinions of native speakers of AAE who had become overwhelmed by the marginalized beliefs of the dominant culture.

Whitney, an individual who evolved to embrace a critically reflective identity construct, understood that the provision of counter-knowledge, opportunities for student voice, and collaborative questioning is vital for students. Whitney believed that, "At this point in their [students'] formative lives they are already being told what to believe on several levels – you know parents, church, whatever. I'd really like to give them the opportunity to start thinking for themselves" (Interview, December 16, 2008). Ana reinforced this perspective when she suggested that traditional power dichotomies distract students from forming their own identities. As with Olivia, this examination did not look at any informal or formal assessments of Whitney's students' achievement, however, her flexible and broad approach to instruction deconstructs hierarchies of teacher privilege, decentering historically accepted valid knowledge, replacing it with multiple possibilities for student thinking, acting, and being successful.

Worldview

Positivist. Olivia, possessing an academic identity, understood this construct to be personally productive and therefore assumed it would also be the best method for all students to achieve success (Lea, 2004). Her assertion that, “they are getting ready to enter my world and society and I want them to be prepared at all levels of it” (Interview, November 10, 2008) suggested her belief that entrance into wider society produces identical experiences. This perspective, though, tends to over generalize success and neglects to recognize individual intersubjectivity. Again, while this examination did not look at any informal or formal assessments of student achievement, this narrow approach to instruction maintains hierarchies of privilege, mistakenly simplifies and generalizes success, and neglects support of variant versions of success. Conventional in nature, Olivia’s academic identity construct is enacting a positivist worldview.

A positivist paradigm, historically traditional in education and wider society, reflects a generalized, highly regulated, and technical nature to instruction and achievement. This is exemplified in Olivia’s constant reminder to her students to, “Essentially get your stuff done” (Observation, October 30, 2008). A positivist perspective understands reality to be concrete, tangible and rational. When Olivia’s students mis-spoke one day about Somali individuals, her investment in one version of reality was evident in her expressed desire to ask the students:

Do you know what you are talking about? Are you educated? And I wanted to say, really? I get angry at that because: one, it is an uneducated conversation and two, there are people that actually think that way. (Interview, November 10, 2008)

Olivia’s experience with different student perspectives did not manifest in collaboratively deconstructing why they held a particular opinion but in frustration with their lack of congruity

to her personal knowledge base that she believed to be an authoritative stance. Behavior, furthermore, is managed from this worldview with controlled input to yield a predicted output. Julie illustrated this perspective in her interview by saying one of her roles as a teacher is to “maintain order” (Interview, January 22, 2009). Overall, the very objective, linear, and outcome based positivist worldview intersects in many ways with the academic construct of teacher identity and student position. The teacher and student are dominated by a relative authority that is presumed to impose or implement methodology in the correct manner, without influence of personal biases, to a generalized population. Both Olivia and Julie reiterated throughout their interviews that their personal educational attainment (higher education degrees) provided them safety from criticism and authority within the school. Reality, in this worldview, is the understanding of absolute statements of truth and fact while social status is maintained under the premise that hard work will equate progress.

Interpretive. The recognition of complexity is an undergirding element of Whitney’s identity construct within an interpretative worldview. She recognized the discrepancy between her own and her students’ lived experiences (Hollins, 1990), therefore embraced unique subject positions. Her disclosure of stories, opinions, gaps in knowledge, and explicit invitations to share student views reinforced that personal perspectives were welcome and contribute to learning (Sharkey, 2004). Through collaboration, Whitney facilitated an even distribution of power offering constant support yet insisting on student responsibility for their learning (Dlamini, 2002). Whitney focused on recognizing the physical, social, emotional, and academic needs of her students in order to provide meaningful support. This awareness of a multifaceted student was exemplified when Whitney discussed different student experiences of pain. She told me, “They are all still coming from their own pain. I don’t think we can qualify pain... that is

what they see and understand” (Interview, November 13, 2008). To Whitney, experience is relative.

Intersubjectivity is a key feature of the interpretive paradigm. Collaborative thinking processes and interpretation of lived experience promote relative meaning. This reality acknowledges various points of views unique to individual experience or situations and infuses into instruction as an unavoidable element of teaching and learning. Whitney described this element in her teaching as, “life lesson oriented” (Interview, December 16, 2008). Within this worldview, teachers, while assumed to be authoritative figures, do not act as neutral disseminators of known fact. The knowledge of the teacher is admittedly limited. On numerous occasions Whitney clearly indicated that she did not know the answer to a question. For example, in conversation with her students about Mosques, she reinforced student knowledge and clarified her gaps in knowledge by saying, “Are they? I don’t know anything.” (Observation, October 30, 2008). Observation and descriptive data is used within an interpretive framework to foster an ongoing process of questioning and creating environments supportive of student needs. Teachers in this worldview analyze and process language, culture, and behavior to understand the multilayered existences of their selves and students. Student knowledge of Whitney’s priorities to include their perspective was evident during a discussion on derogatory language when a typically shy male student volunteered his experience with a brother who has Down syndrome. Whitney reinforced his perspective and experience when she said, “Absolutely, absolutely. And what some people see as a joke, it offends other people. Yeah, I’m glad you brought that up.” (Observation, November 11, 2008). Whitney provided opportunities and infused student lived experience into instruction to cultivate a relative and relevant experience.

Together, this approach to identity and the interpretive worldview overlap in the dialectal practices that mutually negotiate meaning and power.

Consequences

In light of the previous discussion highlighting the maintenance of privilege within Olivia's classroom and the deconstruction of privilege within Whitney's classroom, it could be assumed that these positions would manifest beyond the classroom to the wider MHS context. However, as advisor for MHS's after school Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered (GLBT) group and with a rainbow flag hung on her classroom door, Olivia's support to the GLBT community was visible to the students of MHS. Whitney, on the other hand, while she shared her experiences of volunteering with local homeless organizations and advocated for students to establish a commitment to issues they cared about did not express markers of alliance to a specific marginalized population that would be visible to the wider student population at MHS. This discrepancy suggests that a personal commitment to social justice or equity issues does not translate to disrupting the marginalization of students within the classroom. Upon further consideration, this is consistent with the theory of identity as dynamic and existing in relation to social context (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Olivia has an academic identity expressed within the context of the instructional school day and a personal identity expressed in the context of after school hours. This dichotomous separation maintains the expectations set forth for a safe professional teacher identity (neutral) yet fulfills her individual aspirations for group affiliation. Olivia's identity construct, academic and positivistic in nature, restricts her ability to converge and balance a fluid identity that would allow for the integration of the professional and the personal in both contexts.

Withholding identity markers due to the pressure of a negative reputation or professional consequences reinforces the ideology and power of Whiteness as it affords specific individuals with authoritative opinions and positions. Habitual disregard of the elements forced to be private reproduce the systemic structures of the dominant culture and inequities. While reality is relative, to students their perception is reality. It is the classroom context, created out of the teacher's identity construct, which informs their reality.

During interview Olivia acknowledged how students adapt to their varying classroom contexts in order to be successful. It is suggested that the students in Olivia's class were no different. As such, her students assimilated to meet her expectation for an isolated academic identity separate from their private experiences. This identity construct is problematic, however, as it focuses on very narrowly defined teacher and student competency of standardized procedures and objectives (Dillabough, 1999). The imposition of traditionally upheld pedagogy reproduces social and institutional hegemonic practices (Alexander & Warren, 2002) centered on no more than impression and responsiveness to specified targets (Ball, 2003). Best practice, as explained by Edwards and Blake (2007) is simplified to, "...a technical matter of correctness to unquestioned criteria" (p. 43). As a result, the educational environment becomes a place of preparation for productivity in the workplace (Labaree, 1997) rather than relevant exploration, critical engagement, and the questioning of hegemonic structures.

To further complicate the situation is to recognize the target population of Olivia's classroom – College Preparatory students. Even if the students were successful according to the course objectives, the lack of awareness and critical examination of the larger structures of inequity denies the obstacles students may encounter (Lippi-Green, 1997). For example, if faced with the need, yet a student was unable to pay thousands of dollars for a college entrance exam

preparation course, the student's ingrained narrow interpretation of success may prompt a feeling of decreased worth and failure instead of critiquing the economic obstacles to attaining achievement in the dominant cultural script.

Of further concern is the loss of student individuality for those who do not embody the cultural Whiteness of this identity construct (Lea, 2004). The nature of a positivistic worldview is a static and unquestioned existence. In focusing on an absolute truth, the invisible power structures that legitimate dominant discourses devalue the cultural capital of varied knowledge, language, and social interaction (Alexander & Warren, 2002; Allard, 2006). Students, as Olivia and Whitney articulated, respond to their context adapting and assimilating for survival, infrequently breaking beyond. The ideologies that saturate their educational experience are internalized, silencing their personal histories (Thomas, 2007) and possibilities for multiplicity of being.

Productive in its infusion of multiplicity, the interpretive worldview, as evidenced in Whitney's classroom, frames identity and learning as relative and fluid. The infusion of student voice within a context of shared power deconstructs passive acceptance of truth to critically examine knowing and knowledge. Together, the teacher and student establish language and spaces to learn from each other and broaden their knowledge and lens', moving out of essentialist categories (Johnson & Bhatt, 2003). Teachers who understand their identity to be fluid reflect and engage with students, honoring their voice and infusion of diverse opinions. The teacher with a flexible sense of identity empowers students to deconstruct monolithic expectations and establish their own critical worldview and self identity. While Whitney did not organize lesson plans to specifically problematize race or other marginalized identities, she did create multiple opportunities for students to share their questions and opinions. The students

were encouraged to critique multiple perspectives and respectfully agree to disagree. As a result of Whitney empowering her students, they in turn were able to empower themselves.

The borders of private and public identities are vague and relative in nature. Professionalism, as it refers to teachers, is a mechanism to exploit and control via artificially created neutral teacher identities (Dillabough, 1999). Issues of teacher marginalization aside, this expectation for teachers to fulfill a neutral identity produces a strictly academic focus. It is subsequently the approval from an empowered other that prompts maintenance or deconstruction of this monolithic approach. Teachers who receive approval based upon a rigid identity construct maintain the academic context understanding their own and student achievement as pre-determined and narrow. Alternatively, teachers who receive approval based upon a fluid identity construct deconstruct the dominant expectation for teaching and students, creating a context of multiplicity. A fluid, interpretative, identity construct is vital to deconstructing the traditional definition of teacher, student, instruction, and success. This particular construct supports culturally relevant pedagogy, what Gay (2002) describes as, “along with academic achievement, a social consciousness and critique, cultural affirmation, competence and exchange; community building and personal connections; individual self-worth and abilities; and an ethic of caring” (in Lea, 2004, p. 118). Instruction is student and learning centered drawing upon modern and relevant approaches, experiences, and beliefs to reach students. What culminates is the inclusion and value of student voice through testimony that disrupts the heroic dominant narrative and creates multiple possibilities for identity, equity, and success (Heidenreich, 2004).

Evaluation of Research Practices

Despite various features to ensure trustworthiness, the present study has a few shortcomings. To begin, while interview informed observation, it is unavoidable that my lens filtered data through a personal framework. Similarly, the established rapport, while productive, may have guided participant answers and/or my own interpretations in a particular direction. To address this, the inclusion of more frequent conversations, increased member checks, and participant written narrative may have provided a more accurate representation of participant voice. In addition to the representation of my participants' voices, the absence of students' voices creates a void in which only inference can be made. Additional observation, interview, and interaction with the students would have provided triangulation and additional themes.

Another potential weakness was data analysis and representation. Attributed to my relatively little prior experience with qualitative data, coding and categorization could have been more systematic involving computer analysis or more extensive peer debriefing. I do not believe this weakness negatively influenced what data I presented, however, more thorough representations and use of the data could only provide a greater context and analysis for discussion.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study, in combination with future research, are important to expanding how teachers think about their identity in relation to their classroom. It is not suggested that all teachers must expose private identity markers, but reflect upon their own perception of identity as developmental, socially constructed, fluid or fixed and the influence it has on students. Given the historical tradition of fixed neutrality in teacher identity, perception must be decentered in order to promote classrooms that are meaningful, effective, and

empowering to students. Future research must expand its breadth to include how teachers maintain or deconstruct privilege not only by what they withhold but their identity construct with relation to power structures and Whiteness. Most valuable to future research is prolonged engagement with students. Their voice in future studies, not only reinforces the deconstruction of academic privilege, but would provide further insight into how and why students respond to teacher identity and the resulting consequences.

Future research questions might include: The exploration on how an identity construct can be judged or changed. How would teacher preparation programs or professional development respond to focus on the student implications?; How do students interpret the impact of their teachers' identity constructs?; Do students transfer critical perspectives gathered outside of school to inside of school interactions, expectations, and work?; and finally, Do (and how) students transfer their learned worldviews amongst peers? How do they maintain or deconstruct peer ideologies?

*pseudonym

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*pseudonym

Appendix A: Interview Number One Questions with Olivia

The following are paraphrased observations of engagements that included a perceived movement beyond concrete academic standards. I am interested in your general reflections as well as indications if these interactions are recurring examples, response to this particular class/ a student, pre-meditated, or perhaps natural responses specific to the moment.

- a. 10-9-08: Made comment that you were out for 2 days and that is atypical but your dog is sick with heart disease and it is like your baby.
- b. 10-9-08: You disagreed with class sentiment in student writing responses that the character from *Monster* was from the ghetto as based on a nice sounding passage about the character siblings playing.
- c. 10-23-08: One of the girls responded to you with a strong tone, “What” whereas you repeated with the same, yet surprised, tone, “What?”
- d. 10-23-08: Students received extra credit for dressing up the following day for the *Monster* debate.
- e. 10-23-08: You tell the students the end of the *Monster* unit will be followed by social issues, the *Odyssey* and then Christmas.
- f. 10-23-08: You provide an example about importance of repetition in debate with hearing Miss O all year long so that it is in your brain until July when you need to beat it out and call yourself Olivia.
- g. 10-30-08: A student requested a photo of Obama for their social issue project. You got a democratic flyer out of your purse that you indicated you had found and was going to recycle to give to the boys.
- h. 10-30-08: (related to previous situation but later) You asked the boys to promote something positive instead of their spin and to have hope for more.
- i. 10-30-08: You prompted a pair of girls to consider what rich people have (girls respond nice colleges, clothes, big cars, yachts, houses), then what poor people have (girls respond that they have to work hard). You respond, “tell me about it!”

- j. 11-6-08: In relation to mythology, with lighthearted intonation you indicated that you are God in class, the students are man and Starbucks coffee is hero.
- k. 11-6-080: During the mythology discussion, you asked the students, “What is our creation story?” (male student responded the big bang theory or creationism) You said, “Yes, the bible says the world was created in 6 days and the 7th was for rest.”

Classroom space question: The ‘Honor Diversity’ sign on whiteboard: Was hanging it a teacher or school choice? How was this framed or presented? What constitutes degrading remarks? What is the response to degrading remarks?

Appendix B: Interview Number One Questions with Whitney

The following are paraphrased observations of engagements that included a perceived movement beyond concrete academic standards. I am interested in your general reflections as well as indications if these interactions are recurring examples, response to this particular class/ a student, pre-meditated, or perhaps natural responses specific to the moment.

Bell ringer:

- a. 10.16.08: “What do you think this quote means? Sharing dark skin doesn’t necessarily make two men brothers.”
- b. 10.23.08: “Just in case you are tardy, write an exaggerated, fantastic excuse for yourself. Be as creative as you can. In about 150 words, convince me your excuse is a valid reason for being tardy.”
- c. 11.6.08: “Given an update. On anything! At least a half a page. – Mrs. W”

Popular culture

- a. 10.16.08: Gwendolyn Brook’s poem, A Song in the Front Yard (poetryfoundation.org)
- b. 10.23.08: Oprah’s segment, Jacqui Zaburido
- c. 10.30.08: Photographs of homeless individuals (housemate.org.uk)
- d. 11.6.08: Melissa Ethridge’s song, Scarecrow

Activity examples

- a. 10.23.08: During the bell ringer on writing an excuse for being tardy, you verbally recalled some of the previous class’ excuses.
- b. 10.30.08: During an activity on creating captions for pictures of homeless individuals, you read the previous class’ captions.

Personal examples & opinions

- a. 10.16.08: After the bell ringer about dark skinned men being brothers you asked for personal examples during the class discussion.

- b. 10.23.08: In response to Jacqui Zaburido, a male student said he had surgery once and that hurt and she has had fifty surgeries. You indicated that you put things in perspective as a result of this.
- c. 10.30.08: During the activity allocating money based upon different family situations you asked myself and another woman teacher about our bills. You indicated that you and your husband save money by using less water and lights.
- d. 11.6.08: After you were out for a day and the students listened to a speaker discuss homelessness you asked the students if they had a change in their personal opinion.

Laughter

- a. 10.23.08: After one male retold his excuse for being tardy, including the phrase that he turned from a blue fish back to his regular color, another male interrupts and said, “back to black”. You, and the class, laughed.
- b. 11.6.08: During discussion of creating a safe place despite differences, one boy indicated that he didn’t know what happened. You laughed and explained what prompted your reaction.

Additional isolated moments

- a. 10.30.08: A male was sharing what a Mosque looked like. You asked, “Is there a speaker, like in Church for Americans?”
- b. 11.6.08: Students were talking over your reinforcement of student descriptions of the homeless posters. You said, “I expect respect. Here that means listening to others.”
- c. 11.6.08: A male student was called to the office. A few students made negative remarks. You shut the door and immediately addressed the comments insisting, “This is a safe place, differences aside.”

Appendix C: Interview Number Two Questions with Olivia and Whitney

1. How do you believe your students identify you? How do they come to these conclusions? How do you confirm or refute these conclusions?
2. How do you identify yourself? Is there a difference in and out of school?
3. If home and school identities are, at times, separate entities, why are they isolated?
4. If there is a separation of identities, what is personal to your students, students' parents, teaching colleagues and/or administrators?
5. How does visibility influence how others view your identity inside the school?
6. What role, if any, does teacher and student identity play in instruction? Why?
7. What parts of your identity and that of your students' identities are privileged and/or marginalized? How is this associated with the private and public aspects of identity? How does this affect your instruction? How does this affect your rapport and/or interactions with students?

Appendix D: Interview Questions with Julie and Ana

1. Who are the leaders at CCHS? How did they come to a position of leadership? What is their role (directed and independently adopted)?
2. How do you define community? How does community relate to CCHS?
3. How would you define the identity of CCHS?
4. What teacher characteristics are appropriate as public knowledge within the school and/or community and are appropriate to keep in a private space and/or place? Why?
5. What are the outcomes of incorporating and/or exposing private characteristics into instruction? What role, if any, does teacher and/or student identity play instruction? Why?
6. How does visibility influence public and private identity?