TEACHERS CONSTRUCTING AND BEING CONSTRUCTED BY PREVAILING
DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES OF WHITENESS IN THEIR CURRICULUM,
CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY:
A CRITICAL INQUIRY OF THREE FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH TEACHERS

By

Christina Berchini

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education—Doctor of Philosophy

2014

ABSTRACT

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Research at the intersection of English education, social justice, and Whiteness has established that the ways English teachers engage with language, communication, and literacy development have implications for whether and how K-12 students are prepared equitably for academic opportunities. The problem discussed in this research tends to foreground a racial and cultural disjunction between a predominantly White teaching force and an increasingly racially and culturally diverse student population. As such, extant research often centers on how White teachers and teacher candidates "enact" Whiteness, White Discourses, and White privilege in their classrooms. Critical Pedagogy, Critical Whiteness Studies, and Critical English and Literacy Studies in particular have contributed to a deeper understanding of how English teachers and teacher educators are complicit in re/producing racial and socioeconomic inequality in their schools and classrooms. However, extant theories of Whiteness and White privilege seem to focus on a sort of homogeneity about Whiteness, which seems to assume that enactments of Whiteness and White privilege and the re/production of White Discourses begins and ends with the teachers themselves. This dissertation study seeks to challenge two ideas: 1) That Whiteness is Whiteness is Whiteness, and 2) that English teachers' enacted Whiteness emerges from a place of unchecked ignorance, privilege, or even racism. This study thus foregrounds a more multiple and shifting understanding of Whiteness and how it is enacted, and aims to identify new possibilities for theories of Whiteness, teaching, and education research. Drawing

on critical education research and qualitative case study methodology, this dissertation explores the following research questions: How do teachers conceptualize their racialized identities as White people and teachers? In what ways do teachers enact Whiteness? How does Whiteness *shape* English teachers' practices? What stereotypes about the White teachers are perpetuated in the authoritative Discourses of their schools? Where do the teachers resist and/or negotiate authoritative discourses of Whiteness, and what challenges do they face?

To all of my life's teachers, especially my parents:
John Berchini, Renée Augusta, & Anthony Augusta.
And for my grandmother, Victoria SanFilippo, because "they can't take your education away
from you."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My successful completion of this degree is not my success alone. I owe this journey to the help, love, support, and guidance of so many.

My dissertation committee is, hands down, a group of the most committed people on the face of this earth, and from whom I have learned so much. To my Advisor, Avner Segall: This journey began with a simple phone call, and continued with your unfettered support. I will never, ever have the words to appropriately thank you. I am indebted to you, and always will be. Thank you.

To Mary Juzwik, from whom I have learned so much about teaching, learning, and owning this project: You helped me grow, and in so many ways you helped shape my experiences in this program. I am so very indebted to you. Thank you.

To Dorinda Carter Andrews: I am damned lucky to have met you toward the tail-end of my program. Our work together helped make this study what it is. Your warm guidance helped me grow in so many ways. I am indebted. Thank you.

To David Kirkland: I am lucky to have met you toward the tail-end of my program. You are a model for the kind of teacher I will strive to become. Thank you for your guidance. I am indebted.

To s.j. Miller: You took me under your wing from afar, and without knowing much about me. I am truly grateful, and so fortunate, for your guidance and support during this process.

I am indebted to the teachers who invited me into their lives during their first year of teaching: Mr. K, Mr. A, Ms. T, and Ms. W. Your intelligence, candor, flexibility, humor, and

sheer commitment made this project what it is. I am humbled by your warmth, generosity, and your commitment to being the best possible teachers you can be.

To my family: I could not have done this without your love and support. I know that you did not always "get it." Trust me, neither did I. I love you. Thank you.

I have a number of friends who entertained my every question, worry, existential crisis, and for some, every conceptual memo: Aaron Bodle, Kevin Burke, Carlin Borsheim-Black, Autumn Dodge, Patti Bills, Takumi Sato, Danny Birmingham, Sally Read, Robin Harris, Janine Certo, and Samantha Caughlan. Whether you read my work, guided my work, listened to me whine about my work, or simply asked about my work: *I am indebted*. A special thank you to Vaughan Machado: As always, you provide(d) much needed laughter. Thank you for your enduring support and friendship. To others I have not mentioned here, but who also shared in this journey with me: I am indebted.

Timothy and Audrey Lensmire: Words cannot express how so very fortunate I feel, to have you as colleagues and neighbors. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your affirming guidance, inspiring feedback, and the time you have invested in me as a scholar and person. Your work serves as a model for what I want my work to become. I look forward to this next chapter.

To Matthew…thank you for turning—and leaving—your light on.

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The Beginning: *School is what you make of it*

I remember how I spent many a Sunday morning as a teenager in Brooklyn, New York. Sundays belonged to my father (my parents are divorced); if the weather permitted, we'd grab breakfast and drive up and down Shore Road. Shore road is one of the few city roads densely populated with trees; it sits on a hill that overlooks the Narrows waterway and Verrazano Bridge. We would gawk at the elaborate homes that dotted this short stretch of road; it was here that my father would remind us (my sister and me) that "this could be yours" if we continued to excel in school. That, "school is what you make of it"; that, "life is what you make of it."

I took this belief system with me, through life. I remembered my father's words when I was confronted with difficult, or even boring situations. Consequently, his words fueled my belief in meritocracy; it did not matter that I was forced to attend one of the "worst" urban high schools in all of New York City simply because my address dictated that I was "zoned" for this school, and thus not legally permitted to attend another high school as a function of simple logistics. School was what I made of it. It did not matter that we were a working class family, devoid of any real access to costly enrichment activities (e.g., specialized summer camps for music and arts): Life was what I made of it. And so I never questioned this trope. I was raised to believe it, and even surrounded by different versions of it in popular culture. For instance, Grammy-award winning hip-hop duo Outkast reminds their listeners that "The only liable limitation is yourself." Paulo Coelho reminds his readers in his international bestselling novel *The Alchemist* that "There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure." Success and failure, then, are framed in self-reliance, and come from within. Because I was taught to internalize any and all successes (and failures), it was a belief that guided my

learning, and also my teaching of English Language Arts in a racially and culturally diverse and under-funded middle school.

Fifteen to twenty years after those fond memories of riding up and down Shore Road with my father, a series of painful lessons have allowed me to deconstruct the myth that had guided my assumptions about life and, as a teacher, my assumptions about teaching and learning. For one thing, "school is what you make it" did not seem to impact my 7th and 8th grade students to the extent that it impacted me. It also did not do much to assuage my early (and terrifically misguided) beliefs about why some students did not seem to care about school in general, and English Language Arts specifically. If anything, the trope fueled my assumptions about teaching and learning; for as long as "school is what you make of it," I was relinquished of any responsibility to examine my practice, or my racialized identity, in a school where the faculty was predominantly White and did not reflect the student population by a long shot.

Thankfully, my graduate school engagements with another perspective disrupted, for me, what eventually appeared synonymous with the myth of meritocracy. Suddenly, success and failure in school was not so simple; I began to consider how schools, rather than working to eliminate inequities that are based on social characteristics and differences—e.g., race and poverty—actually work to preserve them (DeMarrias & Lecompte, 1999). Simply put, I became a bit obsessed with theories of social reproduction, and the belief that schools are "considered central agencies in the politics and processes of domination" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 69). In time, I began consuming literature on critical pedagogy and critical theories; I became vocal about my commitments to social justice and critical pedagogy in English education, meritocracy be damned. I began to see how yes, for some, school is what you make of it. But what I learned much later is how this trope—the meritocratic belief that "school is what you make of it"—is

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embedded in a discourse of privilege; that being able to live in the world buttressed and served well by such a belief is one of the myriad privileges of living in the world as a White person. For many, many others, you are what school makes of you; you are what life makes of you.

Janesick (2001) employs the metaphor *pas de deux* to describe the qualitative research process. For Janesick, the researcher and researched, like dancers, are intricately connected. As she explains, "the pas de deux is designed for two dancers, with the idea that they move as one. They are totally connected to the final product, whatever the meaningful movement is to be and however it is to be articulated" (p. 532). Dance, as a metaphor, carries through/out her work (e.g., Janesick 2000; 2001); she tells the story of engineers, inventors, and other "creative individuals" in order to "help us as qualitative researchers dig…deeply into our roles and go further in explaining the beginning of our interest in the work we do. This can help illuminate more clearly the role of the researcher in qualitative research projects" (p. 538-539). I share the above anecdote in response to Janesick's call that qualitative researchers "[explain] the beginning."

The story and evolution I share above set the stage for how I arrived at a pedagogical orientation toward social justice in English education. As such, I initially proposed a dissertation study that would allow me to investigate whether and how a small group of English teachers taught English for social justice. My goal was to add to the literature on social justice in English education by conducting a study more inclusive of teachers' voices. In other words, how did *they* define teaching English for social justice? What did *they* cite as the struggles and obstacles that got in their way of teaching toward transformative ends in their English classrooms? In the section that follows, the goal is not to provide an in-depth review of social justice in English

education.[1] Rather, I provide a brief discussion of the evolution of my research orientation and rely on critiques of critical pedagogy to explain the crux of this evolution. I then explain how my research trajectory resulted in a critical focus on Whiteness studies in education. During this evolution, theories and research on social justice took a necessary backseat to critical discussions of race and Whiteness. Such explanations, in my view, are necessary. They elaborate on the beginning (Janesick, 2001); in keeping with this goal, and to briefly reiterate Janesick (2001), my explanations intend to "help illuminate more clearly the role of the researcher in qualitative research projects" (p. 538-539), which I interpret as an integral component of critical research.

This study was born of my burgeoning interest in social justice in education, and my commitment to teaching for hope and transformation. For Freire (1970), freedom and democracy are synonymous with a "fuller humanity" (p. 47), and are achieved with hope. In his words, to be hopeless is to be silent. In his iconic treatise, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire writes:

> The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one's arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope[.] (p. 91)

Like Freire, I am moved by hope. This study, in its own little way, was intended to address the nuances of how teachers teach English with/for hope for a better world.

In my earliest years as a teacher educator, and in—admittedly—superficial ways, I was persuaded by research and ideas about social justice in English education, and inspired by clarion calls encouraging educators to commit to fighting against "inequitable hierarchies of power and privilege" (Conference on English Education, 2009, p. 1) in education. Alongside my

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[1] An in-depth discussion of the many theories of social justice in education is tangential to the scope of this dissertation.

engagements with social justice research and influential frameworks (e.g. Adams, 2010; Ah Lee, 2011; Ayers, et al, 1998; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Fennimore & Goodwin, 2011; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Miller & Kirkland, 2010; Morrell, 2005; Ryan & Katz, 2005; Shakman, et al, 2007), I merged critical literacy studies (e.g. Morrell, 2005; Shor, 2008) with critical pedagogy, assuming that a critical pedagogy in teacher education would be an appropriate vehicle with which to encourage the secondary English education students enrolled in my courses to teach for social transformation. So persuaded, I wrote an article (Berchini, 2014) persuading others to instill critical pedagogy in teacher education.

However, something was happening during the early phases of this study. Teachers were having a hard time doing the kind of transformative work they set out to do in their English classrooms. As such, my focus began to shift from social justice to closely examining race and Whiteness, as race and Whiteness began demanding interpretation in unanticipated ways. I do not intend to suggest that social justice issues and issues of race and Whiteness are mutually exclusive. To the contrary, critical race theorists have posited that there is a profound and necessary link between issues of race and social justice agendas (Bernal, 2002; Hylton, 2012; Matsuda, 1987; Parker & Castro, 2012). As Hylton (2012) explains, the critical theoretical frameworks which inform CRT in research are "the starting point for anti-racist, anti-subordination, social justice and social transformation activities" (p. 24). Furthermore, CRT "involves a measure of commitment to social justice and social change, and recognition that 'race' and racism are central factors in the social order" (p. 27). Thus, the quest for social justice, when conceptualized through the lens of a critical race theory, begins with an understanding that racism is endemic, normal, and "central" to the lived, racialized experiences of people of color (Carter Andrews & Tuitt, 2012; hooks, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 2012;

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Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); the quest for social justice, then, works to center racialized experiences with the goal of "figuring out how to make them matter" (Taylor, 2009, p. 10). As such, it is *because* of the relationship between race, racism, and social justice agendas that I moved toward a critical examination of how Whiteness gets enacted in schools.

Moreover, I came to see that a shift in focus was necessary, if I were to tell the kind of story about the teachers that I wanted to tell: One which was respectful of them and their work, and one which eschewed a problematic, contradictory, and deficit idea of White teachers that had come to dominate teacher education scholarship. And in order to tell the kind of story I wanted to tell, it became necessary to critique the critical pedagogy movement. Why a critique of critical pedagogy? It represents one of the earlier epistemological frameworks I developed as a teacher educator. Indeed, the critical pedagogy represents, for me, another "beginning."

After a critique of critical pedagogy, I turn my attention to the crux of this study by exploring and problematizing current un/critical examinations of Whiteness in teacher education. As I describe above, my initial goal of entering schools and classrooms to understand how English teachers taught for social justice, while well-intended, was woefully under-theorized. The Whiteness of the teachers and the enactments of Whiteness demanded by their institutions frustrated my earliest research goals. To conclude this review, I build upon extant theories and definitions of Whiteness to explicate the heart of this study's theoretical framework, and to also call attention to what I began to notice as important distinctions between dismantling Whiteness and dismantling White teachers.

The Second Beginning: *Critical Pedagogy, Whiteness, and Teaching for Social Justice*

The literature on critical theories of education and critical pedagogy are broad and expanding. While a number of scholars have informed my approach to criticality, I largely

subscribed to McLaren's (2000) viewpoint that "[c]ritical pedagogy is a way thinking about, negotiating, and transforming relationships among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state" (p. 345). Prior to my substantive engagements with critical race theories of education, I believed that a critical pedagogy (CP) in teacher education was a reasonable and necessary step toward teaching prospective teachers to teach for social justice and transformation (Berchini, 2014). After all, if credence is to be given to the relationship between critical theory—from which re/conceptualizations of pedagogy emerged— and social justice (Ndimande, 2010), a critical pedagogy in teacher education holds potential to become a generative form of action (cf. Howard, 1999). However, notwithstanding these linkages, Allen's (2004) discussion of the origins and foci of the critical pedagogy movement illuminates how my initial conceptualization of this study has proven insufficient. In other words, I came to social justice and critical pedagogy without consideration for how the movement has been created, fueled, and led by "we whites…no matter how well-intentioned we may have been" (Allen, 2004, p. 121). A movement created by Whites which purports to address social inequities within its framework warrants critical attention and analysis.

In addition to critiquing the movement's problematic origins, its centering of class dynamics—and *back-grounding* of race and racism—is not unproblematic. To this end, Allen explains how "[Critical pedagogy] has been normalized around a discourse that sees class as the principal determinant of social and political life, while assigning race to a subordinate position" (p. 121). It is from his critique of critical pedagogy's problematic origins and de-centering of race and racism that the following poignant question emerges: "Can a discourse that pays so little attention to race be anti-racist?" (Allen, 2004, p. 122).

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By virtue of centering class and capitalism as the units of analysis, a critical pedagogy in education inherently de-centers race and, as a consequence, perhaps perpetuates notions that racism is no longer a problem, or is a lesser problem than socioeconomic and class-based issues—despite the tightly woven intersections often embedded in these issues. Critiques of critical pedagogy (Allen, 2004; Ellsworth, 1989; Jennings & Lynn, 2005), analyses of critical pedagogy in education (Flynn, Lensmire, & Lewis, 2009; Sleeter, & Delgado Bernal, 2003; Trainor, 2002), as well as a critical analysis of my own experiences and reflections as a self-identified "critical" teacher educator and researcher committed to the fight for social justice (Berchini, 2014), shed light on why a critical pedagogy in education is perhaps an insufficient theoretical lens when considering the centrality of race and racism as fundamental to the quest for social justice. For one example, Sleeter and Delgado Bernal (2003) point to the limits of critical pedagogy in multicultural education, and argue that "[i]n the United States, connections between race and class tend to be under-theorized partially because of the myth that the United States is a 'classless' society, which leads to a general refusal to examine class relations critically" (p. 243). Here again, the centering of class—at the expense of race and racism—in a theoretical framework which purports to "take on the problem of whiteness" (Allen, 2004, p. 122) is more than a little ironic, insomuch as "most of the literature in critical pedagogy does not directly address race, ethnicity, or gender, and as such it has a White bias" (Sleeter, & Delgado Bernal, 2003, p. 244). I interpret a movement said to have a White bias as a movement which—however ironically—exercises the (White) privilege to decenter, or even perhaps ignore and evade the centrality of race and racial issues, as the critical pedagogy movement has been said to do.

Take, for another example, Ellsworth's (1989) critique of the CP movement writ large. Her analysis of how critical pedagogy, when put into practice, instead "reproduces relations of domination" (p. 91) in classrooms yields the following provocative question: "What diversity do we silence in the name of 'liberatory' pedagogy?" (p. 91). This question, in conjunction with Allen's abovementioned question, might thus yield the following insight: A discourse which pays so little attention to race, such that it inherently has a White bias, cannot reasonably be considered anti-racist or liberatory. To be fair, "Critical pedagogy calls for educators to be agents working for social change and equity in schools and communities" (Parker & Stovall, 2004, p. 168). However, when one considers the centrality of race and racism to the quest for social justice, as critical race theorists posit, a critical pedagogy does not seem to be a sufficient theorization of the realities of racialized experiences and the White supremacist structures within which these realities endure.

In an educational framework in which race is de-centered and class-based issues are prioritized, despite even the very best of intentions, race and racism are perhaps relegated to a null curriculum (Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986). When a framework decenters—or fails to include—race and racism from its core, I consider the extent to which it is implied that race is no longer an issue which matters within the fabric of society and its institutions. As critical race theorists Parker and Stovall (2004) argue, "critical pedagogy, with its roots centered in social class analysis and critique, can be faulted for not paying enough attention to when class matters, when race matters, and when both areas…determine the life chances of families in the U.S." (p. 172). Jennings and Lynn's (2005) work also speaks to the conceptual limitations of critical pedagogy, and advocate instead for a critical *race* pedagogy. They suggest that "[r]acism and education are…tightly interwoven in a manner that is complex, pervasive and constantly

evolving within and across a variety of social contexts" (p. 26) and emphasize "the importance of understanding the power dynamics inherit in schooling" (p. 26) through the lens of critical race pedagogy.

A critical pedagogy of race, then, appears linked to the quest for social justice in a way that a critical pedagogy cannot realistically make claim to. Perhaps, then, a critical pedagogy in education functions—however ironically—to justify ideologies of colorblindness and neutrality in relationship to praxis (see Parker & Stovall, 2004), educational policy (see Urrietta, 2006), and various forms of school curriculum (see Yosso, 2002). A critical *race* pedagogy, however, appears better suited toward actualizing social justice in that it "both contextualizes and problematizes the role of race and education" (Jennings & Lynn, 2005, p. 28). To this end, a pedagogy in which race is re-centered and Whiteness is problematized and challenged is perhaps a more productive frame through which to take on the problem of Whiteness (Allen, 2004) in educational institutions.

Taking on the Problem of Whiteness in Teacher Education

Why my discussion of critical pedagogy? It was the lens I brought to the secondary English methods courses I taught, and provided the context in which I met the participants in this study. In a terrifically naïve way, critical pedagogy provided what I thought of as my ticket to teaching English for social justice. It is the lens I brought to this study; it is a combination of critical pedagogy, social justice, and my investments in hope and transformation that informed my inspiration(s) for this study. However, in an ironic way, it was *also* the lens through which I unknowingly marginalized the White teachers in my care. I am able to recall arriving to my class sessions, as an instructor, fully armed (as though I anticipate "battling" or "sparring" with students) with critical theories and pedagogies to impart to the racially isolated, socially ignorant,

and inherently racist White teacher education students defined and generalized in the research I had been consuming. As Sleeter (2007) has posited,

>Most White preservice teachers bring to teacher education very little cross-cultural knowledge and experience, although they often possess a naïve optimism that coexists with stereotypes that reflect racial and ethnic biases, such as believing that African American and Latino families do not value education. (p. 172)

If the truth be told, it is this very caricature of the White preservice teacher which had (at least initially) in/formed my view of, and philosophical/pedagogical approach to, the students in my care (whether I had yet to meet them or not). I was not only aware, but convinced of the well-intended, yet "dysconscious[ly]" racist (King, 1991) White teachers with "limited and distorted understandings…about inequity and cultural diversity – understandings that make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education" (p. 134). I was prepared, through carefully designed lessons with (what I hoped would be) practical application, to enlighten my students during those (presumed) inevitable moments where "stereotypic beliefs" (Sleeter, 2001) and lack of understanding about, and experience with, discrimination and racism would surface. In the interest of full disclosure, these anticipated views did not always have to surface as a prerequisite to my proselytizing.

My subsequent consumption of Critical Race and Critical Whiteness Studies expanded my view of the White preservice teachers in my care, but, ironically enough, not always in critical ways. To be sure, through Critical Race and Critical Whiteness Studies I acquired an understanding of racism and Whiteness in (teacher) education as institutionalized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Giroux, 1992; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Leonardo, 2009). Institutionalized racism expanded my view beyond a series of personal characteristics and lack

of experience which may account for one's racism. This view of racism and Whiteness—as institutional—has benefited me personally and professionally, insomuch as I gained a deeper understanding of the world and my place in it, particularly as a White educator. However, I began to uptake a "different" language about the White preservice teachers in my care, and again, not necessarily in critical ways. Whereas prior to my engagements with critical studies I viewed White preservice teachers as merely ignorant about racism and cultural diversity in general, I moved toward a conception of White teachers as well aware of racism in education and yet wholly defensive of their White privilege. This "expanded" view of racism has encouraged me to explore how White teachers exact, at their whims, White Educational Discourse (Haviland, 2008) and tools of Whiteness (Picower, 2009) to defend their White privilege, thereby "impede[ing] movement toward progressive, anti-racist education" (Haviland, 2008, p. 40). It is clear that my understandings of White teachers, both before my engagements with critical research and then as a function of said research, did little to critically orient my view of the White teachers in my care. In other words, not much seemed to change (I critique this more fully, below).

To offer a brief, anecdotal example, I recall discussing chapters from Hillocks, (2006), *Narrative Writing*, with one particular cohort of teacher education students. In this research, Hillocks works with African American students to improve writing outcomes. He argues that "significant gains are achievable among students…for whom little in the way of achievement is the standard expectation" (p. 144). His work is thoughtful and inspiring, and is exemplary of what is possible for students historically disenfranchised in and by the American school system. However, something went wrong in our discussion on that day, such that one student raised his hand to say, with mock contrition, "Ok, Christina, I'm *sorry* that I'm White, but there isn't

anything I can do about that." This student then laid his head down on his desk and began to mock-cry (loudly), shoulders (mock-) heaving.

To be sure, it was certainly an amusing sight, and not one soon forgotten. However, it was also troubling. Initially, I wondered why this student (and some others, by virtue of how I interpreted their reticence on that day) didn't seem to be taking our class discussion seriously. Had he heard it all before in his requisite "diversity" course? Did he not care? At first glance, the anecdote represented exactly what I have been delivered in the research (both "mainstream" scholarship and research which purports a "critical" stance) on teacher education: That my White students are resistant to learning about race and diversity.

To be clear, I am not arguing against deconstructing and exposing the insidious presence of racism in schools, classrooms, and the ways by which White educators are complicit in racist structures of schooling (Boyd, 2006). I do not deny that institutionalized racism exists, and that Whites directly benefit from it. Like countless others, I have observed, first hand, institutionalized and overt racism in action in the educational institutions I describe in this dissertation. I align with the important work critical educators set out to accomplish in their (oftentimes White-dominated) teacher education classrooms, and believe we must work to "recognize, analyze, and critique the power and privileges associated with Whiteness" (Haviland, 2008, p. 40). However, for all of my proselytizing, I was not doing a lot of self-reflecting. And I am in no way suggesting that I am the first White educator to critique my position in an institution pre/designed to benefit me. I am reminded, though, of Ellsworth's (1989) words as I continue to reflect upon my earlier understandings of the White students in my care: "My understanding and experience of racism will always be constrained by my white skin and middle-class privilege. Indeed it is impossible for anyone to be free from these oppressive

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formations at this historical moment" (p. 100). Ellsworth's sentiments, and the implied irony embedded in them, have inspired the following questions and in relationship to my own research and practices: What are the conditions which exempt me, as a White woman in authority over the students in my courses, from implication and complicity in the very structures of oppression in which I seek to implicate my own White students? What makes me the arbiter on understanding matters of equity and social justice, in so much as my White skin locates me, now and for always, in an inescapable "double bind" of Whiteness (Ellsworth, 1997), an interactive and contradictory "power-inflected communication process" through which "'white selves' are made intelligible and enacted in ways *that extend and support racist dynamics and interests*" (p. 260, emphasis added)? Finally, and to invoke Ellsworth just once more, *Why doesn't [or, why didn't] this feel empowering?*

  I assumed, also, by sheer virtue of preservice teachers' Whiteness and the likelihood that they had mastered "doing school" that they were likely to have deficit assumptions about students unskilled at "doing school." Moreover, by virtue of their Whiteness, I assumed that they would bring harmful universal world views (Banks et al, 2005) to teacher education, views which were largely ignorant of racial and ethnic diversity (Sleeter, 2007), and views which perhaps encompassed a color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2009). I assumed that the students in my care, by sheer virtue of their Whiteness, would vociferously defend their White privilege (Haviland, 2008; Picower, 2009). I assumed my students to be in need of a broader perspective of teaching English Language Arts; in my mind, I was precisely the person to impart a more critical, expansive view. Most of all, I had assumed that, had I not come to the rescue with one critical theory or another, with one critical pedagogy or another, my White students' presumed ignorance would, and just as the research argues, "[carry] over into the classroom" (Sleeter,

2000, p. 211). In sum, where was the original sense of hope that had initially undergirded my research goals, pedagogy, and belief system?

As I struggled with what I had been taught—and began to believe—about White teachers, I suspected that the problem ran deeper. It was with and through this experience with the student I describe above that I began to examine my own practices; I began to wonder how my practices were at odds with my intentions. I began to wonder how, rather than encouraging students to problematize their work as White teachers, I "othered" and essentialized their (our) own White identities with and through a pedagogy purporting criticality. I had attempted to stabilize the meaning of their racial identities, an approach to meaning which, according to Britzman (1991) "undermines the more difficult work of social change" (p. 63). And over time, as I gained experience as a teacher educator, I was unable to see how the research reflected my students, aside from their basic phenotypical characteristics. While I was able to "see" my students in the research, I was unable to see the research in my students. In other words, my assumptions about the living, breathing, (White) human beings in my care were informed and shape by extant research; my actual experiences with them, however, told a different story. Alsup (2006) speaks eloquently to this precise issue, in her work on teacher identity and discourses. In addressing the discourse of "educator accountability," she explains how Americans have been fed a narrative in which

> teachers and administrators are [described as] choosing not to work hard enough, do not care enough, and often are not even qualified to do their jobs. In my 7 years as a high school teacher and my 7 years as a teacher educator, this egregious deficit has not been what I've found in my dealings with secondary teachers. (Alsup, 2006, xiii)

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As I've attempted to argue, my actual experiences mirror Alsup's sentiments. Once more, this is not to argue against critiquing Whiteness—I do plenty of this in the cases which follow. I do not suggest that the White teachers discussed in extant research are not doing and saying the very things that highly influential scholars are pointing to and theorizing in order to advance the important work done in teacher education. My goal is to contribute to this research in a more nuanced way by exploring the complexities some White teachers bring and may encounter as people who desire to teach for social change.

To be sure, it is no small task to address the problem of Whiteness in teacher education. However, uncritical approaches to teaching preservice teachers to engage issues related to race, particularly in relationship to teaching diverse students in multicultural contexts, have positioned these teachers as collectively emerging from places of racial isolation and devoid of educative multicultural experiences by virtue of their Whiteness. Sleeter (2007), for example, argues how "White preservice teachers lack of cross-cultural knowledge is a direct result of the racial isolation in which most White people grow up and live" (p. 172). While this may be true in some superficial ways, it is a limited and problematic frame through which to theorize White teachers' racialized experiences—or, a presumed lack thereof.

It is, also, more than a little ironic to uncritically position these teachers as inherently deficient in their knowledge about race and culture by virtue of their Whiteness, while simultaneously expecting that they will learn to critically view their own students' cultures and experiences with an asset-based lens. Critical Whiteness Studies and reviews of research in multicultural teacher education have worked to theorize and ameliorate some of the lack of criticality that dominates the conceptions of White teachers in educational research and teacher

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education classrooms (Laughter, 2011; Lensmire, 2010; Lensmire, A., 2012; Leonardo, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009). For example, Leonardo (2009) calls attention to how

> [a]rguing that whites are initially [and inherently] ignorant of race is helpful within
> certain parameters because it exposes their nonchalance and lack of urgency about its
> process. Taken too far, it has unintended, but problematic consequences, one of which is
> that it promotes the "innocence" of whites when it comes to the structures of race and
> racism. (p. 107)

The myth of White ignorance (Leonardo, 2009), then, is only helpful to the extent that it allows researchers and teacher educators a lens through which to determine preservice teachers' initial "nonchalance" or "lack of urgency" about race and racism in education. Leonardo's reference to White "innocence" also inspires the question of whether Whites (preservice teachers and teacher educators) consider themselves absolved of any responsibility to substantively examine Whiteness "when it comes to the structures of race and racism." Said differently, White innocence may promote the belief that (for example) if I, as a White person, am ignorant of my White race and privileges, I cannot reasonably be held accountable for not knowing what I did not know.

Attempting to teach teachers to "address power relations critically, particularly racism" (Sleeter and Delgado Bernal, 2003, p. 240) while positioning them as ignorant of its process does not bode well for goals for social justice in education. To the extent that research and teacher educators (as a function of research, as was my case) uncritically construct White teachers as collectively deficient by virtue of their skin color long before they walk through their teacher education classroom doors, and to the extent that research and teacher educators "gloss over"

(Haviland, 2008) the system which breathes life into White teachers racialized experiences, goals for social justice appear quite tenuous and perhaps even hypocritical and unattainable.

In the above discussion I intended to incorporate several beginnings; in this study, and as a function of the "beginnings" I cite above, I have found it necessary to foreground an examination of how Whiteness was enacted by teachers in their classrooms and schools. In so doing, I was able to describe why my initial conception of studying social justice in English education was woefully inadequate, as race and Whiteness, during all phases of this study, demanded interpretation in ways I did not anticipate. In the following discussion, I turn to the crux of this study to explain how I came to an examination of Whiteness in education.

Theoretical Framework: Theorizing Whiteness

Ignorant

Racism

(unchecked / ignored) White privilege

Invisible Whiteness

White supremacy

Defensive

Denial

Unwilling

Oblivious

Develop a race-cognizant repertoire [assumes a lack thereof]

White Educational Discourses

Tools of Whiteness

Develop a racialized critical consciousness [assumes a lack thereof]

Inherently racist

Evasive

Angry

Conservative

Exhausting

Business-as-usual

Critical educators have begun to worry that the very way that we have imagined and

conceptualized white people and their racial identities is contributing to our critical education

failures with them.

(Lensmire, 2010, p. 169)

The above list of terms is not an exhaustive composite of the language used in extant

research—and quite often in Critical Whiteness Studies—to describe working with White

preservice and inservice teachers. I did not find it necessary to take another look at the literature

to be able to recall this language; as someone who internalized and then used it to draw

assumptions about the English teacher education students in my care (as I describe above), the

language is quite fresh in my mind—even though it has been several years since I made the

conscious decision to disrupt my own use of this language to construct White students. To be

sure, in order to understand Whiteness, it is necessary to understand how it operates individually,

socially, institutionally, and ideologically. To understand how Whiteness functions and is

perpetuated, it is necessary to engage racism in its myriad forms. Scheurich and Young (1997)

offer a framework for understanding the "levels of racism" (p. 5), beginning with overt and

covert racism in the individual, and continuing with institutional, societal, and civilizational

levels of racism, each level of which is "broader and deeper" (p. 5) than the level which precedes it.

I do not have any trouble with the notion that individuals, institutions, and society are embedded—whether subtly or overtly—in a foundation of White supremacy (hooks, 2013). It has been argued that a willingness to engage discussions about how the realities of White supremacy inform myriad systems, institutions, and lives (of both Whites and people of color) can be a more generative way by which to address racism (Leonardo, 2004). For hooks (2013),

> We can move beyond the us/them binaries that usually surface in most discussions of race and racism if we focus on the ways in which white supremacist thought is a foundational belief system in this nation. White supremacist thinking informs the consciousness of everyone irrespective of skin color. (p. 11)

hooks points to a problem of how racism is typically addressed; most discussions about race and racism, it can be assumed, are unproductive in that they reinforce racial binaries of "us" and "them," which I interpret as an "us *versus* them" mentality. I have seen the consequences of an "us versus them" mentality play out in my own teacher education courses when racism is addressed as a personal shortcoming, rather than an institutional and social construct which benefits and "invests" in Whites (Flynn, Lensmire, & Lewis, 2009; Lipsitz, 1995). I have personally struggled with the lack of generativity, which seems to result from such an approach.

As I have said, I do not necessarily disagree with the ways by which scholars have theorized Whiteness in relation to racism. I do not argue with the idea that Whiteness depends on racism in order to achieve/perpetuate/maintain its dominance in society, as it would be foolhardy of me to do so. I do not argue with the idea that Whiteness should be examined and interrogated, particularly in relationship to how it re/produces White discourses in teacher education. I do not

have any trouble understanding how it might be said that teacher education students and teachers may enact tools of Whiteness (Picower, 2009) and/or White Educational Discourses (Haviland, 2008), and/or Discourses of Whiteness (Borsheim-Black, 2012), in order to defend their dominant positions in society, as privileged White citizens. Leonardo (2002), however, offers a discussion wherein he argues that Whiteness should be understood as intersectional. As he explains,

> As a collection of everyday strategies, whiteness is characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions….[However,] many white subjects have fought and still fight on the side of racial justice. To the extent that they perform his act, they disidentify with whiteness. (p. 32)

For Leonardo, while Whites who can—and do—enact Whiteness, it is also possible for Whites to work toward racial justice. Leonardo's discussion offers a sense of complexity to extant notions of Whiteness which uniformly characterize Whites as defensive of their White privilege and evasive of issues around race and racism. As I have discussed, I am dissatisfied with limited and perhaps distorted notions of Whiteness that paint Whites with broad, uniform strokes. In other words, while one might be White, it is possible to fight against White ideology.

Keating (1995), moreover, argues that an overemphasis on racism as the sole means by which to deconstruct and interrogate Whiteness can have counterproductive effects. For one, she argues that "interrogations of 'whiteness' and other racialized categories seem to confirm [rather than disrupt] static concepts of identity which reinforce the already existing belief in entirely separate 'races'" (p. 909). Additionally, the implications of "continually emphasizing racism" (p.

914) are not only counterproductive for students, but deleterious to all students' understandings

of oppression. Keating explains that, to interrogate Whiteness,

> The point is not to encourage feelings of personal responsibility for the slavery,
>
> decimation of indigenous peoples, land theft, and so on that occurred in the past. It is,
>
> rather, to enable students of all colors more fully to comprehend how these oppressive
>
> systems that began in the historical past continue misshaping contemporary conditions.
>
> Guilt-tripping plays no role in this process. Indeed, guilt functions as a useless,
>
> debilitating state of consciousness that reinforces the boundaries between apparently
>
> separate 'races.' (p. 915)

On the one hand, Keating's words find resonance with hooks' (2013): There is a painful

historical past, which accounted—and continues to account for—contemporary racialized

conditions. For both authors, understanding this past is necessary to understanding the roots of

oppression. hooks calls for the "nation…to accurately name white supremacy" (p. 13) lest "the

roots of racism…remain strong" (p. 13). To focus on White supremacy, then, is to focus on the

racism upon which it relies. However, Keating, at the ground level with students, discourages

continually emphasizing racism, lest educators instill in students a futile sort of pessimism, and

the "belief that racism is inevitable and racialized barriers will never be overcome" (p. 914).

However, because Whiteness depends on racism, and because it is true that "racism is like smog

we breathe" (Carter Andrews & Tuitt, 2012, p. 2; see also Tatum, 1997), I am compelled to ask,

what does a focus on Whiteness and racism, in teacher education, make im/possible?

> *White Privilege in Teacher Education: A Critique.* To be sure, Keating is not advocating

for a colorblind approach to matters involving race and racism. She makes this vibrantly clear in

her work (1995; 2007). Expressions that "children are children" regardless of their race, and the

claim that teachers "do not see race" but instead "see children," are not productive and serve only to ignore the "concrete material effects" (Keating, 1995, p. 915) of racism and Whiteness. Rather, I consider Keating's words against the backdrop of Haviland's (2008) study of the silencing power of Whiteness in education. Take, for example, Haviland's brief discussion of Katherine, a student in a university student-teaching seminar whose silence during a discussion about White privilege "represented a challenge to WED [White Educational Discourse] rather than a lack of engagement" (p. 47). It became apparent to the author, in her discussion with Katherine after this particular class, that the student "felt that [the author wasn't] being 'realistic' about White privilege and how it impacted education" (p. 47). There is not an interview transcript to accompany this description, or even a detailed account of the discussion, nor does Katherine show up again in this particular report of the larger study. In fact, we know very little about her, other than that she—along with the other participants—identifies as White. We know, also, that Katherine—along with the other participants—"self-selected into a student-teaching seminar that focused on multicultural issues and expressed a commitment to and interest in exploring the impact of race and racism on their teaching" (p. 41). I assume, then, at the very least, that Katherine is interested in engaging the very issues about which the course was based.

I consider the description and interpretation of Katherine's body language during the discussion ("her lowered head, frown, lack of eye contact, and arms crossed on her chest [which] indicated that she was opposed to the dominant strain of the discussion" [p. 47]), and how this "indication" was supported by the conversation which followed—again, a conversation we do not know much about, as readers. I am compelled to wonder whether the seemingly singular construction of Whiteness as synonymous with White privilege had more to do with this student's silence than a simplistic, predictable, and perhaps even predetermined assessment that

silence functioned, in this case, as a power-evasive characteristic of Whiteness (p. 44). To be sure, Haviland is clear in her warnings against painting Whiteness with a monolithic brush. She allocates a small section of her article to a discussion beginning with the header, *Whiteness is Not Monolithic,* and briefly draws from research which describes Whiteness as nuanced in its embodiment. And yet, despite the author's own warnings against oversimplifying Whiteness (p. 42), how White Educational Discourses and White privilege get enacted is the focus of the article, particularly around the author's use of Peggy McIntosh's (2008) iconic and oft-referenced work on White privilege, with her students in the university seminar under study.

When a course on multicultural issues, race, and racism is structured, in practice, as synonymous with addressing Whiteness as White privilege, we might reconsider Katherine's contributions (or lack thereof), for, as Keating (1995) points out, "When self-identified 'white' students feel guilty, they become paralyzed, deny any sense of agency, and assume that their privileged positions in contemporary U.S. culture automatically compel them to act as "the oppressor" (p. 915). Scholarship has pointed to how a steadfast focus on White privilege has yielded deleterious and futile consequences, including positioning students as guilty, angry, hopeless, and defensive (Flynn, Lensmire, & Lewis, 2009; Lensmire, 2010; Trainor, 2005).

The Problems of Whiteness, White Privilege, and Paradoxes of Whiteness in Teacher Education. I have had personal experiences with the seemingly futile focus on White privilege in discussions about racism, one of which resulted in a colleague sarcastically reminding me that she, as a White teacher educator who believes that (to paraphrase) poverty is a much larger problem than racism, has opted out of membership into what she then referred to as "The White Guilt Society." This is not to say that Haviland's work, and other work which attempts to expose invisible Whiteness, is not useful, or is ultimately futile. It is generative in many ways, and

particularly to my understanding of how, in some ways, Whiteness was made visible in the teachers' practices, classroom discourse, and schools I describe in this dissertation. Moreover, I would be remiss if I did not admit that McIntosh's (2008) ground-breaking work, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, has informed both my learning and my pedagogy. In fact, I regret that my first exposure to the term "White privilege" took 26 years to occur; this fact in and of itself is an invisible privilege born of being White, I am so very certain, but also, paradoxically, a function of growing up working-class. As an academic Discourse (Ellsworth, 1997), Whiteness and White privilege were not destined to become dinner-time topics to which I may have been exposed, as a child, by any stretch of the imagination. I only became a *conscious* member of this Discourse upon Masters' study. As such, the conditions that ultimately account for my lack of conscious and critical awareness of Whiteness are a function of privilege, to be sure, but also a lack of early access to this academic Discourse.

Oxford English Dictionary (2013) defines paradox as "An apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, or a strongly counter-intuitive one, which investigation, analysis, or explanation may nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true." I call attention to this term because it seems to underlie the problem with extant discussions of White privilege in research on teacher education: In the best case scenario, Whites can be critically aware of their racialized experiences. Their awareness, though, does not reduce or in any way change the amount, or kinds, of privileges they receive in their daily experiences (whether psychically or materially). In other words, I am aware of (many, but certainly not all of) my unearned privilege(s) as a White woman. It does not negate, or lessen, the fact that I am not likely to be pulled over in my car, by a police officer in the United States, as a function of my skin color. As such, investigations into White privilege will always "prove," or uncover, the myriad ways by

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which White privilege is enacted. In other words, Whites will always receive racialized privileges, these privileges will always be dependent on individual and institutionalized racism, and this will always prove to be the case, no matter how critically aware any one White person—or group of White people, say, in a teacher education course—may be of their White privilege. However, I'd like to call attention to a paradox of a different kind.

As I begin to describe above, I was caught in a certain paradoxical relationship to Whiteness, as a youth and young adult. My lack of critical awareness of my racialized privileges was born of being White and never, truly, 'required' to confront them. However, my lack of awareness was also due to a lack of access to particular academic Discourses—having nothing to do with my race. In other words, I was in a different sort of double-bind of Whiteness, and very much unlike the kinds of "no win," paradoxical relations to Whiteness Ellsworth (1997) provocatively describes. Ellsworth defines the "double-bind" as "the power-inflected communication process" (p. 260) through which "'white selves' are made intelligible and enacted" (p. 260). Double-binds of whiteness, for Ellsworth, involve processes which "extend and support racist dynamics and interests" (p. 260). In other words, you are damned if you do (critically engage White privilege) and you are damned if you don't (critically engage White privilege).

For one brief example, Ellsworth describes the White academic who, in exploring and attempting to dismantle White privilege in their scholarship and teaching, are rewarded (e.g., with publications, conference invitations, and eventually, tenure) by the very white supremacist structures (i.e., educational institutions) and policies which "fail to question the racialized paradoxes produced [in and] by certain academic practices" (p. 264). In other words, the anti-racist White academic is successful given the White supremacist structures, policies, and rules

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governing one's path to academic success, racist constructs which set them up to—and thus allowed for—them to succeed in the first place. To be sure, the anti-racist White academic Ellsworth describes endeavors to do critical, important work, but the historically racist structures and policies within which they do this work remain unquestioned and thus, intact.

 Whose Whiteness? As a White, female academic, I fit well within certain double-binds of Whiteness. To be sure, some of them resonate with me. But it was not always this way, and Ellsworth's discussion—as with many discussions about Whiteness and White privilege in a general sense—do not account for other paradoxes of the double-bind. That is, and as I have explained, I was in the kind of double-bind where my own White privilege shielded me from knowing anything about the concept for all of my childhood and part of my adult life; on the other hand, my working class beginnings did not make for the kinds of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973; Lareau, 2000) which may have (but not necessarily, I realize) exposed me— early on—to the kinds of academic Discourses that inspire a critical consciousness of social issues and my racialized participation in them. This is not only true of the home Discourses to which I had (and did not have) access, but, given my urban upbringing, it is also true of the kinds of schools to which I had (and did not have) access. My own experiences speak to just one type of intersectionality of identity largely ignored by the no-win conceptions of Whiteness and White privilege. The double-binds Ellsworth describes, as provocative as they may be, are not all-encompassing, and are not guaranteed to resonate wholly and completely with all Whites (although, I suspect she'd agree that that was not her goal). I have found it necessary to remember that not all Whites begin in the same place, nor do they wind up in the same place. As an emerging scholar, this is, at best, true of my circumstances; at worst, it is painful when I

consider the professional doors that have opened as a function of my scholarship and research interests, and the personal doors that have closed at the same time.

To be sure, I am in no way attempting to "disprove" the insidiousness of Whiteness and White privilege. My goal in this study, in part, is to call attention to the intersectionality of Whiteness and the sorts of paradoxical arrangements which make conceptions of Whiteness and White privilege less "neat." The paradoxes which inform one's racialized experiences in the world are real. They are intersectional, and at times oppositional, and it might serve interested teacher educators well to honor and address (and unpack) those intersectionalities when students raise them in discussions and their own work.

As such, the paradoxical conditions which structured my initial lack of awareness about White privilege as a Discourse in which I participated are intersectional in many ways. My own experiences give me profound pause for thought when I consider the teacher education students—and the assumptions which tend to frame them—with whom I have crossed paths over time. In my own case, I did not know what I did not know, as a White, female, English Language Arts teacher of racially diverse students. Later on, I did not know what I did not know about the White preservice teachers in my care. That is, did they grow up as I had? What shielded them from understanding their racialized performances in society (that is, what shielded them—in addition to, but other than—some notion of unfettered White privilege)? If they happened to be critically aware of (their) Whiteness, what are the conditions which allowed for such awareness? And further still, what are the im/possibilities of such awareness, if any? According to the Lensmire et al (2013), and on the topic of White privilege in English education, "McIntosh [her work with White privilege] acts as a *synecdoche for* (stands in for) *all the anti-racist work to be done*—and this limits our understanding and our possibilities for action" (p. 1, emphasis in

original). Furthermore, publicly accepting one's understanding of their White privilege has become synonymous with acquiring the label of "good white person and good white teacher" (p. 4). As the authors argue, confessing one's White privilege, in a mistaken sense, "ends up *being* the anti-racist action" (p. 4, italics in original), and yields an ironic sort of inertia in matters of race and racism as, beyond confessing one's White privilege, the systems and institutions which create the conditions for White privilege remain intact.

My own experiences, when I consider them against the backdrop of Lensmire et al's critique, inspire yet another set of questions: In so much as White privilege seems to reinforce the binary of "good" White versus "bad" White (just as it reinforces White and Black binaries), what am I to make of my earliest years, as first a teacher of young, secondary public school students, and later, of English teacher education students? Am I automatically positioned as a "bad" White teacher because my own White privilege shielded me from realizing that I had unearned privileges? What do I make of my lack of cultural capital which potentially precluded early knowledge of the same? Does the latter question suggest that I am "less bad" because, like so many people, I come from humble beginnings which dictated the Discourses to which I had access until my elective enrollment in a Masters' course which was structured to explore this topic (and was a course taught by another White woman)? I might add, this course was on the same roster but distinct from other graduate courses offered by the same institution which, like so many others, treated race and diversity as something to engage separately from subject matter. Further still, does my elective enrollment in a course about White privilege make me "less bad" than I might inherently be had I opted to study something else altogether (e.g., Reading Strategies)? Could anything, other than a completely different scenario and life history (e.g., a different upbringing, different surroundings, different access, more or "better" cultural capital,

etc.) secure, for me, some coveted status as a "good" White person/teacher? As importantly, says who? And, perhaps ironically, in what ways did I use my own understandings of White privilege to frame English teacher education students as "good" or "bad," despite not knowing much about them (at first) beyond their White skin?

 Epistemological Whiteness. The above anecdotes are intended to illuminate my troubles with the ways by which White teachers are, at times, framed in the literature on—and issues about—White teachers, Whiteness, and White privilege in teacher education. Again, and lest I be misunderstood: I fully acknowledge that Whiteness and White privilege depend on racism and racist structures. Whiteness and White privilege cannot be engaged without also engaging racism and Whites' participation in it. Whiteness and White privilege shape institutions, access to them, and participation within them. To revisit Scheurich and Young (1997), their framework for understanding how racism is manifest at multiple levels is helpful, and in some ways has informed my approach to data analysis, as has the work of others who theorize and critique Whiteness. Scheurich and Young combine the "levels of racism" to ultimately argue that epistemological racism is the sum total of the levels (i.e., individual, institutional, societal, civilizational—"out of which emerges epistemological racism" [p. 5]) which precede it. As such, and as the authors argue,

> Epistemologies, along with their related ontologies and epistemologies, arise out [of] a particular social group. Different social groups, races, cultures, societies, or civilizations evolve different epistemologies, each of which reflects the social history of that group, race, culture, society, or civilization; *that is, no epistemology is context-free. Yet, all of the epistemologies currently legitimated in education arise exclusively out of the social history of the dominant White race.* (p. 8, emphasis mine)

Scheurich and Young's discussion gives me pause: If epistemologies are a reflection of the institutions and social histories out of which they arise; *if no epistemology is context-free*, why, then are interrogations of Whiteness—and usually by way of White privilege—so often located in teachers individually and as groups (as with those who comprise the teacher education classroom)? Subsequently, why are White future (and current) teachers held responsible for a racist epistemology which "arise[s] out of the social history and culture of the dominant race…[and which] logically reflect and reinforce that social history and that [their] racial group" (p. 8)? Furthermore, and particularly if most preservice teachers are unaware of the institutionalized and sociohistorical conditions which have allowed for the possessive investment in, and favoritism of Whiteness (Flynn, Lensmire, & Lewis, 2009; Lipsitz, 1995), from what, other than the dominant Discourse (into which they have been socialized and indoctrinated from birth) should they be expected to draw? As one of my Critical Whiteness colleagues has asked, (to paraphrase) what else are they (future White teachers) going to use, and why are we surprised when this (dominant Discourse) is what they draw from?

On Identity: In relation to the above point, I draw from Gee's (2000-2001) research on identity as an analytic lens for research in education. According to Gee, identity formation is sociocultural, multiple, and "connected to…performances in society" (p. 99). For example, I am a White woman, both a graduate student *and* a teacher educator, a friend, as well as a researcher/academic interested in issues related to race, racism, and critical Whiteness. My interactions with friends and colleagues in Michigan, formed as a function of my attendance at Michigan State University, tend to center around research (my own interests and those of others), teaching, and discussions about teaching, students, and the politics of education, all of which are punctuated by the occasional glass of wine. However, when I go home to Brooklyn, New York, I

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am a daughter, a sister, and a friend (this is not to suggest that I am not those things, or do not perform those roles, when I am not home. The difference is such that my roles as daughter, sister, and friend within a home-based, non-academic Discourse, are fore-grounded when I *am* home). My interactions with family and friends at home center around food, childhood memories, and my taking great pains to drop the "r" at the end of my words so as to—at least— fit in at the corner deli with the other Brooklynites when I order my daily "cawfee, no sugah."

Ideology: Because they are also *ideological*, identities are ways of "being *recognized* as a certain kind of person" (Gee, 2000, p. 99, emphasis added). To elaborate on my above example, my identity as an academic, when I go home, has not done me any favors. I learned long ago that a part of my identity—my membership(s) into academic and certain professional Discourses— has been hard for particular people to digest, and has had something of an alienating effect; at times, it has inspired questions about whether my dissertation research in race, and emphasis on investigating (and at times, critiquing) Whiteness might "work against" me as I attempt to seek a professorship at a university (although, to be fair, I also receive this question when I am in academic circles). Because, when I go home, I am recognized as a certain kind of person, my membership into academic Discourse(s) has clashed with other Discourses of which I am a part, at times proving incompatible with the role(s) I play—the Discourses I act out—when I return home.

I describe my multiple identities—and performances of them—to explain Gee's (2000) point that "[t]he 'kind of person' one is recognized as 'being,' at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable" (p. 99). To offer another personal anecdote, during certain hours of the day, and certain days of the year, I am a teacher educator of aspiring English

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teachers. As such, I am I a position of "authority" over students working toward teacher certification. On the other hand, I am also a graduate student working to gain credibility as a researcher of this same population, credibility which is granted (or perhaps not) by experts in my field, and based on my successful engagements with certain tasks and academic benchmarks. These are only two identities that I perform in any given day, identities which "change from moment to moment" and "context to context." As such, "[e]ach of us is a member of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities" (Gee, 2008, p. 4). Furthermore, identities and ideologies are part and parcel of the Discourses to which we belong; in other words, "[w]e all live and communicate with and through 'ideology'" (Gee, 2008, p. 28). I also draw from Bakhtin (1981) to understand the relationship between identity and ideology, who argues that an individual's "becoming" is an "ideological process" (p. 342). On Bakhtin, Warshauer, Freedman and Ball (2004) explain that, "[i]n effect, the ideological environment – be it the classroom, the workplace, the family, or some other community gathering place – mediates a person's ideological becoming and offers opportunities that allow the development of this essential part of our being" (p. 6). The ideological self, moreover, refers to "how we develop our way of viewing the world [and] our system of ideas" (p. 5).

The above notions of identity and ideology center identity formation in social context; as such, I intend to show in this study how the teachers construct, and are constructed by, a variety of settings and situations. Their pedagogies, as a result, are inevitably subject to discursive tensions. As Britzman (1991) explains, "Inscribed in any pedagogy are the tensions of the social. Every pedagogy is overburdened with relations of power, techniques of social control, and institutional mandates. Thus, pedagogy articulates imperatives of particular discourses and enacts specific styles of interpellation" (p. 72). To clarify my application of these ideas, Bakhtin focuses

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on discourse and ideology as they relate to novel study; Freedman and Ball draw from

Bakhtinian perspectives as they relate to students' literacy development; I explain these ideas as

they relate to how teachers seem to not only construct, but "get constructed" by an interrelation

of ideological, social, and discursive influences. Understanding White teacher identity

development and their pedagogies as socially constructed, discursive, and laden with tension(s)

has been helpful in understanding their work, as well as the contexts within which their work as

teachers is situated.

Discourses: To appreciate identity construction in social context, I draw from Bakhtin's

(1981) discussion of authoritative discourse. For Bakhtin, "The authoritative word is located in a

distanced zone, *organically connected with a past* that is felt to be hierarchically higher. Its

authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a *prior* discourse" (p. 342, emphasis

added). I intend for the term authoritative, as I use it in this study, to signify that authoritative

Discourses "never [originate] from the speaker" (Britzman, 1991, p. 61). Rather, they are framed

by contexts and external demands. I have found Bakhtin's discussion of authoritative Discourse

helpful to moving beyond simplistic enactments of Whiteness which are so often reduced to

teachers' defensive, privileged ways of being (Laughter, 2011; Lowenstein, 2009).

I also draw from Gee's (2008) work in Discourses to better understand how White

teachers' identities are multiple, shifting, and socially situated; I employ his conception of

"Discourse" with a capital "D" to show how their—as with all of our—identities are "thus,

always and everywhere social and products of social histories" (p. 3). Furthermore, our

inevitable membership into multiple Discourses means, sometimes, that Discourses compete

with each other, are contradictory, and perhaps even incompatible; accordingly, "There are

conflicts among them [Discourses], and each of us lives and breathes these conflicts as we act out our various Discourses" (p. 4).

Discourse is more than language; it is a way of being in the world for, as Gee (2008) reminds readers, "Discourses are ways of having, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or "types of people") by specific groups" (p. 3). Critical Language Studies bolster this view by framing Discourse as more than language. Language, according to Fairclough (2001) is "a form of social practice" (p. 16). Furthermore, when language is understood "as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions" (p. 21). Thus, texts, processes, and social conditions are discursive, and should be read in relation to each other.

The Conflation of Whiteness with White People. The above discussion about Discourse, language, and ideology leads me to my next point about how Whiteness tends to be theorized in teacher education research: Despite how racism (and thus, Whiteness) is manifest on a number of levels, and in myriad ways, research in teacher education seems to have relied on White privilege (and/or racism) with the effect of conflating Whiteness with White people. This is clear in considering the terms I use to open up this section. To bolster my point, I consider the following orientations: Can *Whiteness* be defensive of, in denial of, unwilling to address, and oblivious to, its own Whiteness and White privilege, or is it White *people* who are defensive of, in denial of, unwilling to address, and oblivious to, their own Whiteness and White privilege? Such terms make sense as they are used to characterize *people*—not to epistemological and theoretical constructs in an anthropomorphic manner. Keating (2007) distinguishes between "white" people,

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and "whiteness" as an epistemological framework. In her work, she is careful not to "equate 'whiteness' with people identified as 'white.' Rather, the relationship between 'white' people and 'whiteness' is contingent" (p. 131). In other words, the

> conflation of 'whiteness' with 'white'-raced people draws on false generalizations and implies that all human beings classified as 'white' *automatically* exhibit the many negative traits associated with 'whiteness': They are, *by nature*, insidious, superior, empty, terrible, terrifying, dominating, controlling, superficial, empty, carriers of death, and so on. (p. 68, emphasis in original)

It is perhaps the conflation—the automatically assigned negative traits associated with Whiteness—of White-raced people with Whiteness, then, that yields a futile overemphasis on White privilege in teacher education. In defining Whiteness as an epistemological framework, Keating focuses, with her students, on Whiteness as "an epistemology and ethics…that operates as an invisible norm undergirding U.S. culture" (p. 77). Her definition of Whiteness as an epistemology seems to expand even Scheurich's and Young's (1997) notion of epistemological racism by arguing that "epistemological 'whiteness' is only partially about 'race' (p. 78) and reminds us that race (including Whiteness) is intersectional with other aspects of identity and social markers which combine—along with race—to inform one's experiences living and being in the world (Gee, 2008).

Keating's words give me further pause in considering Scheurich's and Young's (1997) framework. They describe the levels of racism as a vertically depicted hierarchy, with each "level" of racism separated by solid lines (see page 5 of their article), and with each subsequent level also encompassing the level which precedes it (here again, as they describe, each subsequent level is "'broader' and 'deeper' than any *above* it" [p. 5]). Keating (2007) describes

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the trouble with such an epistemological framework, even as she uses it to inform her own work: "[E]pistemological 'whiteness' entails an authoritative, hierarchical, restrictive mode of thinking premised on an unspoken 'white' norm….Epistemological 'whiteness' transforms relational differences into a restrictive hierarchy that ranks things according to the degree of their deviation from the ('white') norm" (p. 78). It would seem, also, that the levels Scheurich and Young describe do not account much for intersectionality, nor do they account for the potential for paradoxical arrangements to inform one's racialized experiences. Moreover, just as Whiteness is understood to shape institutions, can Whiteness also be understood to be shaped *by* institutions?

For example, Scheurich's and Young's (1997) definition of institutional racism describes how the "standard operating procedures" of an institution (e.g., education) can "hurt members of one or more races in relation to members of the dominant race" (p. 5). For one thing, in this latter statement, we see instantly how Keating's critique of such a framework inspires the "restrictive mode of thinking" (p. 78) that further reinforces binary thinking on issues of race. But Whiteness, undoubtedly, has shaped institutional procedures. How does this account, though, for how White teachers, with their own Whiteness and their own intersectionalities, are shaped *by* institutions such as schools? What aspects of Whiteness (whatever this looks like within and across different teachers) are dictated, perpetuated, or re/shaped, in the process of entering and serving historically White institutions? It seems irresponsible to not consider these questions in light of current framing/s of White teachers, again, listed at the outset of this section.

Finally, what does the school site make im/possible about Whiteness, and how do English teachers navigate/negotiate these im/possibilities? How are critically oriented White teachers— as with those English teachers who inform this study—also hurt by "standard operating procedures," even as it happens that they are also members of the "dominant race"? How is

Whiteness, as an enactment, also dependent on the context within which it is enacted? As Keating (2007) reminds us, "we are all, in various ways, inscripted into this 'white' framework" (p. 77). Said differently, and perhaps more forcefully, hooks (2013) reminds us that "White supremacist thinking informs the consciousness of everyone irrespective of skin color" (p. 11). And while we are all inscribed differently, and often inequitably within institutions, I assume that, vis-à-vis this study, not all inscriptions are inherently "positive" for Whites, beneficial to Whites, and are attributed to some form of individual, deep-seated White privilege(s) or racism enacted by Whites.

Ellsworth (1997), in her discussion of the double-binds of Whiteness, also sheds light on the intersectionality of Whiteness (versus what she describes as white skin privilege [p. 264]). She critiques the notion that "Whiteness is Whiteness is Whiteness" (p. 266) and argues that

> white people are never just white. We are also always positioned within gender, language, sexuality, class, ability, size, ethnicity, and age, for example. At some times and in some places, those privileges and that safety that come with white skin can be temporarily and problematically overridden or eclipsed by the oppressions and discriminations associated with queerness, Jewishness, femaleness, poverty, [and] homelessness. (p. 266)

Whiteness, then, is not merely Whiteness. It stands to reason, also, that intersections give rise to paradoxes and tensions. However, if Whiteness is not merely Whiteness, and if Whiteness is also comprised of paradoxes and tensions, the question remains: What is Whiteness?

What is Whiteness? Un/settling on a "definition" of Whiteness. I suspect that, to this point, I have theorized quite a bit about what Whiteness is *not*, and not what Whiteness *is*, for the purposes of this study. On the one hand, I hesitate to define Whiteness, as I do not wish to

participate in the perpetuation of a construct which has yielded false generalizations and a

conflation of White people with White*ness* (Keating, 2007). Moreover, Ellsworth (1997) calls

attention to yet another double-bind of Whiteness, which involves defining Whiteness and thus

participating in "scholarly practices [which] are predicated precisely on being able to formulate

and *assert the last word*" (p. 265, emphasis added). As Ellsworth argues, "Asserting the last

word usually demands a kind of authorship that drives toward definition, naming, and

expertness" (p. 265). I run this risk, as a researcher who is in the un/fortunate position of having

to define such a multiple, shifting, and evolving concept, and as an expectation of the academy;

to be sure, dissertations rely on making meaning. They rely on defining. This expectation and

the paradox embedded in it is precisely what Ellsworth discusses as "the academic [attempt] to

define whiteness in the name of antiracism without recognizing that the definitional process itself

is part of the problem of racism" (p. 264). To be sure, I recognize the double-bind process

Ellsworth describes and critiques, but again, recognition does not equate with fruitful action.

Said differently, defining the concept of Whiteness is also—paradoxically—a privilege of

Whiteness. According to Laughter (2011), "Among the privileges of Whiteness are the privilege

to exclude and the privilege to define, possess, and own property" (p. 44). While defining

Whiteness is, in and of itself, a privilege of Whiteness, Laughter does not claim to "possess" or

"own" this definition, as a scholar. Rather, he recognizes the concept as evolving to include the

voices of White preservice teachers (WPTs) which "differ wildly" (p. 45) from the demographic

power and unearned privileges "that might be assumed by teacher educators" (p. 45). With this

in mind, Laughter defines Whiteness as

> an evolving, socially constructed system of conscious/unconscious,
>
> intentional/accidental, explicit/implicit privilege associated with those who manifest

certain characteristics labeled White, characteristics that evolve within a racialized

society….[W]hat is at play in this definition…is a system of demographic power from

unearned but assumed privileges. (p. 44)

I employ Laughter's definition of Whiteness to expand the above discussion by pointing out that

Whiteness is—at the same time—everything that it is not. Whiteness is, for example, conscious

at the same time that it is unconscious. It is also comprised of a series of explicitly visible

privileges while at the same time comprised of a series of implicit, or hidden, privileges.

For the purposes of this study, I employ Keating's discussion of epistemological

Whiteness to acknowledge the limits of defining Whiteness and conflating such definitions with

White people; I invoke Ellsworth's provocative deconstruction of Whiteness to explore the

tensions and paradoxes of (defining) Whiteness; I borrow from Laughter's working definition of

Whiteness and build upon it to "define" the concept as also a racialized system which is:

- static/intersectional

- context-free/contextual

- embedded in (and dependent upon) racism/while embedded in the potential to work
  toward anti-racism

- embedded in privilege/while acknowledging responsibility

- steeped in impossibility/while imbued with possibility

My expanded "definition" of Whiteness intends to capture the contradictory evolution of

Whiteness about which Laughter (2011) speaks; the multiple, shifting, and paradoxical nature of

Whiteness to which Ellsworth (1997) refers; and it attempts to avoid the risk of generalizing

about which Keating (1995; 2007) warns. In constructing my own definition of Whiteness, I

consider Laughter's argument for "the need to rethink ways in which [teachers] embod[y] and

[enact] Whiteness" (p. 44). For the purposes of this section, I wish to elaborate on my inclusion of "context-free/contextual," and to reiterate my above-stated question: Just as Whiteness is understood to shape institutions, can (a teacher's) Whiteness also be understood to be shaped *by* institutions? I include this category to help illuminate how teacher educators may consider how teachers' racial identities are shaped in and by the school context in addition to—but also in opposition to—the Whiteness teachers bring to educational settings.

Such an investigation has required, for me, building upon—but perhaps, in some ways, moving away—from a sole focus on some idea that White teachers enact tools and educational discourses of Whiteness at their whims (or perhaps unknowingly), in a seemingly irrefutable defense of White privilege. I use the word irrefutable, here, in reference to the definition of "paradox" I cite above which, when considered against the backdrop of Whiteness and White privilege, will "nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true."

To conclude in relation to English education, as Flynn, Lensmire, and Lewis (2009) argue, there is a difference between positioning students as responsible *for* engaging race and racism, and positioning students to feel guilty *about* their place in matters of race and racism. This, I think, gets to the heart of the conflation of Whiteness and White privilege. Using their English methods courses as a site of investigation, the authors point out that, "While we seek to have preservice teachers understand the institutional aspects of racism [and Whiteness], we need to make sure that our pedagogies and texts do not end up reverting to the personal [White people]" (p. 95). In this chapter, the authors describe how students took responsibility for the topics (in relation to racism) about which they wanted to learn more. The article encourages teacher educators to

find ways to sustain dialogic conversations that challenge and inspire them to be

responsible, to learn about and teach the ways that inequitable structures are historically

perpetuated, and to think through the complex ways that this knowledge will affect their

practice. (p. 96)

The authors suggest that, because McIntosh's work personalizes, by way of a series of individual

White privileges, institutional inequities, students leave with "the personal" (p. 95), and few, if

any ways by which to take what the authors refer to as "responsible action" (p. 93) toward

understanding how Whiteness and racism impact their practices.

Here again, the authors suggest that teacher education students can learn to take

responsibility for understanding and learning about racism, without being made to feel guilty for

the policies and practices in place which secure their privileges, as White people. As such, their

work illuminates why Whiteness in education should not be carelessly conflated with White

people as educators. A way by which I began to think about this, which I have found helpful,

was to ask myself whether, as a researcher and teacher educator, I was interested in dismantling

Whiteness, as a construct, or dismantling the English teachers with whom I work, as White

people. A few Web definitions of "dismantle" are as follows:

- To render (fortifications, or the like) useless for their purpose; to pull down, take to

  pieces, destroy, raze.

- Level: tear down so as to make flat with the ground; [e.g.,] "The building was leveled."

- Demolished: torn down and broken up

Keeping this question, alongside these definitions, in mind, but sometimes failing to, has yielded

very disparate types of analyses. That is, when my analyses served to harshly dismantle the

White *people* who trusted me inside of their classrooms, my analyses mirrored the very types of

assumptions about White teachers that I had hoped to speak against. Indeed, at times during this phase, I seem to "level" the teachers, their work, and to be sure, my own epistemological goals in my earliest, "neatest" analyses. On the other hand, when I remembered that my goal was to attempt to deconstruct—or dismantle—or at least attempt to better understand White*ness*, as an epistemology or a system or both (depending on the particular slice of data), the analyses generated a rather different, and perhaps more illuminating and productive conversation.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

"You do not come up with an idea and write about it. You write yourself *into* your ideas."—
Aaron Bodle

There are, I think, a few unintended consequences embedded in the dissertation process. A series of sleepless nights (and subsequent bleary days) is one of those consequences. In my case, my nights were spent worrying about how to do the teachers, their words, and their work some justice. I was plagued with/by the struggle of re/presenting the White teachers in this study in new, more humane ways. I was reminded of the tensions with which Britzman (2003) struggled, as a researcher: "My dilemma as a researcher is to reconstruct and critically re-present the voices of others, and, in so doing, care for their integrity, humanity, and struggles" (p. 35). I will admit: Sometimes, it felt as though the teachers' words and practices—their *Whiteness*—did not "allow" me to do that. Just like the research I was attempting to "talk back to," I was subconsciously putting it on the teachers to somehow "prove" to me that they were "good" Whites. The "right" kind of Whites. The kind of Whites with the kind of words and the kind of practices of whom Marx, McIntyre, and Sleeter (to name just a few) might approve. In the event they did not critique themselves or their practices or their schools or their lives in any "meaningful" (as predefined by me) sort of way, it seemed that I, in my Advisor's words, ran the risk of becoming a Grouchy Researcher. I knew that if I wanted this dissertation to represent an example of critical education research, I had to think about things differently. I had to re/consider the ways by which I (and my own background, assumptions, experiences, and of course, my own Whiteness) played a central role in the complexity of this study, in all of its phases. In other words, I had to contend, quite directly, with the "crisis of representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) in qualitative research. Put simply, "the crisis in representation requires qualitative

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researchers to attend to how and why we construct versions of our research in the ways that we do" (Miller, 2010, p. 163).

In what follows, I briefly explain my research orientation and situate it in the literature on critical theory and research methodology; I go on to describe the English teachers who invited me into their lives and work for the duration of an academic year, and my relationship with them. I then describe the three extraordinarily different school sites that informed this study. Next, I describe my qualitative research design and data generation process, which includes interviews, classroom observations, and artifact collection. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my approach to data analysis. Finally, in keeping with my interpretation of a critical research orientation, I write myself into this chapter and dissertation as a whole in order to complicate my role and identity in the process of carrying out this research.

Research Orientation

In the design of this dissertation, I follow critical traditions as outlined and defined by postmodern and feminist scholarship (Britzman, 2003; Lather, 1991). Britzman (2003) frames critical research quite well in her research on teacher education and learning to teach:

> To assume a critical [researcher] voice…does not mean to destroy or devalue the struggles of others. Instead, a critical voice attempts the delicate and discursive work of rearticulating the tensions between and within words and practices, or constraints and possibilities, as it questions the consequences of the taken-for-granted knowledge shaping responses to everyday life and the meanings fashioned from them. A critical voice is concerned not just with representing the voices of oneself and others, but with narrating, considering, and evaluating them. (p. 35)

From a critical perspective, knowledge is contested (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994); critical research rejects positivist constructions of truth and knowledge (Lather, 2008). As such, critical researchers hold that any and all knowledge is ideological; that knowledge is not neutral, but is instead born of and bound in culture and social situations. The critical conception of research to which I espouse holds that there is no getting around the politics of knowledge (Lather, 1991) and interpretation (Britzman, 2003).

As such, "researcher values permeate inquiry" (Lather, 1992, p. 91). As Lather (1991) argues in her seminal book on critical methodology and praxis, "researchers impose meanings on situations rather than constructing meaning through negotiation with research participants" (p. 59). In the spirit of critical research methodology, I have taken a reflexive approach to this study; you will find that I often weave my own experiences, both professional and personal, into the stories I share about the teachers in this study. Not only did a process of reflexivity help to mitigate the early questions with which I struggled (e.g., "Why is it that the teachers display, in their talk, a brilliantly critical awareness about their race/Whiteness, but in their classrooms do something entirely different?"); reflexivity in my writing reminded me that I was not simply an innocuous researcher in this process. I am also a middle-class White woman, a former school teacher, a current teacher educator, and doctoral candidate, (among many, many other things) all of which are identities which have fused together to shape this product. My approach to reflexivity, informed by extant critical education research, served as a humble reminder that my work, my assumptions, my analyses, etc., are value-laden.

The Teachers

My reason for conducting a study such as this is simple. I could not reconcile what I was hearing, and being told, about White teachers with what I was experiencing as educator of this

population. The participants in this study were formerly teacher education students in the secondary English methods courses that I taught at Michigan State University. At the time of the study, they were full-time first year teachers; I had known them for two full years. The teachers I approached to gauge their interest in participation brought a critical and social justice minded orientation to their work. My knowledge of their orientation came over the course of two years of interacting with them; in addition to the "typical" lesson and unit plans assigned in methods courses, they submitted assignments such as the Teacher Autobiography, or Teacher Artifact Presentation[2]; it was within these latter assignments that I was given a real sense of their theoretical orientations. Moreover, over the course of two years, we engaged in innumerable whole-class discussions about myriad social issues, ranging from race, to gender, to socioeconomic issues. In what follows, I briefly describe how I have come to know the teachers in this study, as well as the schools in which they taught. Keep in mind that I've reserved additional details for their individual data chapters.

Mr. Kurt[3] and Hidden Creek High School

Mr. Kurt, and my relationship with him, is the impetus for this study. He is the "star" of the anecdote I share earlier; he is the student who theatrically apologized for his White skin. Mr. Kurt, for me, represented a pedagogical and reflexive shift. It was thanks to his response that I realized how my teaching was—and in some ways, perhaps still is—an unintended consequence of the research in multicultural teacher education that I consumed uncritically, perhaps even irresponsibly. Mr. Kurt's response, up to this day, has mercilessly wedged me into a one-way

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[2] While these assignments have been used as artifacts for this study, the secondary English methods courses within which the assignments were disseminated were *not* included in the sites of study. The participants were full-time teachers at the time of this study; they completed their teacher education coursework by this time. However, they have given me permission to use their assignments as data for this study, to the extent that I deemed necessary.
[3] The teachers chose their pseudonyms; I chose the pseudonyms for the schools. All names, for all people and places in this study, are pseudonyms.

zone of critical reflection, a zone later infiltrated by the Critical Race Theories of education and Critical Whiteness Studies I've ravenously consumed since my earliest experiences as teacher educator. Mr. Kurt's response to me in class on that day is why I asked him, over two years later, to participate in this study.

Mr. Kurt secured his position at Hidden Creek High School two days before the school year began, where he taught 9th and 10th grade English. It is an easy, half-hour-long, eastbound commute on a major interstate highway, from the middle- to upper-class, predominantly White, suburban town in which he lives. There is one lone traffic light along the approximately two mile stretch between the highway and the high school. The traffic light seems to signify the "center" of town, in which one would find the amenities typical to rural town centers: A single hardware store, a gas station, a fire station, a bar, a legal practice occupying an old, Victorian era-style home, a small, mom-and-pop grocery store, a small pharmacy, and a recently closed sandwich shop. The looming Hidden Creek Diner positioned immediately off of the highway, with tractors parked nearby, makes it rather unmistakable that one has entered an area reliant, in some ways, on the agricultural industry. Furthermore, other than the major gas stations positioned immediately off of the highway, there is not any sign of corporate occupation, or what more populated areas might experience as a proliferation of Walgreens and/or CVS pharmacies, Majors super markets, or even a Starbucks. In this way, it is almost as though the community has managed to avoid a certain level of suffocation by the pervasive American culture of corporatization felt in many other areas.

The area immediately surrounding the high school is dotted with large parks which are densely populated with trees and other greenery, creeks, and small play areas made of wooden and steel jungle gyms and park benches, corn fields, and comfortably spaced one-family homes.

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It is a bucolic and serene stretch of road leading from the highway to the school. With a

population of less than 3000 people, it provides every bit the small-town, if not desolate feel.

Unless students live in the homes situated on the perimeter of the campus, it would seem that

most students have to drive or take a school bus. To this point, the student parking lot is often

full, containing a number of pickup trucks which perhaps further remind visitors of the school's

and community's embeddedness in mid-western country life.

The students at Hidden Creek High School were over 96%[4] White; it was no surprise that

Mr. Kurt's classroom reflects this statistic. Although I knew the demographic makeup of his

school, and particularly his classes, going into my study, I remained struck by the lack of racial

diversity in this school; it was completely foreign to my own sensibilities as a former K-12

student in the New York City public school system, as a middle school English Language Arts

teacher in a racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse community, and as a teacher educator

and field instructor/supervisor of English teacher candidates who, more often than not, were

placed in racially and culturally diverse schools. To these points, understanding what it means to

be a White teacher in a school such as Hidden Creek High School, for me, was territory

uncharted.

Mr. Kurt's dynamic personality translated seamlessly to the décor and arrangement of his

classroom. The students' desks were small, mobile, grouped in quads, and sit beneath Civil

Rights and inspirational posters which also adorn the room. There was also a poster featuring the

award winning children's novel series, *The Adventures of Captain Underpants*, about two 4th

grade pranksters who hypnotize their evil, antagonist Principal, Mr. Krupp, thereby transforming

him into a pants-less superhero, until he is doused with water. His classroom was the very

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[4] The school principal provided this demographic data during our interview.

embodiment of Mr. Kurt's interests and life both in and outside of school, whether it is in the artifacts which display his personal interests (e.g., Ultimate Frisbee championship awards, music, Zen Buddhism, etc.) or the artifacts which display his interest in larger social issues, as with his Civil Rights posters.

The walls surrounding his desk, while displaying the typical information (e.g., school schedule, department meeting agendas, the occasional student drawing, etc.) were also adorned with Ultimate Frisbee championship awards (I recall, when he was my student, how he would travel nationally to compete with his team in these tournaments and championships) and posters of Einstein, The Beatles, and Zen Buddhist beliefs featuring the sentiments of the Dalai Lama. His classroom had always reminded me somewhat of a college dormitory which, I believe, probably adds to his popularity with his students.

The majority of my observations at Hidden Creek High take place in Mr. Kurt's 9th grade classroom, but he occasionally invited me to spend the day with him as well, during which I observed his other classes and his school life in a general sense. On any given day, Mr. Kurt could be found in the hallway between classes, conversing and joking with the students who entered his classroom. Many of them breathlessly shared with him the details of their day, such as a health video some of them watched during their earlier gym class, or something funny that another teacher said. Sometimes, both male and female students attempted to hug him, attempts which were met with staunch resistance (e.g., when he responds by saying "I am *not* hugging you."). I was particularly amused when Mr. Kurt admitted to me later that some of the students who display the most affection for him were not students he knew from his own classes; instead, they were students with whom he had very little interaction, and were, instead, friends with his students. It was not uncommon for students to pop in during our formal, mid-day or after school

discussions. It was also not uncommon for Mr. Kurt to have an open door policy when it came to

his students. Several students often popped in at a time, and argued with each other animatedly

over which one of them was Mr. Kurt's favorite. In the one short month between the beginning

of school and the start of my study, it seemed that word had traveled fast about Mr. Kurt's

relatability and general likeability.

Mr. Antolini and Pryde Middle School

Mr. Antolini (Mr. A) and I met two years before the study, in his first senior-year teaching

methods course. All students had to complete a Teacher Autobiography, as their first assignment.

In this assignment, students were to offer a narrative of why they desired to become English

teachers. In Mr. A's words:

> "When I tell people that I'm going to school to become an English teacher, many of
>
> them ask how I chose that career. I usually take the easy way out and make some joke
>
> about summers off or the high wages or both. But if somebody is asking that I care
>
> enough to explain myself to, I tell them, "Two reasons: I love people, and I hate people."
>
> As any of my friends from high school would be able to tell you, one of my mantras
>
> has always been "I hate people." First, it came from me disliking the way people treated
>
> one another, people's lack of consideration for others, and people's lack of thought
>
> before they act or speak. I hate the things people do to one another because of a lack of
>
> understanding of others or a lack of thinking about the consequences of their actions.
>
> Now, my hate has grown to include the systems in place that keep certain people from
>
> bettering their lives like unequal schools, linguistic discrimination, racism, and
>
> homophobia to name a few. I hate the cycles of misunderstandings people have of one
>
> another that cause people to hate those unlike themselves."

At the time of this study, Mr. A was teaching 8th grade English at Pryde Middle School, which is where he was placed as an MSU intern. During our time together in his teacher education courses, he often spoke about how displeased he was with his Mentor Teacher's (MT) practices, expressing that he did not believe his MT knew enough about who his students were, as people. Ms. A would often make comments such as, "there is no way I could miss parent-teacher conferences. I know more about our students than he (the MT) does. In other words, Mr. A believed in forming close relationships with his students, and seemed to recognize the value of his role in the community in which he taught. His first assignment initiating me into his reasons for becoming an English teacher, combined with his various reflections on his intern-year experiences, compelled me to include him in my study.

Mr. A taught four sections of 8th grade English, one remedial math class, and one remedial reading class. The majority of my observations took place during the second half of the school day, during which I would observe three of his 8th grade English classes. However, Mr. A would often invite me to spend entire days with him, opportunities which I embraced as often as possible. During such visits, I was given a terrifically well-rounded view of his school life. His colleagues embraced me, which meant that they allowed me to attend English team meetings, and informal lunch meetings. His principal also allowed me to attend the mandated professional development meetings he held for English teachers who were being introduced to the new mandated ELA curriculum. Access to the school, both in and outside of Mr. A's classroom, afforded me profound insights into the ways by which various school curricula re/produced authoritative discourses of Whiteness.

As with Mr. Kurt, Mr. A had an impressive rapport with his students. I recall being a bit taken aback, and amused, with Mr. A's policy (enacted sporadically) of shaking his students'

hands as they filed into the classroom; he would often joke about his clothing, facial hair, and hair style with his students. One day in particular, he came to school wearing a Superman t-shirt, his facial hair styled in a handlebar mustache; this might seem like an odd detail to raise, but Mr. A dressed in a way that he knew would get his students' attention. They would often make requests for particular outfits, or clothing color-schemes. Mr. A honored these requests to the extent that was reasonable.

Mr. A designed his classroom somewhat randomly, but in a way that was appealing to his students. Rather than adorn his room with posters and information about the myriad behavior management curriculum sanctioned by the school (technically, he was required to hang up administration-approved posters about classroom management, which I discuss further in his case study), he designed his room with Spanish-themed décor (red and yellow decorations in honor of Spain's national flag). His choices for décor were only intentional to the extent that they did not resemble the school-sanctioned posters. Otherwise, he admitted that he obtained the decorations from a party he happened to attend. He laughingly recounted how his students "came to class on a Monday morning and seemed to think they were in the Spanish classroom."

Ms. Tessa and Freedom High School

I met Ms. Tessa (Ms. T) in her first secondary methods course. Ms. T completed an internship in a school not as much known for its racial diversity, but more so for its socioeconomic diversity. She described many students as coming from families who struggled, financially. During our time in teacher education courses together, Ms. T would often express concern about the racism in her student-teaching placement, evidenced in the way her White students talked about racial diversity. She would express how this bothered her deeply.

At the time of this study, Ms. T accepted a teaching position at Freedom High School, in a

suburb of Detroit, MI. This choice required moving to a community closer to her school. Her significant other's family balked at her choice of a new community; they are western European, and believed that she would not be safe in the racially diverse area she had chosen for a new home. Although she too is White, Ms. T told me that she was very uncomfortable living in White, upper-class communities (the very kind of community from which she comes), and for this reason, chose a more diverse area in which to live. In asking her to clarify her discomfort, Ms. T simply said that predominantly White communities "do not reflect reality," and thus chose a more racially diverse community.

Freedom High School was a significant distance from where I lived; as such, I would often spend entire days "following" Ms. T around her school, and observing all of her 9th grade English classes and English team meetings. The student demographics at Freedom High School speak to an observable mix of racial and ethnic diversity, with a significant population of Black and Middle Eastern students. Aesthetically, walking through the halls of Freedom High School was akin to walking through the halls of a museum. There was student-generated artwork on display every which-way; most of this work was protected behind a locked glass display unit. The hallways were long and bright, and seem to endure in every possible direction. The walls were adorned with sports memorabilia, academic awards, and advertisements for various academic and social clubs, student elections, and yearbook sale notices. There was also a wall, across from the Main Office, dedicated to "Distinguished Alumni"; I quickly noticed that every single engraved plaque which adorned this wall displayed the accomplishments of White men and women. The wall is definitely not representative of this school's diverse student population, both in terms of how Ms. Tessa had described the students, and my observations of the student population.

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During my visits to the school, I often heard the symphonic hum of the school band; the music was no match for the steel doors built to shield the sounds of the brass and percussion from the classrooms a short walk away. Each hallway, representing what I presumed was symbolic of solidarity with the nearby city of Detroit, was named after the city's streets (e.g., *8 Mile* and *Martin Luther King Boulevard*, to name two). As a tribute to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a sole lantern displaying a green light sits on a wall at the far side of the school. Freedom High School provided for a very aesthetically pleasing school where creativity appears to be fostered and encouraged.

Finally, in addition to being an English teacher, Ms. T was also the lone school journalism teacher, which meant that she crossed paths many different students, whether or not they were enrolled in her English classes. Students would often seek (and be granted!) passes from their other subject-area teachers in order to go to the journalism office to work on whatever journalism assignment they were assigned (this practice did not seem to be discouraged by administration, or other teachers, in any way). This meant that students, all day and every day, could be found lounging on the couch in the journalism office as Ms. T discussed deadlines and projects. Ms. T trusted her students, and allowed them unfettered access to the journalism office (stocked with expensive equipment as well as her personal belongings), whether or not she was present. During my very first visit to her school, I noticed that her office door had been decorated as something of a shrine to Ms. T; it was adorned with black and white photos of Ms. T smiling and laughing with her students. In her short time at Freedom High School, she established herself as an approachable and likeable teacher. As her former course instructor, this student/teacher dynamic was not at all unanticipated.

In general, I have a well-established, personal rapport with all participants. I am intimately familiar with several aspects of their personal lives, some of which are related to hardships (due to our rapport, and their comfort with sharing the details of their personal lives with me). It is through my relationship with—and knowledge about—my participants that I am able to argue against a static view of White teachers as unresponsive to, or unwilling to address and/or think about, race-related issues in education. However, I can see how my relationship with them might be interpreted differently. For example, would they not just be more inclined to tell me what they think I want to hear? Also, given the research topic, might I be more inclined to gloss-over the teachers' weaknesses, "unchecked" White privilege, or worse, their racism?

I have struggled with these very questions and issues during all phases of this study. I have read—and re-read—the data and subsequent analyses, and often wondered whether I a) should be "harder" on the participants, or b) was using "kids gloves," thereby avoiding the very issues I was hoping to tackle. Elbow's (1986) work has helped to carry me through these—and other—conundrums. As Elbow argues,

> we need the systematic, disciplined, and conscious attempt to criticize [and doubt] everything no matter how compelling it might seem—to find flaws or contradictions we might otherwise miss. But thinking is not trustworthy unless it also includes methodological belief: the equally systematic, disciplined, and conscious attempt to *believe* everything no matter how unlikely or repellent it might seem[.] (p. 257, italics in original)

For Elbow, methodological doubt (vs. belief), while necessary, is pervasive. I have noticed this pervasiveness in critical studies of Whiteness, where discourses and enactments of Whiteness and unchecked White privilege seem to take hold, virtually suspending a researcher's capacity to

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believe that the teachers (or student teachers) are capable of any real transformation (whether pedagogical or personal). Rather, I have deeply internalized my responsibility not just to "doubt" the data, but to "believe" it.[5] Applesies (2006) addresses this concern compellingly. In her words: "I have to trust the words that come out of these participants' mouths…And I have to trust my abilities to interpret those words with respect" (p. 103).

In sum, methodological doubt allowed me to grapple with the tensions, static, "noise" (Kirkland, 2010), and confusion that emerged during the course of this study; methodological belief encouraged me to remember that the teachers are human, some of whom have very real, critical goals for their students, goals which are, in myriad ways, quelled and silenced in the process of becoming of a teacher.

Christina Berchini: Researcher As Participant

As I state above, I borrow from critical education researchers in my stance that my role in all phases of this research (from deciding upon an issue to study, to carrying out the research itself) was/is anything but innocent. While I knew this in theory, I was immediately "struck" by the ways this was manifest in the process of carrying out this research. As I carried out the research, I was often reminded of the ways by which my positionality—my various identities— influenced the research process. For one thing, as I've admitted elsewhere in this study, there were a few times that I wished the teachers would have said—or done—something differently. I had to remind myself that I was the experienced teacher, and that I was the one with the academic background in critical pedagogy, Critical Race Theory, critical research methodology, and any number of theories and ideas that have informed my conception of teaching as well as my research goals. In other words, it was not (necessarily) reasonable to expect the teachers to

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[5] See also Borsheim-Black (2012) for a discussion of how she put "methodological belief" to use in her work on how White teachers teach multicultural literature. I found her discussion of "belief" inspiring and powerful.

recite bell hooks, Gloria Ladson-Billings, W.E.B. Du Bois, or other influential figures who have written extensively about race and society. The teachers simply did not have the training or academic background. On the one hand, I had to work hard to avoid othering (Trainor, 2002) the very teachers to whom I was committed; I reminded myself, often, that they had also committed to me out of trust and confidence that I would handle them respectfully and with care.

On the other hand, I began to realize that it was precisely my collusion (Ellsworth, 1989) with the "intellectual" and authoritative stances held by critical pedagogy and critical theories that perpetuated (if I were not careful) the Good White/Bad White dichotomy that I sought to critique and avoid in this study. Soon into the research process, I began to realize that, for all of my "critical" academic training, I still had a lot of unlearning to do. Ellsworth (1989) covers this issue extensively in her iconic article, *Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering?* She critiques critical pedagogy in particular, and explains that

> I found myself struggling against (struggling to unlearn) key assumptions and assertions
> of current literature on critical pedagogy, and straining to recognize, name, and come to
> grips with crucial issues of classroom practice that critical pedagogy cannot or will not
> address. (p. 95)

On a theoretical level, I entered this project well-intentioned, but unaware of my own political stance and ideologies—that is, my own collusion with authoritative Discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) of Whiteness.[6] As I discuss in the theoretical framework, I, in a misguided sense, entered this project as "The Good White," with the goal of studying race. However, I did not realize the extent to which I was implicated in/by the very structures I set out to critique. I am reminded,

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[6] I discuss this term at length in the final chapter of this study.

here again, of Ellsworth (1989): "My understanding and experience of racism will always be constrained by my white skin and middle-class privilege" (p. 100).

In this section I critiqued my role in this research process on a theoretical level; however, there were very real, tangible ways by which it became clear to me, early in the data collection phase, that my Whiteness functioned as both an asset and a liability (Borsheim-Black, 2012); in many ways, it inflected and influenced the research process. For examples of the ways by which this paradox functioned in the data collection phase, see Appendix A.

Research Design and Data Collection

In seeking to understand the construction of teachers' racialized identities and how Whiteness shaped their practices, I conducted a qualitative research study. Prior to conducting my study, I had read quite a bit about White teachers who, almost invariably, "enact Whiteness," or "discourses of Whiteness"; the White teacher who either vociferously defends, or is oblivious to, their White privilege. I began to ask myself, "What might be behind these enactments?" In order to explore this question, I have designed a qualitative study which would account for what Erickson (1986) describes as "the immediate and local meanings of actions" (p. 119). In other words, what does it mean to "enact Whiteness" in a particular school setting? Left unsatisfied with simplistic discussions about White teachers and unchecked White privilege, I was interested in the complexities which inform how English teachers come to enact Whiteness in their schools. As such, this study is guided by the following questions:

Central Research Questions

1. How do teachers conceptualize their racialized identities as White people and teachers?

2. In what ways do teachers enact Whiteness?

3. How does Whiteness shape English teachers' practices? What stereotypes about the White teachers are perpetuated in the authoritative Discourses of their schools?

4. Where do teachers resist and/or negotiate authoritative discourses of Whiteness and provide counternarratives? What challenges do they face?

This dissertation consists of three case studies in which I detail and theorize the complex words and work of the teachers I describe above. Case study research allows researchers to highlight "the messy complexity of human experience" (Dyson and Genishi, 2005, p. 3; see also Erickson, 1986). However, not all case studies are qualitative, nor does "case study" mean the same thing to everyone. For this reason, I invoke Stake's (1978) helpful description for how I use case study research in this dissertation:

> in the social science literature, most case studies feature: descriptions that are complex, holistic, and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables; data that are likely to be gathered at least partly by personalistic observation; and a writing style that is informal, perhaps narrative, possibly with verbatim quotation, illustration, and even allusion and metaphor….Its best use appears to me to be for adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding. (p. 7)

Case study research has allowed me, in a holistic way, to attend to the complexities in the teachers' racialized identity development, their practices, and the ways by which authoritative discourses of Whiteness shaped their practices.

To borrow from Stake (1995), the qualitative case study approach "usually means finding good moments to reveal the unique complexity of the case" (p. 63). The metaphor of the "good moment" was helpful, as I struggled with how much of a teacher's story to tell, in each case, and knew that I was limited to selecting just a couple of "good moments" per teacher, per case.

Detailing, in case studies, the ways by which Whiteness shaped the teachers' practices, and the ways by which teachers resisted and negotiated authoritative discourses of Whiteness, allowed me to see how "enactments of Whiteness" were dependent on context; it allowed me to contribute to discussions of how Whiteness is multiple and shifting (Ellsworth, 1997); it allowed me to expand working "definitions" of Whiteness in such a way that captures its contradictory evolution (Laughter, 2011). The qualitative case study approach allowed me to settle, confidently, on a few "good moments."

Data Collection

I appreciate how Stake (1995) opens up his chapter on data collection, in his book, *The Art of Case Study Research*: "There is no particular moment when data gathering begins….Qualitative study capitalizes on ordinary ways of getting acquainted with things" (p. 49). In the case of this dissertation, Stake's sentiments hold true. Little did I know that my dissertation data collection was beginning in the fall of 2009, when I met Mr. Kurt for the first time, and would continue with each passing course assignment, each conversation, and each additional insight into the minds of the people who got me thinking differently about Whiteness and how it is enacted in schools. With that said, data for this study were gathered from three main sources: Individual interviews, classroom observations, and what I call school "shadowing" informed by ethnographic methods (Heath & Street, 2008; Spradley, 1979).

Individual Interviews: I conducted scheduled interviews with the teachers minimally[7] four times over the course of the academic year (2012-2013). The interviews began in October of 2012, and were spaced apart by about two months, allowing time for preliminary analysis which often informed subsequent interviews. The scheduled interviews do not account for the myriad

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[7] I say "minimally," as Mr. Kurt granted four interviews, while Mr. A and Ms. T granted six interviews.

informal, brief conversations (Spradley, 1979) I had with teachers in between classes, during

lunch, and even as they walked me out to my car. Often, these shorter conversations, even

though they were typically unexpected and thus not prepared for in advance, were just as

illuminating in terms of my research goals.

I conducted all interviews in accordance with active interviewing conventions (Holstein

& Gubrium, 2002). I entered each interview with three-to-five semi-structured interview

questions centered on their work lives, experiences, and work as White people/teachers. My

goal, in these interviews, was quality over quantity; in keeping with the notion that active

interviews are an occasion to make meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002), I settled on a small

handful of core questions, and a series of related "back-pocket" and/or follow-up questions. The

following small sample of questions is representative of the kinds of prompts/questions with

which we engaged during our interviews[8]:

1. Tell me a story about when you realized that being White held meaning for you.

2. Some people say that our racial identities influence how and what we teach. What

    do you think about this? What examples can you give?

3. In what ways have you witnessed issues about race play out in your classroom

    and school?

These are three of the uniform questions that I asked all of the teachers during our interviews;

while most of my questions centered on race, I also asked them a series of questions about their

early experiences with school, their teaching contexts, their teaching goals, their students,

curriculum, relationships with colleagues, their experiences engaging race and racism in teacher

education, and school life in a general sense. In many ways, the direction of the interviews relied

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[8] A full list of interview questions is appended to this dissertation (Appendix B).

on the stories the teachers shared about their experiences. The interviews which occurred later in the year were used as opportunities to follow up on previous interviews, as well as my classroom and school observations.

Most interviews lasted one-to-two hours; sometimes, the interviews occurred on-site at their schools, however, I usually encouraged the teachers to meet me off-site. This served two purposes, one of which I learned the hard way: First, by meeting off-site (such as at a coffee shop), I was attempting to mitigate the possibility that teachers may not be as comfortable talking about difficult issues at their site of employment. However, the more apparent issue (which I learned "the hard way") was that I did not have as much of the teachers' focused attention as I hoped to have by conducting interviews at their school sites. In other words, while they graciously granted me interviews, they were simultaneously absorbed with any number of school-related tasks (grading, lesson-planning, checking email, etc.) during our interviews when they occurred on-site. For these reasons, and to the extent possible, we met off-site at local eateries and coffee shops.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcription provided an opportunity for clarification, as well as an exploration of themes, tensions, and nuances between participants (and, sometimes, between myself and the participants). Occasionally, and as a form of member-checking, I provided participants with snippets of their transcribed words and my interpretation of their words, several months later, to ask them whether they held the same views about any given topic, and to get a sense for whether my interpretation of their words was consistent with how they meant them. And, while a micro textual analysis was not the goal of this study, interview transcription allowed me—somewhat accidentally—to discover the ways by which, in their language, the teachers would distance, or dissociate, from the Discourses of the

school, even as they enacted them. For example, the repeated use of "they," "them," and/or "their" as with "*They* make the kids read Shakespeare" (Ms. T), "*They* are pushing to remove *The Mississippi Trial: 1955* from the curriculum because *they* said it was too easy" (Mr. Kurt), "[teaching] The Odyssey is *their* decision," and "*They* think it's [the behavior management curriculum] is magic" (Mr. A), revealed the ways by which the teachers' enactments of Whiteness were often constrained in/by larger school and curricular discourses. In the transcription process, I also noted long pauses/silences, hesitations, rising and falling intonation, and body language (I noted body language during the actual interviews).[9]

Classroom Observations: Classroom observations were imperative to exploring the second and third research questions: *In what ways do teachers enact Whiteness?* and *How does Whiteness shape English teachers' practices? What stereotypes about the White teachers are perpetuated in the authoritative Discourses of their schools?* I usually focused on a specific class to observe consistently across time (such as one section of 9th grade English at Mr. Kurt's school, one section of 8th grade ELA at Mr. A's school, and one section of 9th grade English at Ms. T's school) but often stayed for half and whole school days, with the teachers' permission. I was interested in a range of teachers' instructional practices, interactions, relationships, and their school lives in a general sense, but mostly observed literature units specifically when teachers told me in advance that they planned to "have an interesting discussion" in light of my research

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[9] My original thought was that I may notice silences, hesitations, and other markers of discomfort around sensitive topics (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Picower, 2009), but that turned out not to be true in this study. Rather, their hesitations and discomfort were more centered around what they described as the "oppressive" nature of their respective curricula. Mr. Kurt was particularly vocal about this issue, and often described how "not only" were his students oppressed by a canonical curriculum, but he, as a teacher, was oppressed and limited in the opportunities he was afforded (in the curriculum) to engage his students with sensitive or difficult topics. During these conversations, his intonation would rise, and he would cross his arms in defiance. These markers had nothing to do with a discomfort with topics about race; rather, he was uncomfortable with how his colleagues and mandated curriculum positioned him, as a teacher.

topic, or if they had planned to "do an interesting project" related to student-led research on a given topic, etc. This decision, on my part, was strategic. For example, had I only investigated literature units, I would not have witnessed how Mr. Kurt organically seized an opportunity in a lesson on delivering speeches (as mandated by the Common Core Standards) to teach his students about institutionalized racism. This is to say that, while teaching literature is an aspect of the storyline I am attempting to deliver in this study, it is not crucial to the plot. Thus, and in a very real way, I have found, through observing a variety of class sessions over a period of time (three-to-four days a week over a span of six-to-eight months) that the whole of enacted Whiteness is greater than the sum of its parts. I audio recorded all classroom observations to assist with what Heath and Street (2008) describe as "close observation and consistent recording" (p. 35); I transcribed the class sessions, faculty meetings, and interactions that helped me to explore, specifically, what I came to refer to as authoritative Discourses of Whiteness.

School Shadowing: I treated the observations (and other aspects of data gathering) ethnographically. As Spradley (1979) explains, "The ethnographer observes behavior, but goes beyond it to inquire about the meaning of that behavior" (p. 6). As such, I asked the teachers for permission to spend entire days with them and "follow" them around at certain points throughout the school year. My desire was to understand, and make visible, what Erickson (1986) refers to as "the invisibility of everyday life" (p. 121). My hunch was that "enacted Whiteness" could not, and should not be, limited to classroom practices; that the teachers' lives outside of the classroom directly impacted what went on inside of the classroom. I used Erickson's (1986) questions for attending to fieldwork as a guide during my observations:

- What is happening, specifically, in social action that takes place in this particular setting?

- What do these actions mean to the actors involved in them, at the moment the actions took place?

- *How is what is happening in this setting as a whole (i.e., the classroom) related to happenings at other system levels outside and inside the setting (e.g., the school building, a child's family, the school system, federal government mandates regarding mainstreaming)?* (p. 121, italics added)

These questions, while theoretical and perhaps a bit abstract, allowed me to get a sense for how what the teachers did in their classrooms was related to other happenings at the school level. Consistently observing the teachers' practices and school lives gave me an opportunity to interpret their practices, interactions, and relationships with others in light of our interviews.

During the days in which I shadowed the teachers, I was (usually) invited to attend English team meetings, planning lunches, and other formal engagements. However, most days were much more informal. I would often accompany the teachers to the faculty room where they made copies, conversed with colleagues, checked out equipment, and conducted other business typical to the daily lives of teachers. During my first "shadow" with the teachers, I asked them to give me a school tour, where I learned about informal nicknames for certain hallways and classrooms, and got a sense of their schools' overall design and aesthetics. This information proved invaluable in individual schools, but also in relation to each other. For example, my tour of Mr. A's school revealed the extent to which "management language" (Dyson and Genishi, 2005, p. 22) hovered over the teachers and students in his school. This same language was absent from the other two schools, where student populations were much less racially diverse. To offer another example, when I accompanied Mr. A to his faculty room to make copies, there was a floor to ceiling poster of the ELA Core Curriculum Context standards, on which every single

ELA standard, for grades 1-12, was listed (also absent from the other schools). Quite frankly, it was the largest poster I had ever seen (dedicated to the standards). The language of his school, by way of its "aesthetics," shed much light on the issues that mattered in this school. I recorded notes in separate research notebooks (one per school) during all school tours and shadow sessions. I shadowed each teacher a total of five times each.

Field Notes: I had several ways of recording field notes, and recorded them for every classroom observation and period of school shadowing. The field notes I kept were for organizational purposes, but also to recall my attention to class sessions which may have stood out in particular. For example, I adapted a format that Dyson and Genishi (2005) have used in their case study work (see Figure 1, below). The "artifacts" column was where I kept a record of the teaching artifacts I collected on specific days, such as handouts, official school documents, anonymous student work, or pictures I took of the teachers' classrooms and school; the "objective/activities" column pointed me toward the purpose of a particular class (e.g., "Students are discussing racial representation/s in Disney films as a starting point for addressing White privilege"); the "texts" column referred to the texts teachers used during a particular lesson (e.g., a *60 Minutes* newscast about the use of the "N-word" in the novel Huckleberry Finn); the "discussion topics/questions" column referred to the prompts or questions the teacher used to initiate discussion (e.g., "Do you guys know what 'White privilege' means?"); by "trends" (in that same column), I am referring to the direction the whole class discussion would take on a given day, and take notes on the nature of student responses, as well as the nature of the teachers' responses to students (e.g., "students seem to be resisting Mr. Kurt's attempts to talk about White privilege"; "Ms. T seems to be sidestepping Bobby's attempts to talk about racial segregation"). The "Notes/questions" column was where I recorded my ideas, experiences, and feelings

separately (e.g., "see note about 'Bougie definition,' below"). I often recorded more extensive

observations beneath the chart to further explain a particular class session, a whole class

discussion, any interruptions which may have occurred, unanticipated conversations with the

teacher (or their colleagues), and any points of interest that stood out to me during a particular

class that I wanted to follow up on during subsequent interviews with the teachers. These notes

ranged anywhere from a single paragraph to six pages long. In the event that I was at a school

for an entire day (shadowing), I included a row with the details of what the visit entailed (e.g.,

colleagues I met, the details of informal lunch meetings as relevant, a professional development

session to which I was invited, etc.), and extended, more detailed field notes below the table. An

example of the early observation organizer I used is as follows:

Figure 1
Early Field Note Chart/Observation Data Organizer

Date / period	Artifacts collected	Lesson objective / activities	Text(s)	Discussion topics/ questions/trends in classroom discourse	Contextual comments/questions
Shadow:					

This organizer is informed by Dyson & Genishi's (2005) approach to case study; I used it during
the early phases of data collection.

Over time, after I began preliminary data analysis and had been visiting the schools

regularly, I learned to progressively focus (Wolcott, 1994) my field notes on what I began

thinking about as authoritative Discourses of Whiteness. I offer an example of what this updated

format looked like, in the second figure, below.

Figure 2
Focused Field Note Chart / Observation Data Organized

Date / period	Authoritative Discourses of Whiteness	Data	Notes
12/11 shadow 3rd period	School-sanctioned reading program: "Turn Around"	-Handouts -Pictures of remedial "Turn Around" reading classroom -Interview with Mr. A -Brief conversation with classroom aide -Recorded classroom discourse	This is a chaotic class. The students seem bored. Mr. A seems bored and perhaps frustrated, given his slumped posture and tone of voice. This class is intended for students who have not passed their "Lexile" exam. I recognize some of the students from Mr. A's English class. They seem to do great work in his classroom; I am surprised to see them here (*ask Mr. A about this, asap*). The work seems so dry, not at all interesting (see handouts and audio). Mr. A explained to me on the walk over that he is caught between "hating" to teach this class, but grateful that all of the lessons have been designed for him ahead of time (this of course raises red flags). I've never seen so many different behavior management programs in a single classroom room (I've counted three so far). (*–I have pictures of these.*) Toward the middle of class, one boy becomes frustrated because he cannot seem to pass the oral "Scholastic" exam associated with this Turn It Around program. The classroom aide, who has been very friendly and welcoming to me, explained that the program tends to be a problem for the "students with accents." My heart sank. A handful of the students in this class have accents…

I began using this focused organizer about one-third to halfway through the data collection phase of this study.

I used the combination of the tables, subsequent field notes, and interview data to write

vignettes and conceptual memos, where I would build a case for themes, trends, and insights

(Heath & Street, 2008) into enacted Whiteness. I explain my use of vignettes and memos in the Data Analysis section of this chapter, below.

Sometimes, for logistical reasons, it was not possible to record field notes on my computer. In such cases, I would often speak into my recorder on the ride home, or in transit between schools. This proved particularly handy during those earlier observations where I visited a school for the first time and wanted to capture the contextual details of the school community while driving. Or, sometimes, after an observation, I had an impromptu chat with an administrator or another teacher; if the conversations seemed relevant to the study, I audio recorded the details while in transit. I transcribed these recordings at my earliest convenience (usually within a day or two). I also found it effective and efficient to listen to my interview data and certain classroom observations on my car stereo (connected to my iPod), considering the amount time I spent in my car, frequently traveling to each school, during the data collection phase.

Teaching Artifacts: The teachers gave me permission to collect their lesson plans, anonymous student work (essays, speeches, and informal written responses to open-ended questions, exams), and student hand-outs. Sometimes these were collected in class; other times (especially on days when I did not observe), the teachers emailed me their materials and thoughts about their lessons, as relevant. As relevant and useful, I also took pictures of their classrooms (notes on the whiteboard, décor of the walls, etc.) and school walls/hallways. The teachers also allowed me to use their coursework from the teacher education courses that I taught (four courses in total). Their "Teacher Autobiography"[10] assignment was particularly useful in getting a sense of their early goals for teaching and their commitments in a general sense.

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[10] Attached to Appendices (Appendix C)

Data analysis

Mining the Data: I analyzed data during all phases of this study. Wolcott (1994) suggests that "no researcher as author can ever expect to tell the whole story" (p. 19). Keeping this painful truth in mind, I mined my field notes and interview transcripts for "pockets" of meaningful data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I began chronologically reading the data (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Wolcott, 1994) and focused on each teacher individually, oscillating back and forth between my interviews with them, the classroom/school observations I conducted, the artifacts I collected at each visit, and the theoretical lenses I brought to the study. Data mining for "pockets" allowed me to make (always difficult, but sometimes downright painful) decisions about what to include/exclude in the teachers' individual cases, by way of interview excerpts, classroom/school observations, and teaching artifacts.

One specific way by which I "mined the data" was by identifying what Dyson and Genishi (2005) refer to "theoretically rich events" (p. 88). In this study, for example, the different ways by which the teachers negotiated the authoritative Discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) of Whiteness became evident, over time. I transferred these "events" into a Venn Diagram, with three large circles representing each teacher, and overlapping in the middle.[11] Although this is not a study of commonalities, per se, I came to focus on the overlapping portion of the diagram, where I listed events and/or discourse in categories which seemed common to the teachers. Some examples of categories were *negotiating Whiteness*, *resisting Whiteness*, and *distancing Whiteness*. This diagram functioned as my "think display" (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994), and provided a helpful means by which to organize, and make decisions about "critical or

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[11] I did not maintain an electronic version of this, as I needed more "space." Instead, this diagram was hand drawn and color-coded on large post-it paper, which I displayed in my living room (where most of this writing took place).

key event[s]" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 19). I used these analytic techniques in order to accomplish what Wolcott (1994) describes as "doing less more thoroughly" (p. 20) in qualitative inquiry.

Coding the Data: During this initial phase, I employed the open coding technique (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) to locate significant passages in my field notes and interview transcripts. For example, all of the teachers used distancing language to dissociate themselves from curriculum and other school based Discourses, even as they enacted them. This initial phase helped me to uncover the ways by which teachers enacted Whiteness in their classrooms, but also the covert and overt ways by which they attempted to interrupt (Chubbuck, 2004) those same enactments. For example, I flagged following interview excerpt as a significant passage:

> Being too afraid to talk about the real stuff. [He takes on a mocking tone to describe their stance] "Oh, I don't want a phone call from a parent, and, Oh, I don't want so and so to get mad," and yea, there are some days where I don't want to deal with so and so getting mad, too. That doesn't mean that you totally blow off an entire subject that's important…I think people who don't do what they think is the right thing to do, or teach [what they think] is the right thing to teach? And they feel like they need to follow a curriculum verbatim, off of a script? I think that's scared teaching. I think that's an easy way out. (Mr. Kurt, interview)

I extracted this passage from an interview with Mr. Kurt. For Mr. Kurt, "the real stuff" refers to addressing White privilege and institutionalized racism in the English classroom and curriculum. My earliest code of this data was categorized as "critique"; later on, I began to see the larger picture of how this data contributed to an overall narrative in which Mr. Kurt dissociated from colleagues and structures which fell within his ideas of "scared teaching"; his ideas about "being

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too afraid to talk about the real stuff." Ultimately, I identified "significant passages" that would allow me to further develop the theme of Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse.[12]

I was then tasked with developing a language to discuss what I thought I was seeing in the field notes and interview transcripts. As such, my process for coding became more focused; I asked myself, for example, what does it look like for a teacher to dissociate from the authoritative Discourses of Whiteness in their schools? In reading, and re-reading the data, I inductively recorded themes (e.g., "making something out of nothing") which spoke to how the teachers negotiated authoritative Discourses of Whiteness in order to teach the way(s) they wanted to teach.

Constructing Vignettes and Conceptual Memos: It was important for me to go "beyond White privilege" (Leonardo, 2004; Trainor, 2008) in thinking about this study's data. Given my experiences collecting data in these schools, I had a hunch that there was more to enacted Whiteness than met the eye. I wanted to dig deeper into the ways by which authoritative Discourses of Whiteness were imposed upon teachers in their individual institutions. After identifying codes and themes, I put them to use by constructing vignettes (Erickson, 1986; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and conceptual memos (Heath & Street, 2008). As you may recall, I offer an example of an observation I conducted of a remedial reading class, above. I constructed the following vignette after a series of observations in that classroom:

> "We head down the hallway, out of Mr. A's "regular" English classroom, toward
> what is known as the Turn Around room. The Turn Around classroom is unimpressive in
> décor – while every wall is decorated, the décor is limited to posters *about* the Turn
> Around program, which happens to be a program created by Scholastic (the district has

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[12] I have appended a full list of themes to this study (Appendix D).

paid Scholastic for access to this program, its materials, and perhaps even its décor – I am

going to assume that teachers did not have much of a say in this because, well, they never

do). In addition to these posters, the walls are plastered with reminders about behavioral

expectations. One poster in particular stands out; entitled "Restorative Thinking

Questions," the poster contains three questions, all of which are written in capital letters:

- WHAT AM I DOING?

- WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING?

- WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IF I CONTINUE?

I realize quickly that there are minimally two assumptions about the students who find

themselves having to endure the Turn Around classroom: Their reading capabilities have

been deemed inferior to what I presume is an arbitrary measure, dictated by their

performance on lexile tests, and their behavior is inherently subpar, by virtue of being a

"Turn Around kid." The posters around the room, in my interpretation, present a

constant, looming reminder that these children bring deficits to this classroom; that they,

in some ways, need to be "restored" to some imagined, "normal" state.

About fifteen students (about half of whom are Black males) file into the room

before me. Most of the students talk, laugh, and roam around the room. It takes Mr. A a

few minutes of coaxing and convincing them to take their seats. He announces the warm-

up:

"Use the word *method* in a sentence."

The word does not appear to be a part of a larger unit of study. It is as though it is

pulled from the sky, at random, a "warm-up" (warming up what, exactly?) for warm-ups'

sake (I find out later that it is a Turn Around [Scholastic]-sanctioned word and activity).

After some coaxing, students write a sentence. For what it is worth, all students appear to write sentences that depict the correct use of the word. (For example, "I have a method for solving math problems.")

The following assignment is equally random in nature, and asks students to write a thesis statement for an essay they have not yet written. The instructions are very regimented: "*I believe that (state issue) because (state claim).*" There is not any discussion. Students, for the most part, do as they are asked, at times ask for help, and unenthusiastically share their responses. I feel for them as I consider how, as an adult, I would not be particularly enthused with the idea of having to complete this kind of mundane school work in the name of "boosting" my literacy skills.

The first part of the Turn Around program, at least according to the poster hanging up in the back of the room, consists of whole group instruction. Students then move into independent work. Here, they access computers with programs which allow them to engage a variety of Scholastic-sanctioned activities targeting spelling, reading comprehension, fluency, etc. Because they are working independently, I take the opportunity to ask the (White, female) classroom aid about the program. She responds:

"It's just a really good literacy program, it's all paced, the students choose the topics, and it moves up with them, so as they conquer spelling…it moves with them and gets tougher and tougher. Some really like it and see it as a challenge…"

In an ironic twist of fate, a student calls out from a computer about five feet away from us and says, with frustration, "I can't even pass this."

The aid turns to me and says, before leaving to help the student, "So that's where… kids with accents… [the program] can't comprehend what they're saying."

I soon learn in speaking with Mr. A that this particular student has been working

on the same fluency activity for a month, and cannot pass the associated benchmark. The

computer program does not recognize his accent (he appears to be of Middle Eastern

descent, but I am not sure). This program, then, is not testing his fluency. It is instead

testing his capacity to conform to normative expectations for standard English

pronunciations. When this computer program refuses to pass him to the next level based

on its interpretation of an incorrect reading, it is in essence telling him that he is wrong.

His way of speaking, perhaps his family's/friends' way of speaking, is wrong; it is

something that needs to be "fixed" or intervened with. It constructs him as truly deficit in

the way he communicates. I assume that all kinds of students, with all kinds of accents,

are likely to suffer similar fates at the hands of a presumably White-washed program

designed to eliminate linguistic nuance. Mr. A explained to me that his hands were tied;

all English teachers in this school are required to teach this class; they are required to use

the prescribed curriculum. For Mr. A, the only redeeming quality is that he does not have

to "plan much" for this class; that it comes prepackaged, and in that sense, makes his "life

easier." Moreover, he explained that he did not find "much value" in this class, but he

does what he can to "get kids out of there." This program is only one of the devastating

ways by which Mr. A is required to submit to programs and curriculum that marginalize

students and distrust teachers."

According to Erickson (1986), "The vignette is a more elaborated, literarily polished

version of the account found in the fieldnotes. By the time the vignette is written up the author

has developed an interpretive perspective, implicitly or explicitly" (p. 150). I have found that my

conceptual memos are shorter, and only slightly less literary than my vignettes. For this study,

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both vignettes and conceptual memos have served similar analytic purposes. I constructed both throughout every stage of data analysis, and read and re-read them to identify additional codes, patterns, themes, and insights. As such, this process allowed me to, in a focused way, further conceptualize how teachers enacted—and were enacted by—authoritative Discourses of Whiteness.

Reading for Tension:

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose….crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (Richardson, 1994, p. 522)

Several have made use of crystallization as a metaphor in education research for analyzing data, and experimenting with crystallization in writing as method of knowing (Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 1994; Tracey & Tretheway, 2005). Crystallization can provide for layered, multifaceted understandings of identity, achieved through "writing as analysis" (Richardson, 1994). Crystallization, as a metaphor for both my writing method and representation of the English teachers in my study, has proven generative, and also useful in terms of Richardson's argument that "[t]here is no such thing as 'getting it right,' only 'getting it' differently contoured and nuanced. (Richardson, 1994, p. 521). In this study, I use crystallization as a metaphor to examine the nuances and tensions embedded in the teachers' racialized identities and work.

At a recent conference presentation, I discussed the way(s) by which I use crystallization as a metaphor in my dissertation work. After my presentation, one of the audience members

asked me how I reconciled my notion of crystallization, as a way by which to view and analyze

my data in terms of representing White English teachers' identities as layered and multifaceted,

with common understandings of crystals themselves (i.e., hard, concrete substances). To be sure,

my use of crystallization is not one which approaches White teacher identity construction and

practice as something concrete and defined, despite the "concreteness" of the minerals with

which the process of crystallization begins (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013), and the ultimate

product with which it ends (as in, with crystals themselves). I am more so interested in the

process of crystallization. Tracey and Tretheway's (2005) discussion of the "crystallized self" in

organization theory is helpful to explaining the distinction:

> Certainly crystals may feel solid, stable, and fixed, but just as crystals have differing
>
> forms depending upon whether they grow rapidly or slowly, under constant or fluctuating
>
> conditions, or from highly variable or remarkably uniform fluids or gasses, crystallized
>
> selves have different shapes depending on the various discourses through which they are
>
> constructed and constrained. (p. 186)

It is not the crystal, then, that is of concern to this metaphor; it is the way by which crystals are

formed. My concern is with the tense and sometimes contentious conditions which give way to

these formulations: Here again, a process dependent upon seeking to understand "the various

discourses through which they [crystallized selves] are constructed and constrained."

Richardson (1994), from whom Tracey and Tretheway draw heavily, describes the utility

of crystallization in terms of analyzing discourse and identity in and through writing as a method

of inquiry:

> Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place
>
> where our sense of selves, our subjectivity, is constructed. Understanding language as

competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world, makes language a site of exploration, struggle…Language is not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific. What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them….Because the individual is subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid. (p. 518)

Crystallization, as a metaphor, is consistent with postmodern and critical understandings of language, identity, and Discourse. As Richardson explains, "Language does not 'reflect' social reality, but produces meaning, creates social reality" (p. 518). Teachers, then, do not simply use language; they are used by language "in the dense particularity of [their] everyday lives" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. xix), as I argue throughout this study. Naming/labeling the discourses they use (e.g.,WED, Discourses of Whiteness) and describing the ways by which teachers and students participate in the very discourses they aim to disrupt, while insightful, is but a single aspect of a reflecting and refracting crystal. Crystallization, then, has allowed me to attend to the ways by which processes and local context help to construct White English teachers' discourses and practices. Crystallization, as an analytic technique, has assisted in my expanded definition of Whiteness (see Theoretical Framework). Crystallization has allowed for me to not just uncover tensions and struggles, but to examine tensions and struggles in myriad ways. In other words, it was not uncommon for me to "hold up" a particular aspect of data to the light, to see the different ways by which it reflects and refracts, and thus, to discern the different ways by which any single piece of data may be interpreted; as such, it was not unusual for me to write six or more distinct vignettes or memos about the same slice of classroom discourse, curriculum material, or research

interview. Crystallization, as an analytic tool, allowed me to move beyond simplistic conceptions of enacted Whiteness and White privilege, and move to toward more nuanced understandings of the teachers' racialized identities and work.

Finally, the definition of crystals—the product achieved from crystallization—in its most basic and literal sense, describes "any naturally occurring mineral substance which is clear and transparent like ice" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). When I consider the terms "clear" and "transparent" in describing crystals, I think of the authors whose work I site throughout this study. They seek to, in their own ways, expose (i.e., make clear and transparent) the invisibility of Whiteness in education. I build from their work by a) revealing and exposing the ways by which Whiteness is manifest in English teachers' classroom practices, and/but b) drawing from the ways by which crystallization, as a metaphor and method, can reveal White English teacher identity and practices as contoured, nuanced, and not necessarily emerging from deep, unchecked privilege and/or racism which, in my view, has been mis/placed at the center of many analyses past. In short, crystallization is a metaphorical way of thinking about the data, but also informed my analytic approach in tangible ways.

Building on Constellations With Crystallization in Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical Whiteness Studies in education have made use of "constellation/s" as a metaphor to interpret—and tell stories about—preservice and inservice teachers' discourses and practices (see Borsheim-Black, 2012; Haviland, 2008). The Oxford English Dictionary (2013) defines *constellation* as "a group of stars forming a recognizable pattern that is traditionally named after its apparent form or identified with a mythological figure. Modern astronomers divide the sky into eighty-eight constellations with defined boundaries." A cursory Web-search of the term "constellation" (predictably) yields millions of results. I've peeked at a range of these sources,

from scholarly articles, to science content published on university websites, to course syllabi. The sources I've referenced describe constellations as "groupings" and/or "patterns" of stars (as distinct from, but certainly in conjunction with planets) which, to the naked eye, appear constant/fixed/unchanged.

Indeed, the metaphor appears fitting; several have responded to the call that "race be analyzed as a constellation of processes and practices rather than as a bounded entity" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 73). Haviland, for example, examines "a constellation of ways of speaking, interacting, and thinking" (p. 41) that White teachers employ to insulate themselves from participation in racial issues and inequities. This constellation of practices constitutes what Haviland terms, for example, a White educational discourse "that can insulate participants from implication in social inequality" (p. 44). This insularity, made visible by an examination of a constellation of defensive and evasive discourses and practices, has yielded, the author argues, White teachers who enact White Educational Discourses that "'gloss over' issues of race, racism, and White supremacy" (p. 40).

Borsheim-Black (2012) also utilizes "constellation" as a metaphor to describe White teachers' practices, albeit it a bit differently. As distinct from Haviland, Borsheim-Black describes the "constellation of promising practices" (p. 86) which "stood out as being central to Anna's critical multicultural approach" (p. 113) to teaching multicultural literature to White students. In this study, Borsheim-Black highlights how "Anna," a White English teacher in a predominantly White, middle class setting, utilizes an array of practices to "make Whiteness visible and to teach her students about institutional racism" (p. III). The author discusses how Anna intentionally planned to teach her students about racism through literature, all the while making her teaching and learning objectives explicit. For Borsheim-Black, it is the constellation

of "many" (p. 113) practices (as opposed to a single practice), including classroom discourse, which shows how Anna approached—and navigated—her critical multicultural goals with her White students.

Borsheim-Black's use of constellation as a metaphor yields a productive, asset-based approach to theorizing the work of the White English teachers in her study. Theorizing and exploring English teachers' practices as constituting a constellation (e.g., discourse, interactions, lesson planning, lesson execution, school-mandated curriculum, different forms of assessment, etc.) is generative, particularly in illuminating the tensions and conflicts embedded in their practices. Such tensions and conflicts contribute to teacher education research by exposing the invisibility of Whiteness, particularly in and through practices which purport to attend to goals for anti-racism in classrooms and schools. However, for all the differences between these two studies, the uses of "constellation" as a tool to examine teachers' practices yield similar claims. For Haviland, the status quo of White educational Discourses and White supremacy prevails, and are "reinforce[d]…even when they [i.e., teachers] have a stated desire to do the opposite" (p. 41). For Borsheim-Black, Anna and her White students participate "in Discourses of Whiteness even as they attempted to disrupt them" (p. 87). Whiteness, in both studies, thus remains the shield teachers wield (and in the case of Borsheim-Black, teachers and students) in order to defend and/or evade—however un/intentionally, and despite their stated goals—their White privilege.

I do not intend to suggest that the studies are not useful, or that constellations, as a metaphor with which to describe and analyze teachers' practices, is not generative. To the contrary, Borsheim-Black, as I have stated, exposes the tensions and conflicts embedded in constellations' of teachers' practices. These tensions and conflicts, as she argues, "are not obstacles to be avoided or resolved; rather, they are an important part of the process" (p. 117). It

is through analyzing not any one practice, but a constellation (or collection) or teachers'

practices, that Borsheim-Black reveals how tensions and conflicts in teachers' practices form

pedagogical borderlands; as she argues, a "borderland discourse is meant to encourage wrestling

with tensions [and] is generative, even necessary, for developing metacognitive understanding"

(p. 117). Exposing Whiteness has potential to get teachers to grapple with the tensions and

difficulties embedded in their anti-racist teaching goals.

However, I argue that it may not be enough to describe teachers' practices and resultant

"constellations," even while recognizing that it is not any single classroom practice "by itself,"

that "necessarily undermines…critical engagement" (Haviland, 2008, p. 44). Even as

Frankenberg (1993) calls for studying race in terms of a constellation of processes and practices,

she points out that "[r]ace, as a social construct, is transformable, malleable" (p. 73). In my view,

there has not been enough attention to process, and an overemphasis on practice. For this reason,

I ask whether examining teachers' practices in terms of constellations and patterns is enough,

insomuch as teachers' ways of speaking, interacting, etc., are not, and have not been, created in a

vacuum. As Frankenberg (1993) explains, "whiteness refers to *a set of locations* that are

historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked

to unfolding relations of domination" (p. 6, emphasis added). As I intend to illustrate in the data,

institutions demand that teachers teach, inter/act, and talk in specific, and sometimes (if not

oftentimes) prescribed ways. At times, such prescriptions are direct—as with administrative

orders that teachers incorporate a specific, corporatized language of behavior management into

their curriculum and classroom discourse(s), features of teachers' practice which become

constrained—if not dictated—by and within such conditions.

I read the constellations/collections of the English teachers' practices in this study—as well as the construction of their White identities—against a backdrop, also, of what is required of them, and how their practices have been constructed *for* them, in and by the institutions and structures in which they teach. Using the metaphor of constellation to describe a collection of teachers' practices is helpful to the extent that it allows a researcher to explore whether and how, as in the case of CWS, a collection of practices undermine (Haviland, 2008) or support *and* undermine (Borsheim-Black, 2012) a teacher's desire for—and approach to—criticality. However, the use of "constellation of practices" in such descriptions, I argue, may not go far enough in qualitative writing(s) which purport to espouse a critical frame. Instead, if we consider the astronomer's notion of constellation as a "recognizable pattern," stopping with and at "constellations" of practice may perpetuate harmful, recognizable constructions of deficit White teachers and essentialized White teacher identities, or, the kind of teacher which Trainor (2002) describes as Critical Pedagogy's "Other."

Consider, for example, the Oxford English Dictionary's (2013) definition of constellation with which I open this section. Not only does the definition discuss constellations as containing "defined boundaries," but the boundaries form patterns which yield "mythological figures" (e.g., Andromeda, Eagle, and Hunting Dogs, to name three of the 88 constellations). The term constellation implies a fixed-ness, or unchanging and recognizable patterns. As one description states,

> Ancient astronomers often spoke of the "fixed stars," which maintained permanent
> positions in the sky. And, indeed, the stars do seem almost fixed in place; the patterns
> they form look much the same today as they did when the constellations were first named
> nearly 3000 years ago. ("Constellations," n.d., para. 15)

Astronomers, however, also recognize that even the patterns and images formed by

constellations are not fixed and unchanging, in spite of how it may seem to the naked eye:

> But the stars are all moving relative to the Sun, most with speeds of many kilometers per
>
> second. Because they are so very far away, it will take thousands of lifetimes to see
>
> significant changes in the star patterns. But, over time, they will change.
>
> ("Constellations," n.d., para. 15)

This discussion of constellations, in the astronomic sense, reveal how not even the stars are

fixed, unchanging, and permanent in their structure, despite the appearance of defined

boundaries. When the "constellation" is used as a metaphor in education, and CWS in particular,

I cannot help but to pose the following questions: When "stars are all moving relative to the

Sun," does constellation, as a metaphor in education research, imply that the teacher represents

the center (i.e., is heliocentric) from which patterns of Discourse and practice originate? In this

way, are White educational discourses (Haviland, 2008) and Discourses of Whiteness

(Borsheim-Black, 2012) dependent upon the teacher as central to otherwise discursive

re/productions and social processes? If so, how is this understanding, i.e., the teacher as central

to re/productions of Whiteness, reconciled with holistic understandings of Whiteness as

malleable and shifting, explained as a *set* of sociocultural and sociohistorical locations

(Frankenberg, 1993) reliant not only on practice, but on process? In other words, is the

production of Whiteness—as analyzed through constellations of teachers' practices—a

centrifugal process reliant on locating White teachers at the center/beginning of this process? In

sum, do we find the "recognizable," defensive and evasive White teacher that we expect to find

in and through a constellation of their practices, and which myths do we instantiate and

perpetuate as a function of "recognizing" him or her?

Furthermore, when it is Discourse that is the focus of study—or, when it emerges as the focus of study such that it earns categorizations of WED (Haviland, 2008) and Discourses of Whiteness (Borsheim-Black, 2012), can constellation, as a metaphor, capture what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as "the process of becoming" (p. xix)? For Bakhtin, language represents complex ideological struggle(s); we not only use language, "but we are used by it—in the dense particularity of our everyday lives" (p. xix). To be sure, I have come to view constellation, as a metaphor, as a starting point to explore English teachers' practices; indeed, I explore and analyze many of their practices, and their language, in this study. I often explore the features of practice in relation to each other, and, like the authors whose work I discuss above, make note of the tensions and conflicts which arise, discuss them, and make claims about them. However, I also keep in mind Bakhtin's (1981) discussion of authoritative discourse, or "privileged language that approaches us *from without*; it is distanced, taboo, and permits no play with its framing context" and further, "it [authoritative discourse] has great power over us" (p. 424, emphasis added). In this sense, while I recognize that teachers have agency, I do not always find it productive to construct the teacher as central to a constellation of patterns of teaching practice(s). As such, discussing teachers' practices in terms of constellations is a sound descriptive exercise, but for the purposes of this study, not a rich analytical exercise unless and until, perhaps, "constellations" do better to describe the processes involved in practice, and how processes and practices help us to better understand the complexities and nuances embedded in White teacher identity construction.

Wenger's (2000) discussion of social learning theory describes the "layer[ed]" (p. 151) relationship between identity and practice, and aptly points out that "the concept of a constellation of practices [is] a simple way to *start considering other levels of analysis*" (p. 122,

emphasis added). Because, in my view, analyzing patterns of teachers' practices in terms of

"constellations" or collections seems to do more to perpetuate an essentialized White teacher

identity than it does to unpack it (despite authors' intentions), I have turned to crystallization as a

tool with which to explore not only how English teachers produce and enact Whiteness in their

practices, but how Whiteness is produced and enacted *for* them, and, at times, demanded of

them. Sometimes, these processes occur with their knowledge, and sometimes they seem to

occur without their awareness. It is with and through crystallization that I hope to shed light on

the institutional structures and nuances which may account for how and why the White English

teachers in my study practice in ways which actively work against their stated goals of teaching

for social justice. In other words, I turn to crystallization as a means by which to explore not only

how English teachers produce and enact Whiteness in and through their practices, but how

Whiteness is produced and enacted *for* them, and again, demanded *of* them. It is with and

through these "crystallized" understandings of their practices that I am able to explore conflicts

and tensions in their practices, and how these conflicts and tensions might shed new

understandings about White English teachers' racialized development; it is with and through this

process that I also echo the words of a colleague and ask, *Why are we surprised [when we, as*

teacher educators and education researchers, learn] that teachers are doing what they're told to

do?

Reading for "Sense-Making":

Crystallization, as Richardson (1994) has argued, is not about "getting it right" (p. 521).

It is, instead, about "'getting it' differently" (p. 521). By "differently," Richardson refers to the

contoured and nuanced perspective(s) afforded in and by this metaphor. In my view,

crystallization has provided a way of making sense of teachers' discourses and practices which

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may at first seem odd and/or troubling, or discourses and practices which may seem steeped in White privilege or racism (for a small example of this, see Appendix E). As I argue in this study, given the conditions and constraints with/in which the White English teachers teach, sometimes it "makes sense" that they do and say what they do and say. Becker (1998) describes the analytic task of sense making in qualitative research, and argues that:

> It's generally a good sociological alternative…to assume that the action to be studied makes perfect sense, only we don't know the sense it makes….In fact, it's probably a very good hypothesis about seemingly unintelligible acts that seemed like a good idea at the time to the people who did them. This makes the *analytic task the discovery of the circumstances which made the actor think it was a good idea*. (p. 25, emphasis added)

To employ sense making, it has become necessary to ask myself (repeatedly) during the analytic phase, *How do teachers' discourses and practices make sense? Why do they make sense?* Becker further explains the "analytic task of discovery" as noticing when

> something…seems so bizarre and unintelligible that our only explanation is some form of "They must be crazy[,]" [which] should alert us that *we don't know enough about the behavior under study*. It's better to assume that it makes some kind of sense and to look for the sense it makes. (p. 28, emphasis added)

In this phase, I often substituted Becker's words ("That must be crazy") with *That must be a racist practice*, or *That must be a teacher exercising White privilege*, or *That must be a teacher participating in a White discourse, despite their intentions.* By substituting with these assertions (and others), I employed my own system of checks and balances, which alerted me to a need to ask questions about what I thought I was "seeing" in my data, rather than to assert "facts" about my data. For example, rather than assume that a teacher was employing seemingly racist

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practices, I got in the habit of asking, *Why does this teacher seem to employ racist practices? Or, Why does (fill in the blank) appear to be true?* It is precisely these kinds of questions which allowed me to see how, when, and for what purposes the White English teachers in my study were not only using particular kinds of discourse(s), but were used *by* discourses.

Granted, some of these initial assertions appear to be true, at times. However, my earliest, initial sense making, I will admit, did not do justice to the teachers I was hoping to describe, or "get differently"; that is, my own assumptions about their work, informed by many CWS, simply perpetuated, and thus did not "move beyond the essentialized other that vexes projects for social justice like critical pedagogy and whiteness studies" (Trainor, 2002, p. 639), and this—however ironically—was despite my own desire for a critical orientation toward my research.

Striving for Methodological and Conceptual Rigor:

To be sure, I do not claim that crystallization and the ultimate goal of "sense making" is a neutral or "correct" process, unencumbered from my personal and professional relationships with the teachers in my study, and unencumbered from what I want/ed to be true about these teachers. To the contrary, crystallization and reading for sense-making was a reminder that my efforts were "not merely 'grounded' in the data" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 81). Rather, "interpretive research is reflexive" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 81). Crystallization, as a metaphor for analyzing research, has provided a way, again, for me to "get it differently"; a different way of "making sense" (Becker, 1998).

The combination of methods used for data collection and the reflexive techniques I employed for analysis have leant themselves to an alternative perspective of White teachers' racial identities and work. I am reminded of Kincheloe's (2001) discussion of the bricolage, where in describes how

Any social, cultural, psychological, or pedagogical object of inquiry is inseparable from

its context, the language used to describe it, *its historical situatedness in a larger ongoing*

process, and the socially and culturally constructed interpretations of its meaning(s) as an

entity in the world (Morawski, 1997). (p. 682, italics added)

I find Kincheloe's discussion validating; it is consistent with the theoretical assumptions about

Discourse and race and I have used to inform this work, as well as my methodological and

analytic approach to this work. In this study, teachers do not simply enact Whiteness. They are

enacted *by* Whiteness, in ways that influence and determine their practices and interactions. I

employ a series of concepts, methods, and analyses to re/present the in/humanity of these

processes and outcomes; to understand the "dynamic relationships connecting individuals, their

contexts, and their activities instead of focusing on these separate entities in isolation from one

another" (p. 689). For Kincheloe, this is the very definition of methodological and conceptual

rigor, and is an approach for which I strove in all aspects of this study.

Why This Study?

Whiteness is very consistently at the locus of teacher education research. When

Whiteness does not appear to be "the center," non-White subjects are often studied using White

norms as the unit of measure (see, for example, the vast body of research attending to the

achievement gap, and the ways by which minoritized youth are studied in relation to their White

peers). What, then, would make yet another study of White teachers any different from what

already exists? Lensmire (2012) theorizes this dilemma adroitly:

One reason for pursuing the idea of whiteness was not because white teachers have not

been the objects, subjects, and participants in educational research….The problem is that

we do not yet have a body of compelling research that studies teachers as white,

racialized beings. In this specific manner, race has long been ignored. (p. 8)

In this study, I do not intend to recenter a group of people who have historically been "the

objects, subjects, and participants in educational research" (Lensmire, 2012, 8). Instead, I am

hoping, in small ways, to capture the intricacies and nuances of what it means to be a White

teacher, and what it is to get constructed as such.

Moreover, to explore Whiteness, for some, "is to look head-on at a site of dominance"

(Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6). To explore Whiteness is perhaps strategic; according to Frankenberg

(1993),

it may be more difficult for white people to say "Whiteness has nothing to do with me—

I'm not white"… To speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign *everyone* a place in the

relations of racism. It is to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for

white people—that, rather, racism shapes white peoples' lives and identities in a way that

is inseparable from other facets of daily life. (p. 6)

Frankenberg suggests that it is all too easy for Whites to displace themselves from matters of

race and racism. In other words, for as long as one claims to not be a racist, they do not have an

obligation to participate in discussions about racism. This is true for many Whites. The

assumption is (in theory) that racism does not apply to them; they are (in theory) absolved of

responsibility. On the other hand, speaking of Whiteness does the opposite. It assigns Whites a

place in racist relations. By exploring Whiteness, in this study, I intend to contribute to a more

complex account of how White teachers get constructed in and by a variety of school structures;

how they construct their racial identities, by also how their identities and practices are

constructed *by* their institutions.

Caveats and Limitations:

Students' Voice(s). In this section, I wish to address several caveats and limitations to this study, one of the most glaring of which is the absence of student voice. Students were not a part of this study. I had originally secured administrators' permission to investigate the practices of teachers in eight different Michigan schools. However, this permission was contingent upon a condition which was shared across all sites: That I not include students in this study. This, for me, was unfortunate. I was interested in what students had to say, and was prepared to navigate the appropriate protocol in order to include them. Britzman (1991) speaks extensively about the "daily problems of transforming curriculum, students, and the self, and the complicated resistances students and teachers bear when they confront the imperatives of social change, social control, and radical agency" (p. 62). As such, "every pedagogy is always dependent upon interpellation and upon the power to authorize particular discourses" (p. 62). For Britzman, moreover, teachers and students interpellate each other; they co-construct each others' identities and Discourses. As such, students' voices could have added to the stories I attempt to tell in this study in important ways. Carrying out the study, however, meant excluding student interviews from the storyline. Given the uniformity of this directive throughout each of the schools I contacted, I suspect that this is a turn schools are taking, in a general sense, but am not clear on the exact reasons for this beyond speculation. I was not, however, advised against using classroom discourse. I tried to mitigate the issue of a lack of student voice by including classroom discourse as a way by which to advance the storyline, but to also inform my work with the teachers.

Scale. The next glaring caveat/limitation is the issue of scale. I explored the practices of four teachers, and include three of them in this study. I do not expect that the stories I attempt to

share about three people is going to majorly disrupt the dominant narratives about Whiteness against which I speak in the theoretical framework of this study. Nor am I suggesting that there are not White students who bring problematic frames and worldviews to their teacher education programs and later, their classrooms. The point is not to suggest otherwise. Rather, my goal is to begin, with other recent critical studies of Whiteness, to chip away at these dominant constructs with a metaphorical axe. I follow Laughter (2011) in the call to "rethink ways in which participants embod[y] and [enact] Whiteness" (p. 44). I intend, with this study, to explore the work of novice English teachers in a way that contributes to recent efforts to critique and deconstruct the narratives held of White teachers in research and teacher education (Laughter, 2011; Lensmire, 2010; Lensmire, 2012; Lowenstein, 2009). By exploring the work of these early-career English teachers, I am hoping to provide teacher educators with additional, nuanced ways by which to consider the preservice teachers in their care.

   A(nother) Note on (my) Whiteness. While I address my Whiteness throughout this study, I believe that it manages to remain the elephant in the room. In earlier iterations of the data analyses, a colleague who graciously offered to provide critical feedback asked me: *White teachers are comfortable talking to you about race…how do you deal with that privilege?* Moreover, someone else had suggested to me that, because we knew each other so well, the teachers did not want to disappointment me, and may have responded to my questions with this in mind. I understand these concerns, and acknowledge that yes, it is possible. More importantly, though, this is another example of how my Whiteness functioned as both an asset and a liability (see Appendix A). I believe Castagno (2008) puts it well when she says:

    As a White person conducting research with predominantly White teachers, however, my

    racial identity was often taken for granted and not questioned. In this sense, my

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Whiteness was an asset because White teachers and administrators seemed to assume a

sort of compatibility with me. (p. 44)

I address my colleague's question against the backdrop of Castagno's words: *White teachers are comfortable talking to you about race…how do you deal with that privilege?* While I do not have all of the answers for the teachers' comfort level with me (behind that of a strong professional and personal relationship with each), I can only say this: I dealt with it respectfully; I dealt with it honestly; I "played hard ball" where I thought necessary, and less so when I felt that the teachers were in need of something different (I describe more of this specifically in the cross-case analysis). I perhaps felt more comfortable getting to the point about race and Whiteness in our interviews than I otherwise would have (and this reality, to be sure, makes me profoundly uncomfortable. In other words, why would I feel less compelled to "get to the point" with a teacher with whom I may be less familiar?). As such, our relationship, I think, was a liability in a few ways. If the teachers assumed a sort of compatibility, perhaps they may not explain themselves to the extent that they would have otherwise (Borsheim-Black 2012 discusses this specific issue). Perhaps, on the days that I observed, they put more effort into their lesson plans as a function of wanting to impress me. Perhaps, in the end, they wanted to appear as Good White Teachers. I will never have all of the answers, but I can say that I grappled with these issues, in the analysis phase and eventual write-up of this study. To be sure, my Whiteness contributes to this study's limitations.

A Final Note. You will see throughout this study that I tend to capitalize "White" and "Whiteness" when they are my own words (as opposed to when I am quoting a participant, or citing research). I follow Critical Race Theory and critical studies of Whiteness, in this practice.

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Specifically, I follow Marx' (2006) practice of capitalizing the 'W' in White and Whiteness so as to

> [signify] its status as a proper noun to name a particular ethnic/racial group, recognizing
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> the socially constructed, dynamic nature of racial categories (see also APA, 2001). By
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> capitalizing this term, I purposely draw attention to race, ethnicity, and power shared by
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> Whites in this country. (p. 5).

Like Marx, in capitalizing White and Whiteness in this study, I wish to keep to my goals for

representing Whiteness as a socially constructed, multiple, shifting, and dynamic racial category.

In following Laughter (2011), I capitalize the 'W' to move away from a sole focus on skin color

and toward an exploration of how teachers embody and enact "a system of Whiteness" (p. 45) in

their schools and classrooms.

CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES

In the chapters which follow, I present three case studies. In many ways, the cases are guided by what the teachers identified as opportunities to teach English for social justice. Bear in mind, this is not a study about "social justice," per se; this is the teachers' language. They were social justice minded, as I explained in Chapter 2. They often used language of "social justice" to talk about their work.

Each case study is parsed into an introduction to the teachers and their schools, followed by four episodes, followed by a conclusion. The episodes feature aspects of teaching and school life in general, and are woven with interview and observation data. The purpose of each episode is to illuminate particular themes in relation to how teachers talk about race, Whiteness, and/or how they seem to enact Whiteness. In the cases of Mr. Kurt and Ms. Tessa, this means seizing upon aspects of the English curriculum where they felt they were best able to tackle difficult topics; places where the curriculum provided a vehicle through which to "open their [students'] eyes to the world" (Mr. Kurt, interview). In the case of Mr. Antolini, I focus somewhat on the English Language Arts curriculum, to be sure, but with his case, am struck by the need to do things a bit differently to tell his story, as his school was very different from that of the others. Of necessity, the cases which follow can only convey glimpses into the lives of these teachers; in the following chapters, I explore their White racial/ized identities, their pedagogical practices, and what they had to say about both. The three case studies are then followed by a cross-case analysis in which I further discuss how understanding Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) has helped me to productively consider how to move the discussion of the Whiteness embedded in the teachers' work beyond a discourse of White privilege.

THE CASE OF MR. KURT

For me, it's not about 'I before E, except after C.' It's about learning about people, and the world, and….. social justice, I guess. I guess that is what it's about. (Mr. Kurt, interview 1)

Introduction: Mr. Kurt and Hidden Creek High School

In this case I present a study of Mr. Kurt, a talented, charismatic English teacher who I met in a senior year secondary English methods course that I taught during my graduate studies. Tall, sandy-haired, athletic and musical, sarcastic yet kind, I noticed early on that he was well-liked by his peers, and terrifically creative. For one of his senior year assignments, he brought his acoustic guitar to class and put his teaching philosophy to music (he was the only teacher education student to take this approach to his presentation). While serenading the class with a musical version of his philosophy, he tossed handfuls of candy to his peers. It was due to this experience, in conjunction with a few others and becoming acquainted with him in a general sense, that I intuitively knew that Mr. Kurt was going to become an engaging and relatable teacher.

I taught two of the secondary English methods courses required of Mr. Kurt to become a licensed English teacher. As I discussed in the methods of this dissertation, my pedagogical approach to teaching that class, in relationship to helping students to "see" their Whiteness, did not seem to go over very productively. In our teacher education courses together, Mr. Kurt challenged my assumptions about Whiteness; as I, in my earliest years as an English teacher educator, naively "painted" my White students with broad White strokes, Mr. Kurt respectfully and with humor challenged me to re/consider my students' presumed deficiencies. In sum, he challenged me to reconsider what it means to be a White English teacher. Looking back, my

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earliest experiences as Mr. Kurt's course instructor were, for me, professionally and personally

transformative; Mr. Kurt is thus the impetus behind this investigation.

Mr. Kurt brings an interest in social issues related to race to his 9th and 10th grade English

classrooms and his teaching; he is critically aware of his Whiteness, an awareness which comes

through in our conversations. Mr. Kurt likens teaching English for social justice in his

predominantly White context to teaching about Whiteness and White privilege. In his words,

> The reason I know my students have white privilege? Is because I remembered that I had
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> white privilege. You know what I mean? So I'm like, well, I know that I have it, so these
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> kids definitely have it, and they don't know anything about it, so....I think it is my job, as
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> an educator to open their eyes to the world…and I guess that…*is* social justice, if I do it
>
> right….For me, it's not about '*I before E, except after C.*' It's about learning about
>
> people, and the world, and [long pause] social justice, I guess. I guess that is what it's
>
> about. (interview)

Mr. Kurt is not stifled by his lack of experience with diversity; instead, he draws from his own

experiences with learning about White privilege to teach his students about how they are

embedded and implicated in larger social issues. Moreover, Mr. Kurt likens teaching English for

social justice in his predominantly White context to teaching about Whiteness and White

privilege. For Mr. Kurt, "[I]t's not about 'I before E, except after C.' It's about learning about

people, and the world, and….. social justice" (interview). In Mr. Kurt's view, teaching about

Whiteness and White privilege is to discuss racism from a "different angle." He has identified

this alternative approach as necessary because, as he explains, his students do not feel implicated

in racist acts to the extent that they are not racist, as people. As such, Mr. Kurt has fervently

spoken about his interest in finding ways to teach his predominantly White students about White privilege and institutionalized racism.

Although he does not use this language in our conversations or his teaching, I describe Mr. Kurt's goals for his students as "critical" in the spirit of critical studies. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) define critical multiculturalism, for example, as the "[concern] with white positionality [and the] attempt to understand the power relations that give rise to race, class, and gender inequality" (p. 3). Frankenberg's (1993) critical study of the social construction of Whiteness is similarly concerned with positionality and power relations. She explains how deconstructing Whiteness

> [i]s to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism. It is to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people—that, rather, racism shapes white peoples' lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life (p. 6, emphasis in original)

Mr. Kurt has taken on the responsibility of addressing racism in his classes with a critical lens. He does this with literature, but he does not rely on literature to achieve these ends; I have also witnessed Mr. Kurt seize several opportunities to address institutional racism in classroom discussions and student work. As such, he located his White high school and classroom as a space in which to do critical work; he endeavors to assign his students a place in relations of racism.

In this chapter, I describe four episodes which represent how Mr. Kurt endeavors to teach his students about race, racism, and White privilege. These episodes, in some ways, may seem disparate. This is intentional: My goal is to show how Mr. Kurt organically seizes opportunities inside and outside of assigned curriculum to achieve his goals. However, all of these episodes are

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threaded with attention to structure; that is, how Mr. Kurt teaches is not just about Mr. Kurt's teaching. It is very often about the authoritative discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) in place which structured his teaching.[13]

Episode 1: "*They get riled up.* That's *meaningful.*"

As I state above, Mr. Kurt did not only rely on literature designated multicultural, or designated units on racism, to enact his critical goals; rather, he seizes opportunities in all aspects of the curriculum. In this episode, Mr. Kurt attempts to teach about racial issues during a lesson on giving speeches. This lesson is mandated by the Common Core Standards, and as such, the English department in his school.

"[Being a White teacher] means that I'm a stereotype." Mr. Kurt shared his observation with me over his lunch consisting of a Snickers candy bar and soda. I had just visited his class during which students gave speeches as a required part of the 10th grade Core Curriculum Content Standards. Students worked in groups to construct and share ideas; one student was elected by the group to deliver their final product. On this day, students were putting the finishing touches on their speeches, which they were then to present to their class. Their speeches, per Mr. Kurt's instruction, should demonstrate a "clear call to action." Students were also in charge of selecting a topic for their speeches, and were, as was common to Mr. Kurt's pedagogical approach, unfettered from guidelines, with the exception that their chosen topics remain "school appropriate" and follow a particular structure for the purposes of cohesion.

During the beginning of this particular class, my attention was drawn to a table of four White, loquacious, female students. One of these students, Gail, appeared to be the group "leader" of sorts. She laughed loudly (which is part of what drew my attention to the group) and

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[13] See the theoretical framework and also the final chapter of this study for an explanation of how I use Bakhtin's (1981) notion of authoritative discourse to theorize the teachers' work and school lives.

spoke to her group mates with a loud, authoritative tone. Her stature matched her personality; tall, thin, and with a confident posture, she commanded her peers' attention. As Mr. Kurt circulated toward this particular group, Gail presented him with a chart, which she accessed on her cell phone, tracking the disparity between Black and White youth obesity rates. This chart showed that Black youth experience higher rates of obesity than White youth. This chart was a part of a larger Wall Street Journal news article detailing Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign, a federal program in which she targets childhood obesity by providing guidelines for school lunches and recommendations for daily physical activity. Gail addresses her group and expresses resentment toward the program. I have transcribed the conversation Mr. Kurt had with this group of students about the chart:

1. Gail: [giggling loudly] I'm not trying to be racist.

2. Sydney: They're racist against white people, that's not fair.

3. Maci: [this student was not in this particular group of four, but shouted her input from across the room] They started as slaves and we're gonna end as theirs. That's how it goes.

4. Mr. Kurt: [asking all of the girls at the table] Would you be as bothered if this [the chart] were targeting white kids?

5. Gail: No.

6. Mr. Kurt: I don't think you'd even think about it.

In the above slice of discourse, Sydney, one of the other group members, seems to have interpreted the program as racist ("They're racist against white people, that's not fair"). Mr. Kurt challenged his students' resentment toward the program; he directly questioned their antipathy by asking if they would be "bothered" if White children were more so centered in the initiative

than Black children (given the disparities in obesity rates which are higher for Black children). When Gail admitted that she would not be "as bothered" if White children were the focus, he gently pointed to the likelihood that she would not "even think about it."

Gail enthusiastically volunteered to be the first presenter. The reasons for the group's opposition to the program became apparent in Gail's speech, which was replete with racial undertones. In giving the speech, she discussed how she and the group resented the "forced" healthy food choices that Michelle Obama advocates in the "Let's Move" campaign, and argued that "kids [should] choose what they want [to eat]." To conclude her speech, she argued that "Black people have a higher percent of obesity than whites, [and] Michelle Obama needs to consider all children she is effecting[,] not just the obese children." The outline of her speech concluded with the words "Protest! Boycott! Racism."

After Gail delivered her speech, Mr. Kurt did not address the seeming lack of a substantive call to action in this student's speech (I was unclear as to what she was taking a stand for or against, besides the issue of food choice in schools). He set aside his original objective and instead attempted to open discussion about the socioeconomic conditions which may account for the disparate obesity rates between White children and children of color by asking his students a series of questions: *What kind of food is the cheapest to buy? What is the most expensive food? Do you think it's a coincidence that* [students interrupt this final question with a multitude of indecipherable protestations; Mr. Kurt did not attempt to finish constructing his question].

As Mr. Kurt attempted, in his questions, to establish connections between access to healthy food and the very communities which tend to have access to healthy food options (and those which do not), his students boisterously interrupted him—and attempted to silence him— with a variety of responses. Their responses ranged from off-topic, seemingly belligerent anti-

Obama sentiments, (e.g., the contention that the Obama administration "is trying to kill white people"), to dismissive theorizing (e.g., "A lot of black people use that [socioeconomic issues] as an excuse"), to sheer, shoulder-shrugging indifference (e.g., "A lot of black people don't take advantage of their opportunities, it's not our fault").

Mr. Kurt spent about 5-7 minutes deconstructing this student's speech, but to no avail. After the last student exited the class at the sound of the bell, Mr. Kurt animatedly collapsed to his knees and laid face down on the floor, groaning loudly. To be sure, it was a difficult class to navigate. I am not sure, in thinking back to my first year of teaching English Language Arts, that I would have handled the same issues, and overall racial hostilities, with the same degree of persistence. For one thing, he used the assigned curriculum and student-generated artifacts as tools with which to raise discussion about the politics of race and access to healthy food. In the above example, he does not rely on themes in literature, or lessons and topics allocated to a lone unit designated to address race and racism (Black History Month comes to mind). This assignment was administered in the middle of a unit on the canonical *Animal Farm*, a text devoid of obvious themes related to race. Additionally, rather than stick to "the standards" by asking students to focus on whether this particular speech contained a "clear call to action" (again, a clear call to action, in the case of this lesson on writing and giving speeches, is one of Mr. Kurt's targeted learning outcomes), he attempted to direct their attention toward social and structural inequities which may impede access to healthy food. Addressing social issues is a common practice in his classroom; this is one instance of many which left me impressed with Mr. Kurt's tenacity with a group of predominantly White students who have attempted to silence him on issues of race at multiple points throughout the school year.

To be sure, Mr. Kurt does not handle the situation "perfectly" (but then, who could/would? What does "perfect" mean, in relation to teaching about race and racism?). In many ways, he allowed his students to silence him. He asked difficult questions, but did not do much to probe his students' racialized (and racist) responses. This decision, though, was not born of fear (e.g., a fear of "parent phone calls," which he said was not of concern to him during an interview after this particular lesson). As I have discussed, Mr. Kurt is also contained within a particular set of expectations that he teach certain lessons and administer certain assessments, all at certain times and in certain ways predefined for him and the other teachers in the school.

When I asked him to describe the ways by which he felt limited in discussing matters of race and racism with his students on this particular day, he explained how he "wanted to get through the speeches." In this same conversation, he also raises another "problem" he has experienced:

> A problem that I think I just realized that I have with this district is, since they talk about racism so much, 8th, 9th, 10th grade, The students hear it every year. Through the books they read, the topic is always brought up. So my *worry* is that when we talk about it, like, [he mocks an irritated grunt, here] I get the eye-roll. And it's like, "Here we go again." And they might check out, because it's like, "we've heard this a million times." So I think that what needs to happen, or what *should* happen, is, we need to talk about racism, and it needs to be in a meaningful, proper way, instead of like, this on the surface, [in a singsong voice] "Don't be mean to black people" type of thing. Because *that's* when you get the eye-roll, and it's like, "Alright, I get it, I'm not going to be mean to a black person. I'm not part of the KKK"; that's what they're all gonna think. Whereas, to toot my own horn, if we talk about white privilege, and we talk about how it's in Disney

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movies, they get *mad*, and they get *riled up*. *That's* like a meaningful, productive

discussion. Even if they don't start thinking differently right *now*, that's *productive*,

because they've had an emotional attachment to it, and they got into it. But if like, since

8th grade, they hear the same old, same old, they're gonna be checking out by the time

they get to tenth grade. (interview)

Mr. Kurt's struggles remind me of how hard this work is. He faced a number of structural

barriers, not the least of which consisted of a resistant White student population. For Mr. Kurt,

his students already know and understand that racism is wrong. They've heard it "a million

times." As such, he is faced with negotiating a prior curriculum discourse which has focused on

racism in ways that elicit eye-rolling and dismissive responses ("Alright, I get it, I'm not going to

be mean to a black person. I'm not part of the KKK"). Rather than subscribing to a trite approach

to racism endorsed by his district, an approach which "worried" Mr. Kurt, he worked to find

"meaningful" and "productive" ways to engage his students with the same topic, as with cultural

artifacts to which students have "an emotional attachment" –such as Disney films. In the episode

which follows, I discuss how Mr. Kurt used cultural artifacts to engage his students with

discussions about racism and White privilege, while using the novel *The Mississippi Trial, 1955*,

as an anchor for his goals.

Episode 2: Forgetting about the book

Mr. Kurt often used themes in literature to teach his students about White privilege, race,

and social justice. In his words, "literature [provided] the best segue for that" (interview). While

Mr. Kurt predominantly relies on literature to engage students with race and racism, he does not

always carry out his plan for reading sections of text in their entirety. In this first example, I

discuss how Mr. Kurt deviates from his lesson plan in order to address issues related to White privilege and institutionalized racism. As Mr. Kurt explains,

> I feel like the social justice stuff really comes in handy when we go off on a tangent and we just forget about the book for an hour. And in the last 5 minutes, I'd say, "Oh! Uh, see how this connects to our book?" [Laughter] Emmett Till had to go through all these different things, and they say, "Oh yea!" So when you forget about the book, I feel like that is probably a good sign. As long as you're forgetting it for the right reasons.
> (interview)

Mr. Kurt, although he does not say so explicitly, seemed to understand that superficial exposure to a text is not likely to accomplish his larger, more critical goals ("I feel like the social justice stuff really comes in handy when we go off on a tangent and we just forget about the book for an hour"). Mr. Kurt's desire to "forget about the book" and "go off on a tangent" also suggests that Mr. Kurt has located dissonance between what he is required to teach and his larger, critical goals. In fact, forgetting about the book—and other aspects of the required English curriculum— in order to address larger social issues was a practice that Mr. Kurt employed repeatedly throughout the school year, in a variety of ways.

During my initial visits to Mr. Kurt's classroom, he was in the early stages of teaching the district-sanctioned text, *The Mississippi Trial 1955* (TMT),[14] by Chris Crowe. Crowe is a White, male novelist who centers the thoughts, actions, and racialized experiences of a White boy, Hiram Hillburn, using the Emmett Till murder trial as something of a backdrop. By

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[14] At the time of my observations of Mr. Kurt's classroom, this text was a required part of the curriculum, but was soon to lose its spot on the department reading list because one of the veteran English teachers with whom Mr. Kurt works feels that "it's too easy" and would prefer to defer, instead, to the National Advanced Placement Reading List published by the College Board, a list where White, canonical literature reigns supreme.

centering the experiences of a White youth to tell the story of race relations in the Deep South at a time when the nation was on the brink of the Civil Rights Movement, the novel represents a traditional curriculum discourse. As Yosso (2002) explains,

> [t]raditional curriculum discourses tend to marginalize the knowledges of students of color. For example, one curriculum unit for an entire year may be dedicated to African American or Native American histories, and even within these units, the perspective is often told from how Whites encountered these "other" people, which re-centers discussions about race back to the "standard," White middle class. (p. 94)

In this novel, Hiram encounters Emmitt—or, the "other"; by centering the White male perspective on racialized experiences over that of a historical figure who motivated the African American Civil Rights Movement, the author "re-centers discussions about race back to the 'standard,' White middle class." Along this vein, and as Allen (2004) argues, "the typical curriculum is tied up in the production, valuation, and distribution of structural, or scientific, knowledge in ways that privilege whiteness" (p. 131). As such, in this novel, Whiteness is held as the standard, or norm through which stories are told.

As is the case for most English teachers, Mr. Kurt's English department provided the novels he was required to teach; they also prescribe (many of) the ways by which the novels should be taught. Thus, the themes Mr. Kurt is expected to teach have also been predefined and determined long before he came on board at Hidden Creek High School. He raised the theme of "courage," about which he is required to teach in TMT, and explained how he "wishes there were other things." According to Mr. Kurt,

The big [theme] is courage…We're talking about, [for example,] "What is courage?" [He

rests his head in his hands and mutters *Ugggghhhh, God* in a frustrated tone]. Let's talk

about understanding things from someone else's perspective. (interview)

An uncritical analysis of this discourse might conclude that Mr. Kurt is well-intentioned but

misguided in his desire to engage students with "the Other" perspective. Such a critique would

hold merit, on the surface; as Maher and Thompson Tetreault (1997) discuss, engaging the

stories and lives of marginalized groups does not automatically necessitate, for White students, a

critical engagement with their own racialized and gendered positions. I agree with this argument.

However, as Kumashiro (2001) argues, it is not merely about broadening perspectives; rather,

"[t]he importance of…lies…in its ability to change the underlying story of the curricular unit and

its political effect" (p. 6). Mr. Kurt's goals for teaching about White privilege and

institutionalized racism attempt to uncover "a different 'story,' a different framework for

thinking, identifying, and acting in oppressive and/or anti-oppressive ways" (Kumashiro, 2001,

p. 6) not readily offered by his curriculum.

As with every teacher, Mr. Kurt has to balance institutional demands that he teach in

alignment with the national Common Core Standards for the English Language Arts. To meet

this requirement, he developed a regular "Article of the Week" segment of his curriculum. He

developed this segment in an effort to meet district's expectations that English teachers address

literacy standards for informational and nonfiction texts. In one such example, Mr. Kurt assigned

an opinion piece by Pulitzer Prize winner Leonard Pitts Jr. (2012), *Don't lower the bar on*

education standards, with which he attempted to address institutionalized racism. Unlike TMT,

the Pitts article is written by an African American male who centers his experiences with

institutionalized racism. I argue that the use of this piece, and the counter-story (Solórzano &

Yosso, 2002) it provides, was consistent with Mr. Kurt's critical goals. Mr. Kurt asked one particularly demonstrative student, Adam, to read the article aloud to the class. The following is an excerpt of this narrative, from which I extract the main points:

1. So I'm in college, right? Freshman year, and I get to talking with my roommate, this white guy named Reed…

2. [the White student who reads this aloud openly asks, "Wait a minute, why did he say *this white guy*?" Mr. Kurt asks him to continue reading.]

3. …about our SAT scores. Reed's kind of sheepish, finally confessing that he scored "only" about 1200.

4. That's when I realized I had not done pretty well. I had done pretty well for a student of John C. Fremont High, in the poverty, crime and grime of South Los Angeles. I had done pretty well for a black kid….

5. So yes, it touches me in a raw spot, this news that two states — Florida and Virginia — have adopted new education standards under which they would set different goals for students, based on race, ethnicity and disability….

6. [C]an we talk for a moment about what they [the new education standards] feel like? The best analogy I can give you is based on the fact that some coaches and athletic directors have noted a steep decline in the number of white kids going out for basketball. They feel as if they cannot compete with their black classmates. What if we addressed that by lowering the rim for white kids? What if we allowed them four points for each made basket?

7. Can you imagine how those white kids would feel whenever they took the court? How long would it be before they internalized the lie that there is something about

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being white that makes you inherently inferior when it comes to hoops, Steve

Nash and Dirk Nowitzki notwithstanding?....

8. Indeed, for all the talk about the so-called "reverse racism" of affirmative action, I

    have long argued that the real problem with it — and the reason it needs an

    expiration date — is that it might give African-American kids the mistaken idea

    they carry some inherent deficiency that renders them unable to compete with

    other kids on an equal footing….

9. Because ultimately, you do not fix education by lowering the bar. You do it by

    lifting the kids.

When Mr. Kurt interjected and repeated a portion of the article [Line 5] for emphasis, the

following exchange took place:

1. Adam: Isn't that kind of a bit racist?

2. Mr. Kurt: What makes you say so?

3. Adam: Making the goal lower because the person's black?

4. Shane: Racism is pretty much discriminating against you because of the color of

    your skin, and this is exactly that. They are setting different goals for kids based

    on race…

5. Mr. Kurt: What do you guys think of that, is that ok?

6. [A few students chime in with a choral, drawn out "Noooo."]

7. Meg: It also said that they have different goals for kids with disabilities, because

    they have problems that prevent them from learning.

8. Mr. Kurt: So you're saying that it's tougher for kids who may have a disability.

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On one hand, Adam seemed to recognize the racist structure within which educational standards and goals in Florida and Virginia were enacted (Line 1), according to the article. His response, as well as Shane's (Line 6) and also the choral "Noooo" (Line 6) marked the beginnings of a discussion about institutionalized racism. However, as Meg's response revealed, it is not difficult for White students to shirk the topic of race and racism by deflecting the issue, a strategy discussed in several critical studies of Whiteness (Flynn, Lensmire, & Lewis, 2009; Haviland, 2008; Picower, 2009). For instance, Meg suggested that the issues in this article it might be targeting something else altogether—as opposed to racism (Line 7: "It also said that they have different goals for kids with disabilities").

While Mr. Kurt acknowledged Meg's response, he did not push her on this point. Instead, her response served as a springboard into a whole-class discussion about White privilege. He directed his next question to the entire class, and the following exchange took place (italics have been applied in lines where words were dramatically emphasized):

10. Mr. Kurt: Do you know what the term white privilege means? [Students collectively indicate that they are not familiar with this term.]

11. Mr. Kurt: I can give you a very small example: What color are flesh-colored Band-Aids?

12. Cabe: [incredulous in tone] You're comparing this to *Band-Aids*?! [Meanwhile, in the midst of Cabe's outspoken resistance, it is as though the metaphorical light bulb "goes off," as a handful of other, seemingly less resistant students exclaim, "Ohhhh yeaaaaaaaa!"]

13. Jay: Nobody says "Is it because I'm white?" But people do say "Is it because I'm black?"

14. Mr. Kurt: What color skin does every Disney character have, except for one?

15. Cabe: [Dramatically slams both fists on his desk and leans forward indignantly] Now you're comparing it to *Disney*?!

16. Adam: The thing about Disney, I honestly, like, Mr. Kurt, you're an awesome teacher, but I don't think Disney has anything to do with it.

17. Mr. Kurt: Really? Did you notice how every evil character has darker skin? Did you notice how the crows sound black? The hyenas [in the Lion King] sound black?

18. [One female student laughs somewhat hysterically during this exchange.]

19. Mr. Kurt: [Not directing this response to anyone in particular] Before you say that my Disney references are not valid, you should educate yourself.

20. Cabe: I think the Band-Aid thing is stupid. If it really matters that much, send a letter. And Disney, really? It's a cartoon.

21. Meg: I have a lot of friends who are black. I am not racist toward them at all. I think it's strange that they have the BET [Black Entertainment Television] channel….I think it's stupid how certain people think that certain shows are for certain races.[15]

22. Cabe: There is a black history month, why is there no *white* history month?

23. Mr. Kurt: [somewhat deadpan in tone] Because every *other* month is white history month?

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[15] [Field note: Students then share the names of television shows with a focus on black characters and families (e.g., *The Fresh Prince of Bellaire* and *Family Matters*, popular sitcoms from the 90s). Important to note is that there is not any discussion of how these shows were envisioned under a 'White gaze,' in that the characters, as affluent and influential people of color in high positions of power and authority (e.g., high-powered lawyers and judges able to enroll their children in elite private schools, and a police-officer) are deemed "acceptable" to White audiences.]

24. Brad: I always thought that, you know how kids are afraid of the dark? They

make characters darker so people would be afraid of them.

25. Aubrey: Black has always been associated with scary things, for me. Like EMO,

Goth…

The students' attempts to dismiss and silence Mr. Kurt (e.g., Lines 15/16) are not

surprising. According to Britzman (1991)

Unpopular narratives unleash ambiguous effects. A story may be deemed unpopular if it

goes against the grain of the acceptable in ways that either offend sensibilities or

challenge the comfort of clear boundaries….[Unpopular narratives set] loose

unanticipated and rebellious meanings that throw into question our very agency. (p. 64)

In short, to deconstruct Disney is to attempt to disrupt an authoritative Discourse about racialized

representations. It is, to reiterate Britzman, to offend sensibilities; it is to challenge the comfort

of clear boundaries. I have experienced similar responses in my secondary English education

courses with my own attempts to encourage students to deconstruct the racialized representations

promulgated by Disney (see Giroux, 1995). For several of my students (preservice English

teachers), Disney is a sacred staple of their childhood. You simply do not critique Disney. Worth

noting is that Mr. Kurt's students seemed more willing to engage the narrative of

institutionalized racism in the counter-story than they were the racialized representations in

Disney films. While I do not have the data to make absolute claims about this point, I surmise

that this may be because, with the counter-story, students were able to interpret

racism as outside of themselves (and perhaps even geographically distant, insomuch as the

policies pertained to Florida and Virginia). Disney and Band-Aids, however, are more likely to

directly represent a feature of their lived experiences. The above classroom discourse raises

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questions about how to encourage teachers to engage the difficult knowledge (Britzman, 2003) of pedagogies which seek to disrupt "the deep investments students hold in the ready-made discourses that live in schools and in the larger social world" (Britzman, 1991, p. 79).

The above classroom episode demonstrates how Mr. Kurt draws on cultural artifacts to supplement his curriculum and assist his goals for critically engaging race; it also demonstrates how students resist Mr. Kurt's efforts to engage a form of White privilege: The privilege of not recognizing or seeing, for example, racial/ized representations in cultural artifacts as iconic as Disney and symbolic as "flesh-colored" Band-Aids. Some of the resistance is blatant (e.g., "You're comparing this to *Bandaids*?!"); other resistance is more subtle, and seems to position racism as an individual trait and divert from Mr. Kurt's efforts (e.g., "I have a lot of friends who are black. I am not racist toward them at all"/ "I think it's stupid how certain people think that certain shows are for certain races"/ "I don't think Disney has anything to do with it").

With this episode, I intend to highlight two aspects of Mr. Kurt's teaching: Mr. Kurt's goals and candid discussions (with his students as well as with me) stand in stark contrast to the oft cited trope of the White person or White teacher who, say, "avoids" (Haviland, 2008; Picower, 2009) foregrounding topics related to racism and White privilege. Secondly, Mr. Kurt recognizes, and is openly frustrated with his White students' apathy toward racism. In his words,

> Especially because of the population I'm teaching now, it's very, very white. Seeing their
> close-mindedness, because of the lack of, not just race, but sexuality, all that stuff. Just
> seeing how close-minded the community is there, is very frustrating. They [do not] seem
> to understand the *problem*…They're like, 'yeah, race is still a problem today but I think
> they [people of color] need to get over it' is what they [his students] say. (interview)

Mr. Kurt's contention that his students enact a dismissive discourse of silence and invisibility around issues of race is consistent with the classroom discourse illustrated above. Taken together, this episode, as well as the previous episode, reveals how Mr. Kurt challenges discourses of Whiteness and White privilege that are often maintained through strategies of invisibility (Howard, 1999; Leonardo, 2010; Picower, 2009; McIntosh, 2008). In this episode, Mr. Kurt went beyond the assigned curriculum and chose a counter-story which centers a Black writer's perspective of institutionalized racism in relation to education. Secondly, he employed two racialized texts (Disney films and Band-Aids) to challenge his White students to (re)consider the dominant narratives to which most of them have likely been exposed for most of their lives. As can be seen in the above classroom discourse, Mr. Kurt does not merely question the problems of racism; he takes his questions a step further by encouraging his students to consider the extent to which their own White privilege has rendered them complicit in their unquestioned consumption of racialized representation in Disney films (Lines 14, 17, 19). Not only were several students resistant to Mr. Kurt's efforts, but some responses endeavor to dismiss—and perhaps silence—his efforts (e.g., "Mr. Kurt, you're an awesome teacher, but I don't think Disney has anything to do with it").

Episode 3: "[A]ll of the 9th grade teachers needed to have it the same"

In the previous two episodes, Mr. Kurt relies on classroom discussion to attempt to accomplish his larger critical goals. It seemed, also, that he was adept at using the English content standards to his benefit. In the first episode, he devoted a lesson (as required) to constructing speeches and organically seized an opportunity to discuss race within this lesson.

In the second episode, he chose a counter-story to address English standards for engaging informational text. He artfully used this counter-story as a springboard into a discussion about institutional racism.

The purpose of this current episode is to show another side of his teaching; a more "structured" side. Mr. Kurt was structured to, at times, to undermine his own intentions, or reinforce "stupid" teaching (as he describes it). Often, these actions are a product of directives from his English department, a team of White, middle-class women, all of whom are veteran teachers who have established—and seem to actively defend—their canonical English curriculum at the weekly curriculum meetings Mr. Kurt was required to attend.

With a desire to get a well-rounded view of his work at Hidden Creek High School, I expressed an interest in observing this team dynamic, a request to access which was promptly denied by his department chairperson. However, I did not need to attend meetings to get a sense of the racialized ideologies, or the hidden curriculum of Whiteness that seemed to underpin the departmental decisions to which Mr. Kurt was often opposed. Rather, I collected his curriculum materials and discussed his use of them with him during our interviews. His curriculum materials—the curriculum which was created for him and required of him, and often without his say or input—provided insights into how Mr. Kurt sometimes had to undermine his own goals for criticality in the name of a) collegiality, and b) "hit[ting] on the standards" (interview). In his words:

> One teacher wants to get rid of the *Mississippi Trial*, because she thinks "it's too easy"
> [he uses air quotations to reinforce that these are not his words or sentiments]. And I said,
> "Ok, I can understand that it might be too easy, but *please* can we use something that is
> not by an old white guy?"…Everything we read in my classes is by old white guys. Or

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white women. We don't read any diverse authors, or [anything about] diversity. Even

Mississippi Trial is about a white kid…So I don't know. I was like, "Can we please have

some diversity?" I want to make it [reading literature] enjoyable. You know? And I feel

like, reading *The Odyssey*, when I'm trying to do something interesting and fun? As

opposed to hell in a book. (interview)

My goal is, on some level, to critique the curriculum with which Mr. Kurt is required to work.

However, more to my point, my goal is to reveal the pre-set conditions into which Mr. Kurt

began teaching at this school. The data reveal that Mr. Kurt is highly critical of these conditions,

even when it would seem that the curriculum is aligned with his goals for engaging race (e.g.,

"We don't read any diverse authors, or [anything about] diversity. Even *Mississippi Trial* is

about a white kid"). As such, Mr. Kurt objected to his colleagues' efforts to maintain a racially

homogenous English curriculum. For him, the literature canon was not "enjoyable"; it was akin

to "hell in a book."

At times, Mr. Kurt seemed to be stuck between a rock and a hard place. It is not as

though he could simply disagree with his colleagues' decision to maintain a racially homogenous

and canonical curriculum and implement a curriculum of his choosing. According to Mr. Kurt,

We are all very encouraged to do the same books. One teacher is not doing *The Odyssey*,

and she's getting reamed out by the department chair. I know we're all supposed to do

the same books. The school board approves all books, and to change the books is very

difficult thing to do. Unless they're on the AP [Advanced Placement in English Literature

and Composition] list. If they're on the AP list, it's ok. (interview)

That Mr. Kurt's colleagues happened to be White and determine the limits of the curriculum

does not mean that the curriculum is inherently framed in a discourse of Whiteness or White

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privilege. The fact that all of the English teachers are expected to teach the same books does not dictate that the curriculum is inherently framed in a discourse of Whiteness or White privilege. However, that Mr. Kurt feels the need to beg his colleagues for racial diversity in the required literature (e.g., "Can we please have some diversity?") might suggest that he is speaking against the ways by which his broader English department privileges and centers literature written by, in Mr. Kurt's words, "old white guys." Furthermore, the fact that the teachers are expected to teach the same thing might suggest that there are consequences when they do not abide by this seemingly arbitrary structure.

Lest I appear, to my readers, to be making leaps, or to be imposing a frame of Whiteness on the data, the difficulty embedded in securing school board approval for new books, "unless they're on the AP list," also seems to suggest a hidden curriculum of Whiteness embedded in the English curriculum. This point is further supported by a perusal of the AP list, itself, which is published by College Board, an organization which touts preparing students for college through test preparation and advanced placement courses. While the list features literary greats such as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, and Louis Valdez (just to name a few), the majority of authors featured on this list are predictably and overwhelmingly White. To be sure, others have argued that a diverse literature curriculum is not necessarily required in order to see the ways by which teachers teach (or do not teach) about racial issues (e.g., Borsheim-Black, 2012). However, an in-depth analysis of this specific issue is not the point of this chapter. Rather, it is the presence of absence—regarding the ways by which literature is selected and uniformity demanded—that may contribute to the ways by which Mr. Kurt is structured with opportunities (or a lack thereof) to engage race and racism in ways that he determined were meaningful (see Episode 2). In other words, pleading with his colleagues for diverse literature, seemingly stalwart

structures in place that prevent curricular change (e.g., the school board and its adherence to the College Board), and expectations that teachers teach the same curriculum lest they be reprimanded, combine to possibly reveal hidden discourses of Whiteness to which it would seem Mr. Kurt is expected to comply.

The crux of the current episode is as follows: Department expectations for curricular homogeneity carried over into assessments. This meant that, where Mr. Kurt did seize opportunities to address racism in ways he thought were meaningful and productive, his efforts were ultimately undermined by a culminating exam which discouraged meaningful engagements with racism (as previously defined by Mr. Kurt).

During one conversation in particular, I asked Mr. Kurt to reflect on his teaching of the *Mississippi Trial, 1955*. Did he achieve his objectives? What was difficult about it, if anything? Overall, Mr. Kurt felt as though his students "walked away" with an understanding of White privilege, even if some of them may have resisted this new idea. However, in this conversation, Mr. Kurt's tone turned to one of dejection, and his expression one of defeat. He suddenly seemed less excited about his work as he began to describe the final assessment for this novel that he was required to administer. He explained that it was created by the other teachers in the English department, and was administered to all 9th grade students. The exam was a compilation of short-answer and multiple choice questions, and concluded with an essay question. Mr. Kurt explained the origins of the essay question in particular:

> I hated the [essay] question, but since it was part of the *final*, all of the 9th grade teachers needed to have it the same. It was supposed to be an argument paper. We spend a lot of time writing argument. And, um, what the other teachers came up with was this question about, it's like a line or a quote from [TMT] where Hiram says something like, "What

they did in the south to the blacks was not the same as what the Nazis did to the Jews"

type of thing. It was like, not as harmful as what they did to the Jews, it was just a way of

life, just the way things are, type of thing. And so then they [students] had to write

whether or not [they agreed] with Hiram or not. And, uh, it just kind of became a

compare and contrast essay, instead of an argument essay. Because all they did was

compare Nazi Germany to 1950s south. So, I was kind of disappointed in the question.

And I should have read it or said something before I gave it to my kids. (interview)

The above explanation illustrates a common dilemma for both novice and veteran teachers in

today's schools: For one, there is the departmental expectation that teachers will share a common

assessment with little to no regard for differences between teachers, students, and classroom

dynamics. Also, it reveals the expectation that materials are to be utilized as given.

That there is a common assessment, and that materials are to be utilized as given, does

not necessitate that the materials represent, maintain, and perpetuate hidden discourses of

Whiteness. It does not, necessarily, reveal how school structures position Mr. Kurt to enact

Whiteness in specific ways. However, what might be gleaned about how Mr. Kurt is positioned

to engage race (or not) by taking a look at the discourse of the assessment? The passage that the

"other teachers" chose for analysis—the passage with which students were prompted to take a

stand, in essay form—is as follows:

Hiram states: "I can see where segregation wasn't very fair, but it wasn't the same as

something like the Nazis killing all those Jews. It seemed to me that Negroes weren't

really being hurt; it was just the way thing were, and I couldn't see why people like dad

or Mr. Paul got so worked up over it, especially when it had nothing to do with them."

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[Essay question]: Is the racism in Mississippi the same as the Nazis killing Jewish

people?

With this exam, Mr. Kurt is required to ask students to take a stand and, in effect, *measure*

different instances of racial oppression and atrocities against each other in terms of which is

more "harmful"; the exam seems to highlight how racism is understood in and by the larger

English department: As a minimized, organize-able ("The Nazi slaughter of the Jews, that

seemed *different*—and *worse*"), and ultimately debatable concept ("so then they had to write

whether or not [they agreed] with Hiram or not").

Framing racism as ultimately debatable (e.g., "Is the racism in Mississippi the same as

the Nazis killing Jewish people?") is disconnected from the type of question Mr. Kurt would

have asked his students. In his words:

It's not the question I would have written. I would try to put them in their [the

characters'] shoes. Which was a big thing that we talked about throughout the whole unit.

Putting yourself in others' positions, and seeing the world from their eyes, and then

turning that into an argument paper. If I could do both of those in one prompt, that would

be a success [long pause] for me.

The kind of question Mr. Kurt "would have written" is more in line with his classroom approach

to teaching his students about institutional racism, racialized representations in media, and the

(White) privilege to ignore it all, unscathed. For Mr. Kurt, "putting yourself in others' positions"

was a concept he hoped his students would engage, critically, after participating in discussions

about White privilege. Take, for example, the following classroom episode.

Episode 4: "*Psssst…Because you're white!*"

As you may recall from Episode 2, I illustrate how students resist Mr. Kurt's efforts to engage a form of White privilege: The privilege of not recognizing or seeing, for example, racial/ized representations in cultural artifacts as iconic as Disney and symbolic as "flesh-colored" Band-Aids. I raise this issue in Episode 2 to tell a story of how Mr. Kurt is not a teacher who avoids discussions about race and Whiteness, and to show, also, how his students attempt to structure his silence around these issues. In this current episode, I elaborate on how Mr. Kurt resists his students' efforts to structure his silence in order to achieve his larger goals of teaching them about White privilege:

26. Cass: The thing about the Band-Aids, I think they're over thinking it, because I never thought…

27. Mr. Kurt: [Dramatically leans toward Cass and responds to her in a mock whisper]: *Psssst…Because you're white!*

28. Mr. Kurt: What if the Band-Aids were black, and we called it "flesh colored Band-Aids"?

29. Cass: Well yea, then we would think about it.

30. Mr. Kurt: I wonder, that those characters often have a black dialect…do you not learn something about people who are darker if that's what you're brought up with?

31. Aubrey: Black people think that because they were enslaved once, that the world owes them something.

32. Mr. Kurt: It's easy for a group of white kids to say this. If we were in Detroit, they might say, "Yea I know what you're saying."

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33.   Meg: [References racialized representations in a Crest Toothpaste commercial]…checking peoples' mouths for germs. The black girl's mouth is dirtier than the white person's mouth.

[A male student presents an actual Band-Aid and says, "To me, that's not flesh colored."]

34.   Cabe: [Takes the Band-Aid and makes a dramatic display of delivering it to Mr. Kurt] Mr. Kurt, can I see your skin for a minute?

35.   Vito: Now it's gonna bug me any time I put on a Band-Aid.

36.   Mr. Kurt: [Allowing Cabe to hold the Band-Aid up to his skin] For homework, finish chapter 2 and chapter 3.

At the end of the discussion, there appeared to be several shifts in the way students talked about the issue of institutionalized racism. For example, in Meg's case, she moves from "think[ing] it's stupid how certain people think that certain shows are for certain races[,]" to offering her own example of media which perpetuates harmful racialized representations, as with a Crest Toothpaste commercial. I argue that this shift would not have occurred without Mr. Kurt's persistence (e.g., "*Psssst…Because you're white!*" / "I wonder, that those characters often have a black dialect…do you not learn something about people who are darker if that's what you're brought up with?" / "It's easy for a group of white kids to say this. If we were in Detroit, they might say, 'Yea I know what you're saying'").

The previous episode (Episode 3) was intended to show how Mr. Kurt's efforts were ultimately undermined by a culminating exam which discouraged meaningful engagements with racism. I raise this current episode separately to better frame Episode 3: As can be seen in the classroom discourse with which I begin Episode 4, Mr. Kurt's idea for an assessment question

would encourage his students to consider other perspectives in the spirit of deconstructing White privilege. This is consistent with the way he conducted classroom conversations (e.g., "What if the Band-Aids were black, and we called it 'flesh colored Band-Aids'?"). To be sure, both this current episode and Episode 3 address issues about the final exam; however, by showing in this current episode more of how Mr. Kurt interacts with his students about race and White privilege, it might better show how the exam is at odds with Mr. Kurt's philosophical and pedagogical intentions.

As such, I offer this classroom episode separately to bolster my interpretation of the final exam as an example of how it positions Mr. Kurt to maintain discourses of invisibility and silence when it comes to deeply exploring issues of race, despite his goals. This can be seen in two ways: 1) The exam he was required to administer addressed race by demanding problematic comparisons, and as such, it b) seemed to undermine Mr. Kurt's previous efforts to engage his students with critical discussions of race. Thus, the way by which the exam seems to superficially frame racism (as debatable in terms of its impact) is at odds with Mr. Kurt's intentions.

Furthermore, much like Mr. Kurt had to deviate from the curriculum (where possible) to accomplish his larger, critical goals, he sometimes measured his efficacy in terms of whether his students also deviated from the curriculum. He described how several students did not respond to the essay question as directed:

> But some people, for the essay portion of their test? Instead of answering the question, they talked about white privilege. So, that's kind of a personal victory, I guess, that they can sit there and write something about it [even though they did not answer the test

question]. It's cool that [white privilege, and talking about white privilege] must be a big

thing that they took away from the unit. (interview)

Some of Mr. Kurt's students deviated from the purpose of the original test question, and instead

"talked about White privilege." For him, this was a silent victory in the face of having to

administer an exam with which he was disappointed, but ultimately agent-less in its creation.

Even though "[A]ll of the 9th grade teachers needed to have it the same[,]" Mr. Kurt revealed that

he did not mark students "down" for failing to answer the question as written. Rather, he was

"just happy" that his lessons on White privilege "stuck with them."

This assessment is not the only example of how Mr. Kurt and his students were directed

to engage race in the curriculum (when they were not being structured to ignore it). For another

example in relation to this specific unit, students were asked on a quiz to "Give three examples

that show the reader how different Emmett is from other black people in the south. (3 points)."

As I explained above, the materials shared between the English teachers in this department were

usually expected to be administered as given. Sometimes Mr. Kurt edited the materials for his

students' use, but the freedom to do so applied more so to formative assessments. Teachers were

not permitted to alter summative assessments, such as final unit exams. As a former English

teacher subjected, at one time, to the same policy, I have yet to hear of a reason for this practice

that makes justifiable sense to students and teachers. To me, it was so often a mind-numbingly

arbitrary practice, but with real consequences (the worst of which was akin to accusations of

insubordination) for those who decided to defy it.

Finally, the exam may undermine Mr. Kurt's more critical goals by what it seems to

leave intact. Kumashiro (2001), for example, describes the problem of partiality, and explains

that

[a]ll students come to school with partial knowledges. In some ways they may not know

much about marginalized groups in society, but even when they do know about the Other,

that knowledge is often mis-knowledge, a knowledge of stereotypes and myths learned

from the media, families, peer groups, and so forth. *The school curriculum often does*

little to address these partial knowledges. (p. 4, emphasis added)

I argue that the exam potentially positions Mr. Kurt to reinforce "mis-knowledge" about racism.

Students are asked to take a stand and, in effect, *measure* different instances of racial oppression

and atrocities against each other in terms of which is more "harmful" (Mr. Kurt, interview). The

exam also highlights how racism is understood in and by the larger English department: As an

organize-able, measurable, and ultimately debatable concept ("so then they had to write whether

or not [they agreed] with Hiram or not"). This is perhaps a form of mis-knowledge handed down

to the students by those in authority (including Mr. Kurt).

This mis-knowledge about racism, though, is not merely handed down to the students—

students, in theory, are assessed on the extent to which they comply with the discourse of the

exam. In other words, students are free, in their argument essay, to disagree with Hiram.

However, they are not, vis-a-vis this final exam, free to argue against the "debatability" of racism

as an organize-able and measurable phenomenon. The requirement that Mr. Kurt use this exam

renders him complicit in mis-knowledge about racism, even as he critiques the exam itself (e.g.,

"I hated the question, but since it was part of the *final*, all of the 9th grade teachers needed to

have it the same."/"I was kind of disappointed in the question. And I should have read it or said

something before I gave it to my kids").

Conclusion

The above compilation of episodes was intended to show some of the difficulties

embedded in Mr. Kurt's practices. Teaching his students about race, racism, and White privilege

are priorities for Mr. Kurt, as I learned during the course of this investigation. It was his past

experiences in predominantly White schools, and his current work in a predominantly White

high school which provided the catalyst for teaching about race and racism. He described how, in

his own schooling experiences, he did not "remember talking much about" racism or White

privilege. He acknowledged that it is "scary," and admits that the teachers with whom he works

> are afraid to talk about it. Because it's touchy. I wouldn't be surprised if I'm the only
>
> teacher who talks about it [racism and White privilege]. Because it's scary. When you're
>
> going into it, you know you're going to upset people and push peoples' buttons. But
>
> that's why I did it. I did it because I wanted to do that. I wanted to push them [the
>
> students], and make them question, and get mad at me. (interview)

Mr. Kurt located opportunity in an otherwise "scary" endeavor. However, as I described above, it

was not always possible to carry out these goals. The more I observed Mr. Kurt's practices, the

more I detected a sense of trepidation. That is, while he often made decisions in favor of what he

thought was important (e.g., teaching about White privilege, racism, and other social issues and

hot topics), they typically seemed enshrouded in a degree of hesitation. Given his "first year

teacher" status, he did not often express his interests and concerns to his team (in his words, he

smiled, nodded, and remind silent at most team meetings).   In a conversation with me, he

invoked the metaphor of "scared teaching" to distance himself from the English team of teachers

with whom he works. He defined scared teaching as:

> Being too afraid to talk about the real stuff. [He takes on a mocking tone to describe their
>
> stance] "Oh, I don't want a phone call from a parent, and, Oh, I don't want so and so to

get mad," and yea, there are some days where I don't want to deal with so and so getting

mad, too. That doesn't mean that you totally blow off an entire subject that's

important…I think people who don't do what they think is the right thing to do, or teach

[what they think] is the right thing to teach? And they feel like they need to follow a

curriculum verbatim, off of a script? I think that's scared teaching. I think that's an easy

way out. (interview)

The differences between Mr. Kurt's orientation and that of the teachers with whom he worked

closely are not merely philosophical. In this same conversation, Mr. Kurt described how he

"loves talking about social justice," but is required to teach "a curriculum that we know is not

going to be well-received" by the students. However, at the same time, he acknowledges how

"doing the right thing" it is not a simple matter of being unafraid; as a teacher he also "toes the

line" (interview) with a curriculum and process he has described as "oppressive," and makes

decisions about teaching in ways that are justifiable to broader audiences (such as parents):

I toe the line a little bit sometimes. And I say, "How can I justify this to a parent? How

can I justify saying, well, we're learning this, because blah blah blah, it relates to our

novel, blah blah blah, and it relates to *this* standard and *this* standard, which I'm required

to teach?" If I can justify it, then I'll be ok. (interview)

On the one hand, Mr. Kurt seems to acknowledge that he has to submit to the very structures

which inspire his critique. In a paradoxical sense, Mr. Kurt's decisions for criticality are feasible

only to the extent that they are supported and "justified" within those larger structures (e.g.

standards, curriculum, and parents). For as long as he can justify his decisions in the eye of the

mandated curriculum, and also to parents, he "will be ok." We see how he critically navigates

this tension above, as with his use of a counter-story to meet the curriculum requirements that he

engage his students with informational texts. As I show earlier, the use of this counter-story then serves as something of a launching pad from which to engage the topic of institutionalized racism and White privilege.

But we also see how his efforts are stifled, as with a curriculum materials that are prescribed by veteran teachers who, in his words, are "too afraid to talk about the real stuff." While he does not subscribe to this approach on a philosophical level, his practices, in some ways, are structured by it. This irks Mr. Kurt, and has inspired some resentment toward the teachers with whom he works.

To close this chapter, I return to the quote with which I began Episode 1: "[Being a White teacher] means that I'm a stereotype." Mr. Kurt goes on to say, "I'm stereotypical. Especially, I look around in *this* school, and I think we have one teacher who's black. He's a student teacher. And everyone else is white. So I think I'm a stereotype." In the case of Mr. Kurt, however, his work reveals anything but the stereotypical White teacher. His work and his words have inspired me to ask questions about the ways by which enacted Whiteness may be shifting, contradictory, and, well—confusing. This confusion, I fear, may all too easily be reduced to a simplistic construction, a caricature, of the "stereotypical" White teacher.

CHAPTER 4: THE CASE OF MR. ANTOLINI

To me, social justice is all about teaching students what power they have to change

things. About their school, the immediate things that matter to them… That's the reason I

teach English – to help them become the best person they can be, and all of that. Mostly,

in my opinion, it's all about teaching them their own power to change things for what

they think is best. (Mr. A, interview 1)

Introduction: Mr. Antolini and Pryde Middle School

I met Mr. Antolini (Mr. A) in a required, senior year English methods course that I taught several years ago. I knew him for about two weeks when he submitted his "Teacher Autobiography," the first assignment of the course. The purpose of the assignment was to give students a platform through which to articulate their reasons for wanting to pursue education, and specifically, English teaching, as a profession. This assignment is also structured to give me, as their instructor, profound insights into their motivations and influences; in a sense, it is a tool that allowed me to "get to know" my students, uncover whatever assumptions about teaching, learning, literacy, students, and the world that they hold, and re/structure the class sessions that lay ahead. Mr. A opened his assignment as follows:

> As any of my friends from high school would be able to tell you, one of my mantras has
>
> always been "I hate people." First, it came from me disliking the way people treated one
>
> another, people's lack of consideration for others, and people's lack of thought before
>
> they act or speak. I hate the things people do to one another because of a lack of
>
> understanding of others or a lack of thinking about the consequences of their actions.
>
> Now, my hate has grown to include the systems in place that keep certain people from

bettering their lives[,] like unequal schools, linguistic discrimination, racism, and

homophobia to name a few. I hate the cycles of misunderstandings people have of one

another that cause people to hate those unlike themselves. (Mr. A's Teacher

Autobiography, a secondary English methods assignment)

While Mr. A had an entertaining, tongue-in-cheek tone to his writing, his response stood out

among his peers for other, more profound reasons. Across several years of teaching, and having

collected many responses to this assignment, I noticed that Mr. A remains the lone student (now,

fulltime, in-service teacher) who specifically referenced the inequitable "systems in place," or

institutional structures which oppress historically marginalized populations; systems which

"keep certain people from bettering their lives" as something he wants to address, as an English

teacher. As such, Mr. A brought a critical orientation to English education. He went on to say

that:

This is one of the bigger reasons that English is important to me: teaching people to

understand one another and care enough to take social action. Literature is a great tool to

teach and inspire these things. (Teacher Autobiography)

Mr. A's response stuck with me for our two years together in our secondary English methods

courses. It was Mr. A's awareness of the "systems in place" that led to my asking him to

participate in my study of White English teachers.

Mr. A taught 8th grade English Language Arts at Pryde Middle School, a racially diverse

middle school in a Midwestern city hit particularly hard by the recession. Early on in my work

with Mr. A, he laughingly described his school as racially diverse:

What I like to tell people is [he laughs], 'I work in a diverse school, and by diverse I

mean *diverse* – not black. You know, like, normally what people like to say is, 'I work in

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a diverse school,' and what that really means is 90% black'…but it's actually a very diverse school, and it's actually a *very cool* place to be teaching and talking about issues with race and things. (interview)

In this school, more than half of the student population (60%)[16] consists of students of color. Of this percentage, 39% of the students are Black, with the remainder consisting of a mixture of Latin@ and Asian students. Mr. A's classes are consistent with these demographics; most of his classes consist of children of color as the majority, and mostly African American males.

In this chapter I intend to contribute to critical studies of Whiteness which take into account the ways by which school structures intersect with the re/production of Whiteness. After observing Mr. A's practices, and coming to know his school, colleagues, students, and various aspects of school curricula, I have begun to make sense of that which was troubling me: I could not seem to reconcile Mr. A's goals of teaching English for social justice with what actually occurred in his classroom and the broader school. Mr. A struggled with his racial identity; his struggles were ignored and perhaps even exacerbated by the racial/ized discourse of the school he and his students inhabited. In the episodes which follow, I describe different aspects of his teaching and his day to day life at Pryde Middle School to shed light on how the school's institutional arrangements and curriculum discourses helped to co-construct his White racial identity often—if not always—in opposition to his racially diverse students. I begin with an episode in which two curriculum discourses, P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS, set the stage for how Mr. A is structured to teach in ways which run counter to his critical orientation; ways which seem to position him to assume a deficit orientation toward the students in his care.

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[16] I was given this percentage during an interview I conducted with one of the school's assistant principals, which came directly from a district Civil Rights report that he had compiled just prior to our discussion.

Episode 1: P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS

Mr. A's classroom is a short walk and two right-hand turns from the main office. The décor of the hallways floods teachers, staff, students, and visitors with an overwhelming number of directives; these include the amount of "noise" one should make, to reminders to respect oneself and the other. I did not understand many of the directives at the time of my earliest visits, although, the message(s) delivered by some posters was easy and obvious enough. For example, every teacher in this school was photographed with a novel, and then photo-shopped to a particular background (a beach, a couch, a comfortable room, etc.), with their own personal words of wisdom about how important "reading" is, scrawled across their pictures. These 8"x10" posters align the upper walls and border the ceiling. Other posters are larger (some spanning entire sections of wall), and far more ubiquitous. These other posters have the acronym P.R.I.D.E painted, sometimes messily in typical child scrawl, in a rainbow of colors. It is not until I arrive to Mr. A's classroom that I learn that P.R.I.D.E is an acronym for the following: Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, Engagement. A more in depth tour of the building provides definitions of each of these terms, according to several official (i.e., non-student generated) posters:

Preparation: Get to class on time./Use passes to leave class.

Respect: Stay in your own space./Use kind words and a kind voice.

Integrity: Answer all questions truthfully./Stop-Walk-Talk.

Determination: Walk directly to class./Stay on the right.

Engagement: Follow adult directions./Use self-control.

This curious language is ubiquitous as soon as one enters the school building. There is also a "P.R.I.D.E. Awards" table and adjacent wall, right outside of the main office. Adherence

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to P.R.I.D.E. principles, then, is incentivized, in that it is something of a competition, where teachers submit blue, raffle-esque stubs and encourage their students to vie each month for the designation of…I am still not sure of what. The classroom with the most students who "stay" in their own space? Stay on the right? Exhibit engagement by using self-control, or integrity by "stopping, walking, and talking"? (Which begs the question, how does one stop and walk at the same time?) There is also "P.R.I.D.E. for Restrooms," defined as follows:

Preparation: Use passes to leave class.

Respect: Stay in your own space./Allow privacy for all students.

Integrity: Keep walls and surfaces clean and free of writing.

Determination: Use time wisely.

Engagement: Quickly take care of personal business and return directly to class.

It would all seem bizarre and perhaps a little amusing, if not for the reality that, as a researcher, walking through halls and classrooms flooded with this acronym inspired feelings that I was not inside of a school; instead, I felt as though I had entered a correctional facility, or something a bit worse, where people are instructed and surveilled on how to prepare, respect, and engage determinedly and with integrity, their own bodily functions; a place where young people, on the verge of young-adulthood, actually require instruction about how to use the restroom.

I realize that it might seem odd to focus my discussion on what may seem, on the surface, to be strange school posters. However, as I came to learn, this behavior management system (and others) functioned alongside the English Language Arts curriculum (and all other subject areas taught in the school). It was embedded *into* the subject matter, and into teachers' teaching of the subject matter. The language of P.R.I.D.E., and other school-wide behavior management systems, set the stage for my investigation into Mr. A's practices. As I have found in my

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analyses of Mr. A's words, work, and daily interactions with students, I could not talk about his teaching without also talking about this larger mandated curriculum. Mr. A explained how the program came into being, and shed light on the ways by which the administration justified its use:

> The way they [the administration] sell it, they say this is what's best for the kids. So we give it a try. Everyone pretty much did agree that, especially with our student population, a lot of them [students] lack consistency at home because, since one week they're with mom and one week they're with dad and things like that, or one week they're with mom, and then one week out of nowhere mom leaves, and then they're with grandma and grandpa. So they try to use emotion to get us to think like, yea, every bit of consistency we give them will help. (interview)

It seemed that assumptions about students' home lives justified the use of P.R.I.D.E. in an effort to provide the "consistency" that students "lack" at home. Having also come from a home in which time with family was structured in particular (and not always consistent) ways, I was unclear as to how surveilling bathroom use, micromanaging the flow of hall traffic, and conducting "P.R.I.D.E." competitions was supposed to alleviate some sort of perceived lack in students' home lives.

Given the racial makeup of this school's population, in conjunction with the absence of similar programs in the other schools I visited during this study, I could not help but to consider the possibility of a racial component underlying the behavior management curriculum. And while Mr. A did not raise this possibility explicitly, he reflected on the dynamics between the White teacher population at this school, and racial diversity of the students. In Mr. A's words,

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There probably is a small amount of cultural misunderstanding and difference that gets in the way of things. I wouldn't be surprised if it's a problem because of the diversity of the students compared to the diversity of the staff. I would not at all be taken aback to find out that some of the students we have trouble with [in terms of] behavior and grades would be different in a different environment where it's not just a bunch of white teachers telling them [students] to stop being black. (interview)

On one hand, it would seem that Mr. A described the "cultural misunderstanding and difference" that play out in this school as a barrier to forming productive relationships with students. That is but one read of his words. It seemed that he was not describing difference, itself, as the problem; instead, the problem seemed to exist in how teachers and staff worked (or did not work) with difference. As such, he surmised that the students teachers say they "have trouble with" might have a different experience "in a different environment where it's not just a bunch of white teachers telling them to stop being black." Mr. A's words shed light on a possible racial component underlying the behavior management curriculum. In other words, I wondered whether P.R.I.D.E., as a required aspect of the curriculum, was a misguided attempt to mitigate against the teacher/student dynamic that Mr. A described.

As such, P.R.I.D.E. seemed to represent a hidden curriculum of Whiteness in several ways. According to Allen (1999), a hidden curriculum of Whiteness in institutions allows "Whites [to] rationalize their privilege by constructing themselves as benevolent patriarchs of the disadvantaged Others who struggle to keep pace" (p. 9). The use of P.R.I.D.E. has been rationalized as "what's best for kids" because "a lot" of the students are said to "lack consistency at home." Secondly, it seemed to be a hallmark of larger prescriptive disciplinary programs and discourse that are common in schools with high populations of students of color (Delpit, 2003).

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To both of these points, as I oscillated between four different schools during the course of this study, I noticed immediately that there were not any comparable programs in the other schools I visited, nor was there a discourse of deficit that seemed to surround students and teachers at all times in these other schools. Was it merely a coincidence that these other schools had high/er populations of White students?

Furthermore, as Yosso (2002) argues, school curriculum is layered; curriculum is not only about the subjects taught. A Critical Race Theory challenge to the traditional curriculum argues that curriculum also encompasses *processes*; it is "supported by *discourses* that justify why some students have access to certain knowledge while others are presented with different school curriculum….As they stand, traditional curricular structures, processes, and discourses reveal a hidden (and not-so-hidden) curriculum that marginalizes…students of color" (p. 93-94, emphasis in original). In other words, exploring the ubiquitous presence of behavior management curricula in a school where more than half of the students consist of students of color, and where 100% of the faculty and administration are White, might suggest that the administration (those in charge of purchasing and enforcing all school policies and curriculum) had specific (and to be sure, very misguided) ideas about what it means to serve children of color.

The P.R.I.D.E. posters, I noticed, were also surrounded by a curious numeric language. For example, the "Hallway Volume Level" is set at "Voice Level 2—Quiet Voice." It was not until I began my observations of Mr. A's classroom that I gained a deeper understanding of this corresponding numeric system, known as CHAMPS, which turned out to be yet another school-wide attempt at behavior management. In Mr. A's words, "'CHAMPS' is the latest craze in classroom management." Employing a mocking and amusingly irreverent tone, he went on to say that,

CHAMPS says, "*Oh*! Kids misbehave because they don't understand what they're

supposed to *do*!" Which is completely false, because I ask them what they're supposed to

do, and they know before I tell them. And you're supposed to have one of these posters

[he points to the poster which references the different segments of the CHAMPS model]

Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success. So…*CHAMPS* [he

spreads his arms and places emphasis on this final word, still amusingly irreverent]. Um,

so, the 0s, 1s, 2s and everything that you hear… is the conversations or noise

level…(interview)

Mr. A's sarcastic tone had always suggested to me that his expectations for his students were

much higher than what the program prescribed ("Oh! Kids misbehave because they don't

understand what they're supposed to do!" Which is completely false, because I ask them what

they're supposed to do, and they know before I tell them"). He described CHAMPS as a

mechanism of control ("so, the 0s, 1s, 2s and everything that you hear…is the conversations or

noise level"), and explained how it dictated how students and teachers were expected to engage

with particular classroom activities. For example, according to CHAMPS, students are expected

to accommodate a "noise level" of 0 when they are asked to read silently, or asked to complete a

writing assignment. Students are permitted a noise level of a whisper (noise level 1) when asked

to complete partner work, and a noise level of 2 when asked to complete group work. A "class

presentation" has been allocated to a noise level of 3 for those situations where students address

the whole class. Finally, a noise level of 4 is strictly an outside voice. This last level is

particularly interesting, and perhaps a bit absurd, insomuch as the program seems to take a crack

at governing how students conduct themselves outside of school, a time when they should be free

of the very tables, charts, bullet points, and directives which delineate and quantify their academic and personal engagements inside of school.

Episode 2: "*We're at a 'zero'*": A discourse of deficit

In the previous episode, I described P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS to illustrate how the institutional arrangements in this school seemed to represent a hidden curriculum of Whiteness. In this current episode, I offer an example of how CHAMPS functioned alongside the English Language Arts curriculum. In so doing, I use a class discussion which occurred in the middle of a literature unit Mr. A taught midway through the fall semester of the academic year. In this episode, Mr. A and his students were discussing aspects of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, a novel in which social class differences and violence are prominent themes. During an interview, Mr. A indicated that his students seemed to enjoy the novel; in his words, "I actually get kids who are complaining when we're not reading the book in class…no one ever [says], 'Aw, man! We're not doing vocabulary today?'" Likewise, Mr. A enjoyed teaching *The Outsiders*.

Mr. A often began each day of the literature unit with a "warm-up"; in an effort to get his students to make complex connections to the world around them, Mr. A would devise writing prompts to which students would respond at the beginning of class. An example of such a prompt is as follows:

> The main division between the Greasers and the Socs [the two social categories/groups in the *The Outsiders*] is economics (money). Do you think this type of division between people still exists today? Explain why or why not. Use specific examples to back up your argument.

This "warm-up" was a lead-in into the class discussion which followed. On this particular day, Mr. A adapted what would normally be a "4-Corners" style, kinesthetic opportunity for

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discussion, for individual seatwork (see Appendix F). In other words, this debate-style activity

was redesigned as a worksheet (labeled "survey") to be completed independently.[17]

The following slice of classroom discourse captures one way by which CHAMPS

functioned alongside the English Language Arts curriculum:

1. Mr. A: [Calling students to attention] We're at a "zero." Now we're going to have

   some time for a class discussion and we haven't done a long class discussion, and

   for some of us, this might be quite difficult to keep our mouths shut while others

   are talking…..Raise your hand if, for number one [he refers to the first question

   on the survey], *Nothing can replace or fill in for family*, if you have strongly

   agree or agree?

2. [Several students raise their hands]

3. Mr. A: I want to hear from two people on the agree or strongly agree side, why

   Nothing can replace or fill in for family.

Although the very first letter in the acronym CHAMPS stands for "conversation," and although a

class discussion is the goal, Mr. A reminds students that they are "at a zero" noise level (which,

in CHAMPS language, indicates that "noise" is not acceptable). Also, rather than encouraging

students to respond to each other, Mr. A calls on students, question by question, to share their

responses, while taking sufficient time out in between questions and responses to remind

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[17] To be sure, I am not critiquing Mr. A's decision to have students complete this worksheet from their seats. In the CHAMPS literature I've seen (see Appendix), "Movement" refers to "activities" such as pencil sharpening, getting a drink from the water fountain, using the restroom, handing in and picking up materials, etc., all of which, according to this program, require a teacher's permission. Movement, then, refers to day to day organizational tasks detached from actual learning opportunities (e.g., pencil sharpening). If Mr. A had the freedom to incorporate actual kinesthetic learning activities into his instruction, it was not obvious in his practices or our discussions.

students that they "need to be at a 0." Throughout the duration of the class, several students offer the following responses to the survey questions:

a. *People treat certain types of people differently.*

b. *Some people don't like people cause they ignorant.*

c. *Back in the day they treated slaves differently because of their skin color. They didn't have a choice.*

d. *Violence never solves anything.*

- *Yea, but that's not what Malcolm X says.*
  - *Yea, but Malcolm X died.*

e. *I think Mitt Romney was like…he wasn't looking at the middle class people and their money. He was more concerned about the rich.*

f. *Mr. A, who did you vote for?*

g. *If somebody is poor, it is their own fault. Poverty is a choice.*

- *What do you mean by "poor"? Living on the street, or struggling?*

I offer the above amalgam of responses, rather than a full transcript of classroom discourse, as a matter of strategy, and with readers in mind: By singling out these particular snippets, my goal is to highlight the student responses that a more formal (and onerous, pages-long) transcription seemed to eclipse. That is, students were offering complex, historically situated input, and at times agreeing—and even debating with—each other (as with the exchange that begins with Line 'd'). I was taken with their allusions to discrimination (lines a, b, c) and current politics (lines e, f); I was impressed with one student's request that his peer get clear on her definition of "poor" (beginning with line 'g') so that he might be better positioned to respond thoughtfully (he never did respond, as the class was called to order and reminded of the "zero"

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volume level). However, each of the students' responses, because they did not begin with a raised hand (thereby seeking permission, per the CHAMPS model), or were mostly in response to each other (and not the teacher), were cut short by a reminder to remain at a level 0. Mr. A does not push on most responses, except to say how he "likes the references to *The Outsiders*" specifically.

I chose the abovementioned writing prompt, corresponding survey, and select student responses to show how the school's mandated behavior management curriculum, as it functioned alongside the ELA curriculum, seemed to mandate a discourse of deficit. On one hand, the data might suggest implications for how classroom talk, as a pedagogical tool, is (or should be) approached in English teacher education. I do not necessarily disagree with this potential interpretation, but will point out that, as Mr. A's former instructor, investigating dialogic discussion and discourse analysis was a prominent feature of his teacher preparation in the English education program. For Mr. A, it is not necessarily an issue of whether he knows how to facilitate purposeful classroom discussion (although, again, this is a possibility). The writing/discussion prompts he created (as with *The Outsiders* prompt, above) suggest that his questioning techniques are conducive to purposeful discussion. The above discourse is about much more than facilitating whole-class discussion: It is to show how the school's mandated behavior management curriculum undermined Mr. A's pedagogical goals for complexity, discussion, and "highlight[ing] problems in the world" (interview 1). The constant reminders of a "level 0," calling on students to respond individually, while highlighting his lowered expectations for "some of" his students, raised questions about how Mr. A may have been positioned to enact a discourse of deficit by the larger behavior modification curriculum mandated by his school.

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Moreover, the above discussion is intended to show that teachers, too, were controllable, and thus subjected to these "strategies" with which they were expected to comply. Mr. A explained how CHAMPS de/limited his curriculum: "Even if I want to give them some different expectations, or let some other things slide, I can't because I'm supposed to hold them to these [CHAMPS]." Furthermore, for Mr. A,

It's [CHAMPS] an oversimplification [long pause]. Life doesn't always have all of its activities perfectly portioned into what type of citizen you're supposed to be [he laughs], when you're engaged in different types of activities throughout your life? Part of life is supposed to be about making some of those assumptions and determinations on your own. And use some of your common sense to figure out what you should and shouldn't be doing. (interview)

Not only did Mr. A feel constrained by the curriculum, but it seemed to run counter with real-life expectations for participating in the world ("Part of life is supposed to be about making some of those assumptions and determinations on your own"). It seemed, also, that the mandated behavior management curriculum impacted classroom dynamics in negative ways. For instance, during my time at Pryde Middle School, it was not uncommon to observe many students participating in a way which seemed to frustrate Mr. A. At times, there was a fair amount of talking, or students leaving their seats for reasons which did not seem clear (other than the sheer joy of leaving their seats). Mr. A often expressed frustration with not being able "to get through a lesson" because of his perceived needs for addressing classroom issues. These "needs," though, always seemed to be dictated by the assumptions embedded in CHAMPS and P.R.I.D.E. In other words, it did not seem that Mr. A was given much opportunity to assess, on his terms, what his classroom needs were.

After about six months of integrating P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS into his pedagogies, curriculum, and general interactions with his students, I noticed that Mr. A began to talk to—and about—his students differently; his language became unrecognizable from this person that I had known, by that time, for over two years:

> These kids, especially, need very strict, stringent guidelines, and not a bunch of exceptions about, you know, "Oh, yea, I guess if you're going to have a good reason to get up, you can get it up," etc. It bothers me if I have to have everyone seated and absolutely silent and if they want to get up and get a tissue to raise their hand and ask me permission. That's not me, you know, I'm much more free flowing, a little bit of background noise is ok, that sort of stuff. But these kids can't handle that. So it's hard for me, it's almost more work for me because I have to be who I'm not. I have to fight my natural instincts to be what they need. (interview)

Mr. A seemed to speak about his students as though his hands were tied, and that silence and forced immobility as acts of punishment in his English classroom were the only option ("It bothers me if I *have to have everyone seated and absolutely silent*"). During our discussion, he also repeatedly used language of "these kids" to describe and explain how distant he is from his students, and as a function of this, how distant they were from (his) conceptions of normal students ("Who I am naturally…doesn't mesh with what *these kids* need from a teacher").

A superficial and convenient read of his practices would suggest that Mr. A constructed his students as deficit. This very much seems to be the case, both in how he talks to his students and how he talks about his students, as I describe above. However, insofar as Mr. A is surrounded by—and required—to employ these management systems in his teaching, I argue that they are not innocently detached from how Mr. A talks to—and constructs—his students. I

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also argue that these systems are not innocently detached from how Mr. A is constructed (and thus, how he constructs himself), which is often in direct opposition to his students ("But the kids can't handle that. So it's hard for me, it's almost more work for me because I have to be who I'm not"/"Who I am naturally…doesn't mesh with what *these kids* need from a teacher"). The data reveal how it is not an issue of whether "the kids" can "handle that"; rather, it seems that the behavior management curricula *dictate* that "the kids can't handle that." In other words, Mr. A's assumptions about students were already embedded in—and dictated by—the traditional curriculum discourses (Yosso, 2002) of the school. As such, it seemed that the prior and authoritative discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) of the school developed Mr. A in a racial deficit lens by enforcing, through CHAMPS and P.R.I.D.E., ideas about who is natural (i.e., himself) and what is natural (compliant behaviors), all of which are designed to exist in opposition to *who* is deemed unnatural (his students) and *what* is unnatural (their behavior).

In the previous discussion, I show how students' behavior and classroom participation were assumed, by the larger school curriculum, to be deficient; in turn, the behavior modification curricula of CHAMPS and P.R.I.D.E. were required aspects of daily life for teachers and students. They seemed to function as an "instrument of…omnipresent surveillance" (Foucault, 1977, p. 214), but not just over students' behavior and classroom participation. Mr. A was also required to enact these curricula, and often at the expense of other ways of interacting with students. The curricula, though, was more than just a required aspect of daily life. They seemed to insidiously impact the way Mr. A began to construct his students. One might argue that Mr. A had more agency than he claimed; that perhaps these curricula were, to some extent, optional. In the episode which follows, however, I offer an(other) example of how Mr. A's adherence to these curricula was actively surveilled and mandated by an equally omnipresent discourse which

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purported measurability. I analyze how the school's discourse of "fidelity" seemed to secure Mr. A's adherence to the traditional discourses of the school.

Episode 3: Teaching with "fidelity" and/to Whiteness

"It's not Pearson who is going to be called to the carpet if *SMARTER Balanced* doesn't pan out,

it's you guys."

(The school principal speaks during a curriculum planning meeting for English teachers)

I begin this episode by describing my attendance at Mr. A's mandated professional development session, held in the school library. I arrived just in time to hear the above words, as they were spoken to the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade English Language Arts teachers at Pryde Middle School—Mr. A and his colleagues. Mr. A, with his colleagues' and Principal's approval, invited me to this early spring meeting, an all day affair referred to as Professional Development. On this day, teachers were tasked with aligning "I-can" statements (statements which encompass learning objectives in student-friendly language) with the Common Core Standards for the English Language Arts. The administrator left shortly after his statement, his suggestion that if *SMARTER Balanced* (2012), an assessment consortium which "brings together states to create a common, innovative assessment system for mathematics and English language arts/literacy that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and helps prepare students for college and careers" (para. 7) does not "pan out," teachers—these English teachers, specifically—will be "called to the carpet," a colloquialism for "reprimanded" and "scolded." While I do not ever have the opportunity to speak with this administrator about exactly what he meant by this statement, I assume that "doesn't pan out" refers to whether enough students pass the standardized tests created by the *SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium*.

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The administrator left the room soon after he delivered his warning (but not before he offered felt like an obligatory attempt to boost an obviously depleted morale with a half-hearted, "Good work!"). Upon his departure from the meeting, the teachers began to express the following sentiments (the disheartening list that follows is not exhaustive):

He wouldn't look at anything, and I'm like, "Here, look!" [One particularly vocal teacher held a stack of papers in front of her – this stack of paper consisted of curriculum materials which she co-developed with her team. These materials, as it turned out, would not ultimately be used in their classrooms, despite the work they put into developing them.]

We're trying to fight to get away from the textbook.

We'll only have room for one novel.

We're doing the opposite of best practices.

We're doing critical thinking on page 30…

This is sickening. [This particular teacher, it seemed, was on the verge of tears.]

Should we break this up so that they [the students] *don't want to take their lives?* [The other teachers laugh.] *He's not around, is he? I have to get my comments in…*

They will not like my classroom half as much as they do now.

The teachers entwined expressions of frustration (e.g., "This is sickening") with what appeared to be ideas for negotiating their administration's directives for using a specific Prentice Hall textbook, devising student-friendly "I can" statements which correspond with the Common Core Standards listed at the beginning of the text, and then teaching curriculum which will best prepare students for *SMARTER Balanced* assessments. For example, one teacher expressed concern over how her administrator would not consider the curriculum that she and her team co-

created ("He wouldn't look at anything, and I'm like, 'Here, look!'"). Another teacher, concerned about opportunities to engage students with critical thinking skills [she did not explain what this meant, to her] flipped through the thick red textbook in an attempt to locate opportunities for critical thinking: "We're doing critical thinking on page 30…" Mr. A had not contributed to this aspect of the discussion. He leaned back in his chair, appearing comfortable and relaxed, displaying something of a smirk, and suggested to the teachers (all of whom have been in the building for a number of years) that their administration did not "seem to care *how*" they taught to the standards.

The teachers' discontent was punctuated by the dimness of the library. While the library was decorative and adorned with student-generated projects, this poorly lit room, as with the classrooms, was also devoid of windows to the outside world. Perhaps more striking, though, was how this room, like the hallways, classrooms, and restrooms, did not manage to escape the CHAMPS management system (not that I expected it to). Moreover, the CHAMPS posters in this room clung to every white pillar, and sat alongside another type of poster I had not seen before this meeting, a color-coded guide to "LEXILE® Levels." LEXILE® levels are categorized and coded as follows:

[blue] Up to 499

[yellow] 500-699

[green] 700-899

[red] 900+

On these posters, students are then offered an equation for how to find their "LEXILE® range": "My Lexile+50 = [upper range]" and "My Lexile-100 = [lower range]".

The website associated with "LEXILE® levels," http://www.Lexile.com, provides a

"LEXILE® Framework for Reading" and allows visitors to enter their LEXILE® level and to

choose from an array of "matched" and "measured" novels (146,058 at this time), categorized by

genre and topics within genres. In essence, LEXILE® scores purport to measure students'

reading levels. I could not help but notice that a brief tour of the measured novels yielded

predominantly White authors. Because some of the English teachers shared with me the novels

that they say their students enjoyed and related to, I decide to enter the author of one such novel,

Trino's Choice, written by a woman of color, Diane Gonzales Bertrand. A search of this author

did not yield any results on the website. This finding prompted me to explore which authors'

novels have been "measured," and thus approved by this organization for use in schools. Upon

entering a random LEXILE® level, I was given a list of sources to investigate. My investigation,

however brief, did not yield a single author of color. This is not to say that there are not any

authors of color whose novels are included within the collection of "measured" texts. Indeed, a

narrow search of famed Harlem Renaissance author Langston Hughes, yields only three texts by

the author, and twenty-nine texts *about* the author—a curious find, considering his critically

acclaimed and prolific career (in other words, I would expect to see more options for texts

written *by* Langston Hughes, versus texts written *about* him by others).

However, a search for one of Langston Hughes' contemporaries, Walter Dean Meyers, a

critically acclaimed and prolific African American writer of young adult literature who often

centers his experiences as an African American youth, did not yield any results. In fairness,

visitors have the option of submitting a text of their choice for a LEXILE® measure (and

resultant dis/approval). However, the sheer absence of authors of color speaks just as loudly, if

not more so, than the abundance of White authors and their "Lexiled" and approved texts. I argue

that a lack of authors of color in a system which purports to address reading proficiency, a system which schools are required to use, speaks to the Whiteness embedded in the curriculum. Moreover, and as an aside, as I take in this LEXILE® poster, posted to every pillar and wall in the room, I notice two young boys at a nearby water fountain, just outside of the library, play-fighting underneath a CHAMPS poster hanging above the fountain. The irony of this scene is not lost on me.

My purpose to describing the library and the meeting which took place in it is to add complexity to Mr. A's practices. In other words, what happened outside of his classroom, as with this meeting, virtually dictated that which occurred inside of it. To simply look at his classroom teaching, discourse, and interactions with students would not have provided as much insight into a how the larger school discourse which purported measurability not only seemed to stifle the work teachers wanted to do with their students; it was a threatening discourse ("It's not Pearson who is going to be called to the carpet…it's you guys"). By describing this scene in the library, surveilled by posters of LEXILE® measures, and by investigating the language of LEXILE®, and what it meant to have a LEXILE® score and a "Lexiled" and approved text, I intend to provide more complexity to the backdrop against which Mr. A chose texts, planned his lessons, taught his classes, assessed his students and, ultimately, talked about his students. It provides the backdrop for how Mr. A ultimately demonstrated reduced standards for his students, as I describe below.

To be sure, all schools enact discourses which purport measurability. I am not suggesting that this is a new phenomenon, or unique to Mr. A's context. Rather, I offer this episode to describe how the above meeting is one of several meetings where it seemed I entered right on time to hear the school principal warn teachers about being "called to the carpet" if a particular

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curriculum purchase did not "pan out." There was another English department meeting where I

entered in time for the principal to stress the importance of higher test scores: "If you guys can

drive those scores up, that will be great." The focus on testing and scores at these meetings was

not surprising to me, nor do I intend to suggest that principal's hands are not also tied to some

extent, as an administrator who answers to the central office, and a central office who answers to

state officials. However, throughout all such meetings, Mr. A can be found leaning back in a

chair, legs crossed, with something of a sly smile on his face, encouraging the other teachers to

remember that they do not have to do anything exactly as the principal suggests. For example,

after the principal left one particular English department meeting, Mr. A pointed to the required

Prentice Hall textbook and said to his colleagues, "Operate covertly, pretend like we're doing

this [he pointed to the district-sanctioned, Prentice Hall textbook] all the time."

For all of his desire to "operate covertly," and as I mention above, I noticed that the work

Mr. A assigned his students began to lose complexity, a loss which seemed to coincide with the

outset of the new curriculum. These staff meetings provided the backdrop against how this came

to be. To illustrate, I offer two examples of writing prompts: The following writing prompt

addresses a theme in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*:

> Is age a good way to determine who can and cannot do certain things in a society? Why
>
> or why not? If you think is a good method, why would other methods not work? If you
>
> think is not a good method, what should be used instead and why?

This prompt was assigned early in the school year; I was in attendance during this class

discussion. Students offered lively examples of how age is (or is not) an effective means by

which to dictate their privileges. Some students offered driving as an example; another student

brought the age requirements surrounding military service into the discussion. Students seemed

to enjoy the discussion, as a whole. I noticed that, during these types of discussions, students who do not normally participate in class would feel inclined to participate in these types of discussions. Mr. A seemed to genuinely enjoy teaching on such days.

However, if we are to fast-forward about four months into the academic year, after several official and unofficial meetings with the English department and their principal, we begin to see how things change; how expectations for engaging complex ideas seemed to have diminished, on some level. The following prompt represents an example of the type of writing that Mr. A began to assign his students:

> What would you do if you were stuck in your bed for months and months or maybe even years? Who would take care of you?

To be sure, this prompt may make for lively discussion. But lively does not necessarily equate with complex or meaningful. Mr. A assigned this prompt because it met the writing requirements for a play entitled *Sorry, Wrong Number*. This play was one of the readings in the newly implemented textbook. Mr. A did not want to assign this play, and explained that "The play is not that deep, but it is a 'Common Core Exemplar,' so it must be 'best' [he uses air quotations to indicate that he does not necessarily agree with this text's designation as an "exemplar"]. When I asked Mr. A to elaborate on what he meant by "not that deep," and the following exchange took place:

> Christina: Do you think it was too easy for your students? When you say "not that deep"…
>
> Mr. A: I mean, in that way, I think so? Um, it's an ok way to give them a little introduction to reading a play, and how that works and what it is, they like it for the most part and seem to enjoy it. In [that case] it's good…As an English major, I can BS and

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drag some things out of there if I need to. [*Sorry, Wrong Number*], as far as I can see, is

not written with much purpose other than, "Oh, I have a good idea for a one-act suspense

play, so I'm gonna write this and it will be fun." It's an entertainment piece and that's

kind of it.

I use the above discussion to illustrate how the curriculum forced Mr. A to behave in ways that

represent reduced expectations for students (as can also be seen in the differences between the

writing prompts). During the year, I watched as Mr. A taught the "prescribed curriculum" (in his

words), per his administrators' directives, at the expense of his own expectations of what

students are capable of. He also taught the prescribed curriculum at the expense of his own

creativity and intellect, about which he openly lamented. At around this same time, Mr. A, a first

year teacher, also began openly considering leaving this district, and actively sought employment

opportunities elsewhere.

Teaching with "fidelity"

The above discussion is nothing new. However, there is detail which sets it apart from the

commonly told stories about teachers who are required to "teach to the text/test." As Mr. A and

his students transitioned to the new curriculum, I became privy to a peculiar language that he

began using to describe his teaching and the curriculum. More so than any other term, I was

exposed to an oft-stated expectation that teachers teach their curriculum—in this case, the

Prentice Hall text that they were required to use—"with fidelity." Mr. A defined this term as

"staying true to the prescribed curriculum" (interview). I was exposed to this term, directly

through conversation and indirectly through teaching and planning, on a regular basis during the

second half of the academic year. I thought it (the term "fidelity") a strange phenomenon, as

prior to this study, I had always and only ever thought of the terms in/fidelity as they relate to

faithfulness in romantic relationships, and also a television commercial for some kind of insurance company that now eludes me, many years later.

What might it mean, then, if a teacher were to, say, be "untrue" to the curriculum? If they were, in fact, not fidelitous? Oxford Dictionary describes the term "infidelity" as "want of faith; unbelief in religious matters, esp. disbelief in the truth or evidences of Christianity" and my personal favorite, "the attitude of an infidel." Given this word's denotations, as well as the cultural *connotations* which spring to mind (e.g., unfaithful partners and spouses, religious infidels, etc.), it is more than a little curious to direct, encourage, and structure teachers' practices and students' learning around a word historically associated with religious faith (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). Indeed, it is an interesting term to use in schools, and perhaps a powerful one, given the imagery it provokes. Surely, most people do not want to be seen—or caught—in an act of unfaithfulness.

Originally, I thought it was a term whimsically invented by the administration to see to it that teachers taught the curriculum as prescribed; this naïve, outsider assumption of mine was quickly disproven with a simple Google search. In fact, according to www.Pearson.com, this curriculum is "Research-Based, And Proven to Work" given that it is implemented, "with high fidelity," by English Language Arts teachers. Specifically,

> [a] scientific efficacy study, conducted by Cobblestone Evaluation, found that students in classrooms where Prentice Hall Literature is implemented with high fidelity significantly outperformed their peers using other language arts programs on the GMRT Vocabulary test and the MAT8 Writing Test. (www.Pearsonschool.com)

According to Pearson's website, the study considers ethnic diversity, and is sure to point out that "[p]articipants came from eight ethnically and economically diverse schools" (according to the

National Center for Education Statistics (2012), as of 2009-2010, there were 98, 817 public

schools up and running in the United States. The number of public schools, also, has been rising

every year for the last ten years). The company reports that the differences between students

using comparison language arts programs and Prentice Hall Literature saw "high fidelity growth"

at rates "statistically significant in favor of Prentice Hall Literature." Mr. A is expected to teach

the school curriculum with 80% fidelity—although, I am unsure of how, precisely, this is

measured and proven, except to presume that fidelity rates are directly tied to student

performance. In other words, if his students are "outperforming their peers" (presumably

evidenced in standardized testing), it might be assumed—by his administration—that Mr. A is

implementing the curriculum with high fidelity. I assume, also, that the opposite is considered—

by his administration, as well as the corporate enterprise—to be true. Recall, the website

indicates that "students in classrooms where Prentice Hall Literature is implemented with high

fidelity significantly outperformed their peers."

The discourse of "fidelity" seemed to function as an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin,

1986). It is a prior discourse, engrained in Mr. A's institution. Like CHAMPS and P.R.I.D.E.,

teachers are expected to incorporate this terminology into their curricular planning. It is a

discourse of authority (Bourdieu, 1991) enacted by the institution over Mr. A and his colleagues.

To borrow from Bourdieu (1991), "it *signifies* to someone what his identity is, but in a way that

both expresses it to him and imposes it on him" (p. 121, emphasis in original). Because, as I

describe above, the curriculum also seemed to represent a hidden curriculum of Whiteness, the

discourse of fidelity which surveilled Mr. A's practices seemed to secure his adherence to the

traditional discourses (Yosso, 2002) of the school. In what follows, I provide an example of what

fidelity to the curriculum looked like, and how it reinforces a hidden curriculum of Whiteness.

Episode 4: Fidelity and the hidden curriculum of Whiteness in practice

The relationship between "teaching with fidelity" and Whiteness

What, then, might be the relationship between "teaching with fidelity" and Whiteness? Mr. A was required to teach short stories from the district's newly mandated text. He and his colleagues were interested in exposing their students to diverse and multicultural texts, and literature that their "students are going to care about and connect with" (Mr. A, interview). As such, Mr. A and his colleagues chose texts deemed—by the Common Core Standards—multicultural. In the discussion which follows, I focus on one such story, Gish Jen's *The White Umbrella*, to illustrate the relationship between "teaching with fidelity" and Whiteness.

Toni Morrison's (1992) famously expressed concern over the effects of racial unconsciousness on the literary imagination, and on writers and readers of American literature. Specifically, she points out that,

> regardless of the race of the author, the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white. I am interested to know what that assumption has meant to the literary imagination. When does racial "unconsciousness" or awareness of race enrich interpretive language, and when does it impoverish it? (p. xii)

To be sure, Morrison's work focuses on an invented "Africanist presence" in American literature (p. 6); a presence she describes, through careful analysis of select works (e.g.—and just to name a few—Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, several works by Edgar Allen Poe and Henry James, etc.), as necessary to writers of canonical American literature. In this work, Morrison challenges assumptions about knowledge, a circulated knowledge which holds that the "four-hundred-year-old-presence" of Africans and later, African Americans, in the United States "has had no significant place or consequence in

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the origin and development of that culture's literature" (p. 5). In this work, Morrison centers "the black presence" (p. 5) in canonical literature, a body of literature which has historically treated the presence of Africans and African Americans as marginal to the literary imagination.

Woven throughout her argument is the reminder that, "in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse" (p. 9). This silence is punctuated by how literature treats "racialism in terms of its consequences on the victim" (p. 11). It is with and through these understandings that I frame the current episode.

As I have discussed, the textbook became a mandated aspect of curriculum midway through the school year. Mr. A, along with another 8th grade English teacher, busily collaborated to choose short stories from this text which they believed held value. They chose two short stories to read with their students in tandem: *The White Umbrella* and *The Medicine Bag*. Both of these stories are written by people of color; furthermore, *The Medicine Bag* has been designated a "multicultural text" by the California Writing Project. For the purposes of this chapter, I discuss Gish Jen's *The White Umbrella*. To be sure, I am not endeavoring to critique the story's content, per se, although I do draw from it in aspects of my argument. For example, because the protagonist's mother has to work, her daughters often walk to their piano lesson; moreover, she is consistently late from picking up her daughters from their piano lessons, given her new work obligations and conflicts with timing. These details are key to the story's development.

From the very beginning, the daughters' piano instructor, Miss Crosman, positions their mother as uncaring—perhaps irresponsible—in subtle ways by saying, "If your mother won't drive you, I can come pick you up" (p. 417) and later, "Shall I at least give her a call and remind her you're here? Maybe she forgot about you" (p. 421). The use of "won't," "remind," and "forgot" position the mother as uncaring and negligent throughout the story, a negligence

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punctuated by the daughters' "filthy" (p. 419) eyeglasses; the narrator, it seems, is cognizant of these subtleties, and seems to respond to Miss Crosman in ways which evidence different forms of resistance. For example, she attempts to play the piano "extra well" for Miss Crosman: "See, I told her with my fingers. You don't have to feel sorry for me" (p. 419). Toward the end of the story, the narrator refuses to wait inside of Miss Crosman's house for her mother to arrive; instead, she waits outside in the freezing rain for over an hour. While the narrator's shame in the need for their mother to work is present throughout the entire story (evident in the form of contrived reasons for their mother's chronic lateness), I also interpret the narrator's refusal to wait inside with Miss Crosman as an act of resistance; an act of removing herself from a woman who has subtly berated the daughters throughout the piece, all the while referring to the narrator as "you poor, poor dear" and comparing her—in terms of what the she lacks—to the White, pretty, blue-eyed Eugenie Roberts who "has a real gift" and is "an honor to teach" (p. 418).

The story ends with a) the mother's (predictable) late arrival in picking up her daughters, and b) a car accident soon thereafter. The car accident is particularly emblematic of a certain racial stereotype, a stereotype which carries subtly throughout the story (i.e., the daughters allude to their mother's driving abilities several times throughout the story, each allusion decreasing in subtlety until, finally, there is the car accident). This accident, to be sure, is not the family's first; accordingly, after their mother backs into a car at a stop light (in an effort to reverse the vehicle out of the crosswalk in which almost hit a pedestrian), the youngest daughter says, "Uh oh, [a]*nother* accident" (p. 425, emphasis in original).

To reiterate, Morrison's analysis focuses on White authors of canonical literature in relation to the Black characters they "fabricate" (p. 6)—it might seem odd, then, that I am invoking her work to deconstruct a story which foregrounds the experience of a Chinese

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American child. However, it is because the story (*The White Umbrella*) has been selected for publication in a *Prentice Hall Literature* text—the *Common Core Edition*—that I understand Pearson/Prentice Hall to be co-authors of these works; not co-authors of the story's content, to be sure, but co-authors in the sense that Pearson has devised questions and topics *around* and *for* the story. Their questions and topics rest in the margins of the story, as well as at the story's conclusions; if they are to be avoided, the reader must make a conscious effort to do so. The questions and topics, created by Pearson, also adorn separate worksheets with the ©*Pearson Education, Inc.*, stamp of approval resting in inconspicuously small font at the very bottom of the pages. These questions and the pre-determined topics from which they emerge, I argue, are every bit a part of the short stories selected and published in an anthology for classroom use. As such, when Morrison describes her project as "an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers" (p. 90), I envision Pearson to be the describers and imaginers, through their questions, topics, suggested lessons and activities, and all else their texts entail, of the literature they select; of the racial subjects in their selected literature. And it is with and through their approach to selected literature that the stories become diluted versions of what I believe they were intended to be: Opportunities for critical engagement with race, culture, stereotypes, and the "American" experience.

The issues Jen raises in *The White Umbrella* are not only racial; they are also cultural and religious, as with numerous references to the Christmas holiday. They allude to a strange sort of obsession with acquiring "things," as with the narrator's preoccupation with the umbrella (although the white umbrella is much more than a "thing"), and what she imagines her mother's response would be to it: "All you want is things, just like an American" (p. 419). A theme related

to the nuclear family also emerges, as with when Miss Crossman wistfully shares the story of how she "very much wanted to have children" but ultimately did not because she "never got married" (p. 423). It is not so much, then, that the story is "dry"—as Mr. A's colleagues have suggested. It is Pearson's race-less treatment of the story's content that is "dry" at best, and harmful, at worst. Take, for example, the "Reading Check," a type of question sprinkled in the margins throughout the story (this list is not exhaustive):

- Where are the two girls going? (To their piano lesson.)

- Why is the girls' mother unable to bring them dry clothes? (Because she is working.)

- What does Miss Crosman offer the girls while they wait? (Pot roast.)

These questions are accompanied by other questions related to the "symbols" in the story, questions which seem slightly better, more productive, in that the responses they call for may require a word or two more than the previous questions elicit; however, even the questions/prompts about symbolism do not do much to attend to opportunities for a critical engagement with race, culture, and stereotypes that are very present throughout the story:

- Why might the girls' mother try to hide the fact that she is working?

- Contrast the true story of how the girls got to the lesson with the symbolism of arriving in a convertible.

- What details in this paragraph indicate that the narrator sees the umbrella as something more than a useful object?

The story concludes with a list of questions categorized—however ironically—as "Critical Thinking":

1. Key ideas and details (a) Why is the narrator's mother late to pick up the sisters? (b) infer: Why is the narrator bothered by her mother's lateness? (c) Analyze: Why does she prevent her sister from explaining why their mother is late?

2. Key Ideas and Details: (a) Infer: Why does Miss Crosman give the narrator the umbrella? (b) Deduce: How does she feel about children?

3. Integration of Knowledge and ideas (a) Why is the narrator embarrassed by her mother? (b) Does she feel guilty about her embarrassment? How do you know? (c) Do you think this conflict can be resolved? Explain your response. (*Connect to the Big Question: Can all conflicts be resolved?*) (p. 425)

To be sure, I believe that the author—Gish Jen—presents rich opportunities for cultural critique in relation to race and other social characteristics. As I note above, my interpretation of the narrator's behavior is that she attempts, in her own ways, to resist Miss Crosman's treatment of her as a "poor, poor dear" whose mother will not pick her up from her piano lesson, or perhaps worse, whose mother *forgot* to pick her up from her lesson. The narrator draws from her skills as a pianist in an attempt to prove she does not need—or want—Miss Crosman's disquieting sympathy ("See, I told her with my fingers. You don't have to feel sorry for me"); the narrator even sits outside in the icy rain for her mother in what I believe is a form of resistance; an attempt to physically distance herself from the piano instructor's critical, White gaze. This short story thus appears to be a powerful counter-narrative that can be used with students to uncover a) the reasons for why counter-narratives might be a productive way with which to engage literature, and b) their own counter-narratives which emerge from experience(s) in a racialized society. I argue that an exploration of counter-narratives is not only powerful, but possible—even in district-sanctioned literature—in all kinds of schools.

The story, when separated from Pearson's treatment of it, holds potential to inspire

complex discussion about race, oppression, and racialized micro-aggressions. Because Mr. A

teaches to a rather diverse student body, a small portion of whom is Asian American, I could not

help but to wonder what certain students thought of this story. Did they identify with the

stereotypes? Did anything about the story anger them? What impact did the allusion to the

nuclear family have on Mr. A's students (especially considering that the administration and

teachers have used this very issue to construct students as in need of consistency)? The multiple

references to Christmas? What cultural stereotypes do the questions which accompany this story

enforce and perpetuate? Who felt comfortable with the various narratives present in the story and

uncomplicated by the questions? Who may have been made to feel *un*comfortable by the same?

While I was curious about the impact of this story on Mr. A's students; I could not help but to

wonder about the cultural stereotypes reinforced in the story by what the questions neglect to ask

of readers, and by what they—in turn—prohibit teachers from asking, particularly teachers who

are encouraged, if not ordered, to adhere to the curriculum with "fidelity."

Mr. A wished to employ a critical read of the themes and topics in this story. His

description of how the text treats *The White Umbrella* in particular underscores a dissonance

between what the text's questions set out to accomplish and leave uncomplicated, and "the

possible causes of" the author's struggles:

> Instead of there being anything [in the story] about, kind of, "wait a second, what about
>
> the culture outside of them that's making them feel like they have to change, what about
>
> the systems in place that are making them have to break their traditions and their
>
> cultures?" [There is] nothing about that, it's all about how she's struggling with her mom,
>
> it's all about a mother/daughter relationship type thing, slash, them fighting with their old

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traditions and customs because mom has to get a job and that's not okay back home, but, now they kind of don't have a choice…it's kind of like, we talk about race in a way that it's *their* fault, which, I guess I haven't read everything in the book, but I highly doubt there's anything pointing fingers at the possible causes of some of these things. (interview)

Mr. A makes the important distinction between "fighting with their old traditions and customs" and the systems within which such conflicts take place ("we [the text] talk about race in a way that it's *their* fault, …I highly doubt there's anything pointing fingers at the possible causes of some of these things"). For Mr. A, the text does not adequately address the systemic issues which influence "the possible causes" of the conflicts revealed in this story, or others. Instead, the text addresses race in a way that suggests that the reasons for the conflicts are located within the communities themselves ("it's kind of like, we talk about race in a way that it's *their* fault"). In this way, even though the text purports to attend to diversity of authors and stories, it "talks about race" without addressing it in its historical—and critical—contexts.

Morrison (1992) highlights a "willful critical blindness" in literature which emerges from "[h]abit, manners, and [a] political agenda [which] have contributed to this refusal of critical insight" (p. 18). As can be seen in the questions which co-author this short story, the issues with which teachers and students are required to engage are fixed and determined by the racelessness of the questions and topics; a discussion of Whiteness as the system from which racialized experiences emerge is foreclosed, and thus simultaneously reinforced as the norm with and through its invisibility (see Yosso, 2002). Because teachers are told to "teach with fidelity," it would seem that they are ordered to embody this same willful critical blindness.

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The White Umbrella, as it is co-authored by Pearson, demonstrates what it means to "teach with fidelity." However, it is not simply teaching to the text that is under scrutiny, here. The questions which co-author Jen's short story demand that teachers ask students to recall race-less details in the story (details which are cloaked in language of "key ideas," "infer," and "analyze"). The questions intend (it would seem) to produce an unconscious, hegemonic type of knowledge—a perspective of the narrator's experiences as race-less and devoid of historical context, as Mr. A astutely pointed out. It is precisely this type of knowledge—authoritative in function—which Morrison (1992) challenges in her own work. Furthermore, the questions might suggest that if the narrator's experiences *are* racialized, it is her fault, and perhaps also her newly employed mother's fault for situating the narrator and her sister at uncomfortable odds with social perceptions of them.

Mr. A was candid about the ways by which the text talked about (or did not talk about) race. Regarding the Pearson textbook, he described how

> It's got your diversified authors as your supposed to, it's got exactly 50% male and 50% female [long pause] I get the demographics are all represented and everything. *But*, they're [the demographics] represented in a very white man doing his good deed way, you know what I mean? (interview)

He is critical of how author diversity in this text is represented. In our discussion, it seemed like he was calling attention to an approach to diversity for diversity' sake; this was also evident in how he talked about *The White Umbrella* in particular in the previous episode: "It's kind of like, we talk about race in a way that it's *their* fault."

Conclusion

In the episodes I describe above, I attempt to show how Mr. A is positioned by various school curricula to teach his students as though they bring deficits to their schooling experiences; as though these deficits are inevitable. In turn, Mr. A is *also* constructed, by his school, in a racial deficit lens. He is assumed incapable of teaching his racially diverse students without the mechanisms and discourses of control that are in place and demanded of him to implement. As such, enactments of Whiteness, in Mr. A's school, are about so much more than unchecked White privilege. They are a product of an organizational discourse of race already in place. As Fine (1997) argues,

> Whiteness, like all "colors," is being manufactured, in part, through institutional arrangements. This is particularly the case in institutions designed "as if" hierarchy, stratification, and scarcity were inevitable. Schools and work, for example, do not merely *manage* race; they *create* and *enforce* racial meanings. (p. 58, emphasis in original)

As the above data and discussion reveal, Mr. A is embedded in a discourses of schooling which create and enforce meaning. As I've learned throughout this investigation, there were institutional arrangements in place which seemed to have an insidious effect on his perception of Self (natural) and his students (not natural). To invoke Fine's words, it is a process sufficiently institutionalized and embodied; moreover, it is a process "easily miss[ed]" (p. 58). As I have observed Mr. A's students act in opposition to the tenets and structures of P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS, and as I have also observed their seemingly bored attitudes toward the newly instituted curriculum, I have also observed Mr. A teach inconsistently—and frustratedly—in an effort to embody these required tenets and structures—all in the name of teaching with fidelity and/to Whiteness. Perhaps most of all, I have observed how these various requirements quelled his expectations of his students, as well as his critically oriented approach to practice.

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It is important to remember that Mr. A did not enter his role as an English teacher in this building with either model as a part of his "bag of tricks," or as a function of any of his professional, university preparation. P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS are the pedagogical, curricular, and behavioral expectation for all teachers and students in the building. In this way, the teachers are also constructed as in need of control; *their participation is required if these curricula are to be carried out*. Fine draws from Bourdieu's (1991) discussion of what institutions are and how they function, to make a particularly ominous point: Not only do institutions "signif[y] to someone what his identity is," but they "[inform] him in an authoritative manner of what he is and what he must be" (p. 121). It is here that we see how the curriculum may function as an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). Bourdieu goes on to say that, furthermore, institutions expect compliance: "This is also one of the functions of the act of institution: to discourage permanently any attempt to cross the line, to transgress, desert, or quit" (p. 122). As such, I also consider how Mr. A's identity and practices are also developed *by* the systems and how these systems intersect with the reproduction of Whiteness.

Fine's argument, in conjunction with Bourdieu's framework, offers a way to understand what I argue is an important distinction between *managing* race, and creating/enforcing racial meanings. To suggest that schools merely manage race is to suggest that teachers and students enter institutions with fixed racial identities; it is to suggest that schools function as benevolent interveners. To suggest that schools merely manage race is to absolve them of complicity in how racial identities are constructed; in how Whiteness is enacted; in how teachers are positioned to enact Whiteness. I make these points to remind readers that enactments of Whiteness do not always begin and end with teachers themselves. Schools with programs/curricula like those I

describe above mandate particular enactments of Whiteness; these mandated enactments position Mr. A to behave in deficit ways.

Finally, in this chapter, I do not include much by way of Mr. A's practices or classroom discourse. This is deliberate. I focus my discussion on the various curricula with which Mr. A is required to work, as a matter of strategy. If I were to focus mainly on his class discussions (so many of which appeared identical), or our interviews about his teaching and students, the chapter would have mirrored that which I am endeavoring to avoid: A surface-level look at a privileged White teacher's "deficit assumptions" about the racially diverse students in his care; a teacher who teaches English to the text/test; a teacher who becomes frustrated with his students' "constant need to talk" (interview) and perceived inability to do what Mr. A "asks of them" (interview). In order to understand what was going on in his classroom, it was necessary to investigate what was going on outside of his classroom. This meant delving into the P.R.I.D.E. and CHAMPS curriculum, and how it functioned alongside the subject-matter; this meant attending team meetings where teachers were warned on a consistent basis that they "would be called to the carpet" if they were not successful implementing the new curriculum with "fidelity"; it meant understanding what the new curriculum looked like, and how it functioned (and as such, failed to function, using Mr. A's astute analysis). It meant exploring whether and how the institutional arrangements within which Mr. A worked created and enforced racial meanings, whether explicitly or implicitly.

All of this is to say that it was imperative to understand how his practices, interactions, and discourse were shaped by the larger authoritative discourses embedded in the school. To do otherwise, in my opinion, would have been irresponsible, and reflective of more of the same. With my approach to this chapter, I was better able to show how enactments of Whiteness do not

begin and end in Mr. A. I was able provide, I think, a more interesting story than a series of

classroom discourse and practices repetitively featuring the words "we're at a zero" would have

allowed for.

I think that mostly because my experiences since then, you know, the world isn't all white. And if

you are being educated in a place where, they're like, "this [Whiteness] is normal, this is life,"

you're learning to do all this stuff in a bubble. Once you leave that bubble, you realize how

weird it was. My teachers didn't have to think about, "What is the context these kids are coming

with? How can I explain this information to them in a way that relates to who they are?"

Because we were all the same, basically. To them we were all coming from catholic families with

enough money to put them through private school and a specific set of cultural values and

everything that was pretty much the same. So they didn't have to very often change things up to

relate to us differently [because] we were all just kind of them same. (Ms. Tessa, interview 1)

Introduction: Ms. Tessa and Freedom High School

Ms. Tessa (Ms. T) is a first year teacher who I met in our senior year teacher preparation

coursework. I was Ms. T's secondary English methods course instructor for two full academic

years. Ms. T was comfortable with me, and candid in our conversations about race and

Whiteness. Her descriptions of her significant other's "racist family" compelled me to want to

learn more about this teacher who openly "preferred to live in a racially diverse area," and to

"teach in diverse schools." As I mention previously, Ms. T is aware of the role her race played in

her own schooling experiences.

In the above interview excerpt, Ms. T describes the schools she attended as a child; her

initial inclination is to offer a racial description of her high school. Specifically, she describes the

Catholic High School she attended as "white, white, white." When I asked her to expound upon

the reasons for why Whiteness stands out to her as a prominent feature of her experiences, Ms. T

offered a metaphor to understand and explain her experiences as a White youth in predominantly

White schools ("if you are being educated in a place where, they're like, 'this [Whiteness] is normal, this is life,' you're learning to do all this stuff in a bubble"). In using the metaphor "bubble," she suggested that the diversity to which she was exposed, particularly once she left the "bubble," was perhaps a bit strange ("the world isn't all white"/ "Once you leave that bubble, you realize how weird it *was*"). The metaphor of a "bubble" also helped Ms. T to understand and explain her experiences with her teachers and curriculum ("they didn't have to very often change things up to relate to us differently [because] we were all just kind of the same"). The metaphor also helped me glean how she understood her early racialized experiences in school. It was clear to me that she was not resistant to talking about how race shaped her early experiences, nor was she unaware of this process.

As such, Ms. T is cognizant of how her earliest experiences with schooling were shaped by race. She demonstrates the same level of awareness in relationship to her practices. In her words,

> My experiences growing up were very based on my race, in that I was surrounded by people of the same race as me. *So, I was never really forced to consider other ways of thinking, or other ways of acting or interacting, because I was surrounded by people who were just like me*, kind of? In that way? And so I would say that my experiences growing up have made me who I am, and so if the ways that I teach are based on who I am, and I *know* that my lack of exposure to other races growing *up* sort of adapted who I am, then I would say, *in that way*, yes, it would affect how I teach. (interview)

I was impressed by Ms. T's understanding that "being surrounded by people of the same race" is also suggestive of a racialized experience. In other words, she is conscious of the "racial isolation" (Sleeter, 2007) in which she grew up and attended schools, and how those experiences

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were shaped by race. Ms. T critically reflected on how her Whiteness has positioned and framed her experiences as a student and a teacher; how her race, in relation to her "lack of exposure" to racially diverse groups, has effected how she teaches. For this reason, she explains, "Learning doesn't have to mean doing the same thing as everyone else in class."

Ms. T teaches 9th and 10th grade English at Freedom High School. According to school data, there are approximately 1400 students who attend FHS; 69% of the students are White and 21% Black; the remainder is listed as Asian (including Indian and Pakistani students) and Hispanic. I notice, however, that the statistics I've seen (accessed through official school documentation and interviews with administration) do not mention or account for what I know, as a researcher who accessed the school and interacted with students frequently; that is, that there is a significant number of Middle Eastern students, due in part to the school's proximity to the largest Chaldean and Muslim-American communities in America. It is possible, though, that these populations identify (or are identified) as White. This is not to say that this particular group should identify one way or the other; it is simply to point out that this group features prominently in this high school's student body, but goes unmentioned in reports of the school's demographic data.

Ms. Tessa's classrooms reflects the diversity which I, as an outsider, notice immediately. As I listened to her take attendance in her first-hour class, I took note of the culturally diverse names she called off from her roster. In addition to the occasional "Joe" or "Mary," there is "DeShonda," "Batool," and "NaSeem."[18] There are approximately thirty students in her first hour class (where I conducted the majority of my observations), sixteen of whom are male; of the male students, ten are Black. As such, 1/3 of the students in her first-hour class are Black

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[18] All pseudonyms, but an attempt to reflect the racial and cultural diversity of students' names with which I became familiar at this school.

male students. The second largest majority of the students in this class are a mixture of ethnically diverse (predominantly Chaldean and Muslim students) students, and the remainder is White.

In the methods section, I described the general layout of Freedom High School. It seemed to be an aesthetically pleasing context, with student-generated work, as well as professional artwork, decorating nearly hallway. The artwork was interspersed with typical high school sports memorabilia, as well as framed pictures of Barack Obama, and his mantra "Yes We Can." Ms. T often described the school as "proud" of its racially and culturally diverse student population. There was also a striking affinity with the nearby city of Detroit in that each hallway was named after a well-known Detroit street. On the surface, there absolutely seemed to be noticeable levels of pride in racial and cultural diversity, which inspired to me dig beneath what I was able to glean at the surface level. That is, early on in my visits to Freedom High School, I asked Ms. T whether and how she noticed racial and/or cultural issues arising between students, her interactions with students, or in other ways. For Ms. T, racial issues do not play out in any problematic way. In her words, "I think it might be [that] people are continuously around people who are very different from them. So they got used to it? And didn't feel the need to point out the differences anymore?"

Ms. T's words set the stage for this chapter. I undergird this chapter with two main threads (tensions): Ms. T is critically aware of her racialized identity as White teacher, at least in our discussions. She is unafraid to talk with me about race (including Whiteness) and how it positions her as a teacher. Her words and stated orientation to teaching, however, seem to be at odds with her practices. She does not recognize the ways that racial issues play out in her school because, in her words, the students are "used to" each other and do not "point out the differences

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anymore." In some ways, the failure to recognize the ways by which racial issues and tensions play in her school may be due to White privilege—the privilege of not seeing, or "dealing with" (Frankenberg, 1993) race. However, in her work, as with the other teachers in my study, I seek a more complex argument than a simple engagement with White privilege allows. In other words, in what ways might Ms. T be structured to not recognize the ways by which race plays out in her context? I begin by offering an example of how race seems to play out in subtle ways, by describing an episode in which I foreground an artifact called the "Colloquialism Corner." I begin with this episode in order to counter Ms. T's contention that racialized issues do not play out in her school or classroom in noticeable ways. The subsequent episodes focus on aspects of curriculum and classroom discourse; in these episodes, I raise the question of whether Ms. T is structured to dismiss race and diversity in the curriculum, despite her desire to engage it.

Episode 1: "Everyone gets along"

"Bouginess is always present in the battle of team-dark and team-light skin."

The above sentence gripped my attention as I sat down at my usual desk, situated at the front right corner of Ms. Tessa's classroom. I was initially confused by it, a seemingly unintelligible slice of discourse which seems to have found a home on the corner of the whiteboard, a space designated as the classroom's "Colloquialism Corner." My gaze shifted downward; the sentence, it seems, was derived from the term, "bougie," also written on the whiteboard in large, black marker and unmistakable teenage scrawl. "Bougie" was assigned an entire etymology, complete with a part of speech and suggested uses for the term in two variations ("bougie" and "bouginess"). I copied down the word, its evolution, and, in addition to the sentence above, an example of how to use this term in conversation with another, as it was written on the whiteboard (see Figure 3, below):

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Bougie (boo-shie) adj.—Stems from bourgeoisie, meaning a woman of the middle class who acts of a higher class. [Def:] a super stuck up and ornate female who believes she is better than every other female of her race, usually an AA [African American] female who thinks she's better than she truly is.

[Ex:] "Girl, I only drink 30F bottled Figi water," (says Watermelondrea). [Response:] "You a bougie trick."

Figure 3
Bougie: This figure displays a student-generated artifact as a counter-argument to the idea that "Everyone gets along."
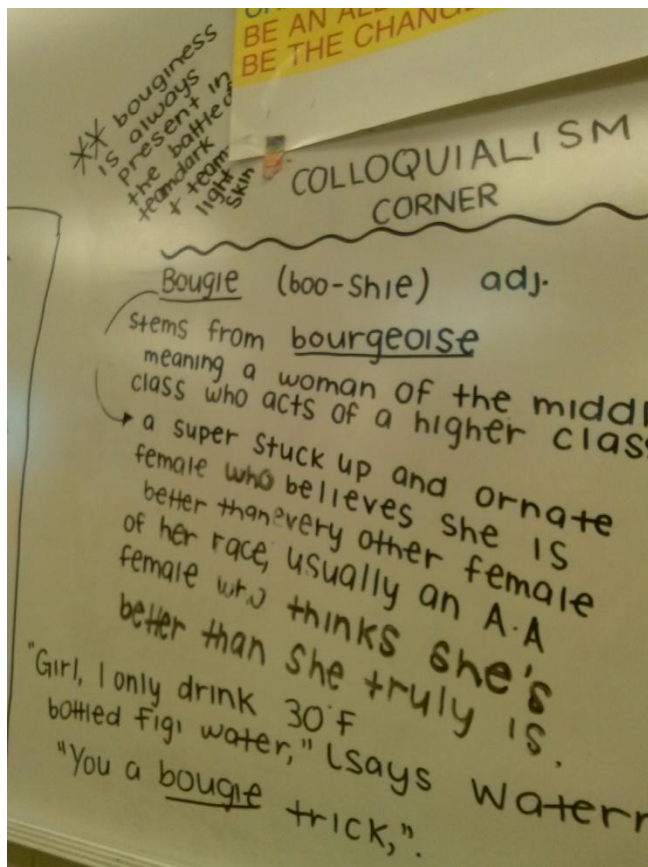
I was disturbed by the use of "Watermelondrea" to name the character in this fictitious exchange, a moniker which inspires memories of the racial caricatures (e.g., Pickaninny, to name one) about whom I learned in a college feminist history course. I was troubled by the

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"freeness"/bareness/nakedness of its (the term and its contrived etymology) location on the whiteboard, there for all of the students, teachers, and classroom visitors to see, unencumbered, it seemed, by debate, protest, objection, or even a discernible degree of distaste .

I was both fascinated and perplexed by the racial overtones of the term's (bougie) metaphor: "bouginess is always present in the battle of team-dark and team-light skin." Is "bougie" a war between the races? Within the African American race? Given the definition ("a super stuck up and ornate female who believes she is better than every other female *of her race, usually an AA female*"), I initially suspect that it refers to a dance *within* the African American race; namely, a dance between African American women—a dance which, according to this definition, "is always present." While I have noticed seemingly innocuous terms posted to the Colloquialism Corner before, nothing caught my attention quite like this term had. I immediately wondered who the author was. According to Ms. T, I later find out that the author of this term is a Black female student. Ms. T laughingly—and defensively in tone—described her as a popular, smart, and "really funny" high school junior. The term itself, for Ms. T, did not hold significant meaning beyond comedy.

I will admit: I did not get it. I did not get how this term was anything but offensive. I did not get Ms. T's seeming dismissal when I asked her to explain. I did not know how to theorize this artifact in any meaningful way. It seemed so out of place in a school where racial issues were said to be virtually nonexistent because, to paraphrase Ms. T's words, "everyone gets along." Her sentiment was echoed by the school's Assistant Principal who, during a lengthy and captivating discussion with me about his experiences with prejudice as a Middle Eastern teacher and administrator in White schools, surprisingly said, with a shrug of his shoulders and a

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dismissive tone, "Nope. I don't see anything [racial issues] happening here" (interview). And yet, this term "bougie" told a different story.

I did not know where to turn. I am embarrassed to admit that I first turned to the Oxford English Dictionary (of all texts) for an explanation. Of note is how *bourgie* is considered a slang term used among African American communities to refer to someone as "depreciative"; moreover, the adjective bourgeois refers to that which is distinctly "middle-class; exhibiting characteristics frequently associated with the [White] middle class, such as conventionality, materialism, or elitism." This wasn't enough. I struggled with wanting to say something profound about this artifact, but am exceedingly aware that what I might say is always and forever filtered through my Whiteness. I turned to a literacy studies scholar for help, and was guided toward the work of Fanon, hooks, and DuBois; this advice marked my acquaintance with the terms "oppositional gaze" (hooks, 1992) and "double-consciousness" (Dubois, 1903), among others. While I initially constructed this term, in my mind, to be something offensive in general and to students of color specifically (regardless of who the author of this particular Colloquialism Corner post may be), I began to consider another perspective, for, as hooks (1992) explains:

> Spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at one another, naming what we see. The "gaze" has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that "looks" to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating "awareness" politicizes "looking" relations—one learns to look a certain way in order to resist. (p. 116)

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Is the Colloquialism Corner, as it was used in this class at this time, a space of agency and resistance? I would seem that way. It does, though, seem to represent a subtle way by which racial issues play out in this school. It was an entrée into realizing that Ms. T may not have been as aware of racialized issues as I had hoped.

This term remained on the board for several weeks, until someone washed it away. It sat on a discreet corner of the white board, surrounded by errant stacks of canonical paperback novels (e.g., *Of Mice and Men*), and posters of theater productions (e.g., *Our Town*) and inspirational sayings (e.g., "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take"). I sat beneath this term (literally, my desk was positioned right beneath the Colloquialism Corner) as Ms. T taught Holocaust literature, and specifically Elie Wiesel's *Night*; I sat underneath this term as Ms. T introduced her students to *Of Mice and Men*, and particularly the prevalent use of the "the N-word," a term that, as Ms. T describes, "is in the book *a lot*." I considered this term as I walked through halls and later learned that a segment of hallway was labeled "Little Africa," a metaphor for the intersection where many of the school's Black students congregated before the school day began and after it ended. These artifacts provided a lens through which I began to think about Ms. T's White teacher identity, in relation to her students, the curriculum, and the broader school. They provided a backdrop when I considered the various ways by which Ms. T seemed structured to dismiss the idea of whether and how racial issues played out in her school and classroom.

Episode 2: "English is such a great place to acknowledge diversity"

In this first episode, I discuss how Ms. T noticed the ways by which her race held meaning in her classroom. Ms. T, like the other teachers in my study, has built an admirable rapport with her students. On any given day, students excitedly greet her in the hallways.

Stepping into Ms. T's classroom, save for the thirty-plus desks built of metal and faux wood, is akin to stepping into a friend's living room. More often than not, the class begins with lively chatter; Ms. T is usually writing something on the White board or engaging students in small talk about their weekends, their plans, or upcoming vacations. At the time of my first observation of her practices, I was amused by how one of her freshman students rushed up to her before class began to proudly show her the first signs of stubble that faintly protruded from his chin. I was not surprised that her students seemed to relate to her and even adore her; indeed, she could possibly be mistaken for a high school student herself, as she is youthful in appearance and also, in some ways, takes on a similar style of dress. Also, her status as advisor of both the yearbook and school newspaper also puts her in contact with students outside of her classes. She is indeed very familiar with many students in the school, both academically and socially; the students with whom she works on yearbook and newspaper also have her cell phone number, which they use to text her questions about various projects and deadlines.

When she is able, she attends student performances and other extracurricular activities with which her students are involved. I was often greeted by students during my observations; some students would offer a friendly hello, while others would call me by my first name and wave to me from across the room. In my earliest field notes, I mention more than once that the atmosphere feels very much like home and family. I also noticed, very early on in my observations and interactions with her colleagues, that Ms. T is revered and trusted by her superiors and the other teachers in her school. It was common to observe other teachers approach Ms. T for advice about rubrics and assignments; during English team meetings, I noticed how her colleagues depended on her for input about the direction meetings should take, as well as

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data to be delivered to the administration. The level of trust and responsibility she was given, as

a first year non-tenured English teacher, was nothing short of striking and impressive.

Like most English teachers, Ms. T is tasked with teaching a range of texts, themes and

topics, and concepts. She is attentive to her students' responses and resistance to the curriculum.

If students became bored with a topic, she often worked overtime devising ways to garner

interest. Sometimes this meant incorporating multi-media into her lessons; other times, it

involved an in-depth study of rap music (about which she is deeply knowledgeable, and actively

consumes in her personal time), as with when she taught a required unit on poetry. I am not

attempting to employ an idealized, Freedom Writers'-esque, White-teacher-savior tone in this

chapter. To the contrary, I am pointing out that Ms. T has talents and interests which often

mirrored those of her students. This was to her benefit.[19] As such, she was a resourceful teacher,

particularly in those moments when she and her students struggled with the required curriculum.

At times, Ms. T struggled with the required curriculum because of what she said it failed

to accomplish. She has been openly critical of the curriculum and the ways by which it failed to

represent the diversity of the school's student body. In her words:

> I would think especially in a district that acknowledges how diverse it is, it would try to
>
> teach to diversity? And I don't know that it necessarily does that. I think the school itself,
>
> and the district, is very aware of the diversity of the student population…But I don't see,
>
> maybe with the exception of [Elie Wiesel's] *Night*, I haven't really seen content that

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[19] In *'Who you callin' nappy-headed?' A Critical Race Theory Look At the Construction of Black Women*, Ladson-Billings (2009) critiques the "narrative of teacher as savior" (p. 93) as it is perpetuated in American culture. These teachers are often—if not always—White, female teachers. Using a Critical Race Theory lens, Ladson-Billings discusses the film *Freedom Writers* to demonstrate how it—and films like it—have fed into the parodied trope of the "nice White lady" (p. 93) who rescues "unruly [and] disrespectful" (p. 93) children of color. Such representations of White female teachers warrant critical investigation, especially considering how, as Ladson-Billings argues, with few exceptions, there are not similarly positive representations of Black teachers and women. While I in no way wish to argue against Ladson-Billings'claims, I wish to avoid a narrow look at Ms. T's pedagogical efforts by ascribing to her a 'savior' label. It just does not seem to apply to her words and work with her students.

directly acknowledges diversity, accepting diversity, wanting to learn more about other cultures…I would think that, with how proud the school is of its student diversity? It would want to acknowledge that. English is such a great place to do that, and I don't think that the curriculum necessarily gives teachers as much opportunity to do that as it could, or gives students as much opportunity as it could. They should be willing to teach more things that students can relate to. And I don't know how often they update the curriculum, how often they adapt it, but it doesn't seem like something that's fitted to the student population in any way. (interview)

Ms. T recognized the ways by which her school's English curriculum did not seem properly suited for the students required to engage it. I wondered whether Ms. T's use of the pronoun "they" was an attempt to distance herself from an English curriculum she argued was ill-fitted to the students in her care ("*They* should be willing to teach more things that students can relate to. And I don't know how often *they* update the curriculum, how often *they* adapt it, but it doesn't seem like something that's fitted to the student population in any way.") This sort of distancing language was common in her practices, as well. I have recorded eight separate occasions in my field notes where students challenged the curriculum in some way (e.g., "Why are we reading/doing/writing/talking about this?"); in response to her students, Ms. T would remind them that she was not the one "making" them do anything—that it was, in fact, the English department's directives.

I'm not suggesting that she is doing herself any favors by publicly relinquishing her agency over what she teaches; I am suggesting, though, that this is one way by which Ms. T seemed to distance herself from the curricular requirements, even as she implemented them. It

was a revealing way by which she dissociated from a curriculum ill-suited to her students, but recognized that she was still tasked with delivering it, regardless of how she felt about it.

Ms. T openly struggled with the possibilities of an English curriculum ("English is such a great place to do that [acknowledge diversity]") and the realities of the curriculum with which she works ("I don't think that the curriculum necessarily gives teachers as much opportunity to do that as it could"). She is cognizant of the ironic power struggles embedded in a school which is, in theory, "proud" of its student diversity, and a curriculum which does little to honor this diversity.

On one hand, Ms. T is critically aware of how her Whiteness has positioned her as a teacher. This awareness emerged from her experiences in a White community and high school. However, this same degree of awareness, while it carries over in theory, does not always seem to carry over in practice, as I discuss in this episode. As the episode plays out (and in subsequent episodes), I raise questions about whether Ms. T's awareness of herself as a racialized being simply does not carry over in practice, or whether it is *structured* to not carry over in practice.

Ms. T noticed early in her first year of teaching that her race held meaning in her classroom. She understood that her race had an impact on how she related to students, and how they related to her. In her words:

> I could tell how students relate to me from the very beginning. Every single time I got a
> new set of students, a new class [long pause] I got the warmest responses in each class by
> girls who were very much like me, at least in appearance. Like, white…[long pause]
> Mini-me's always came to me most, they were always the warmest to me….And then a
> lot of the times I had to work harder to either get the attention of, or the respect of
> students who *didn't* look like me. I would try to explain a concept to them, and like, the

first things that popped in my mind were not always things they understood the concepts

of. Maybe I'd mention a movie or a song, something that *I* relate to? And they wouldn't

relate to it as well, so I'd have to work to think of more examples that they could relate

to? And it actually ended up working well because it would end up making me ask more

questions about them [such as], "Well, what do you do when you get home? What do you

watch, What do you listen to? Or, what do you think about 'this'?" (interview)

Ms. T's Whiteness posed a clear challenge in relating to students who did not look like her. In

some ways, this might be construed as problematic. Her words might be construed as "othering"

her non-White and culturally diverse students. I do not read her words in this way. There are real

racial and cultural differences between Ms. T and many of her students; rather than ignore these

differences (as many White teachers are said to do), and rather than assume a "kids are kids"

colorblind approach to her classroom practices (as many White teachers are said to do), she

describes how she seized opportunities in difference. She did not approach her students assuming

that she is entitled to their respect simply because she is their teacher. She talked about working

to earn their respect. In the process, she sought to learn about their lives in an effort to a) earn

their respect, and b) establish relevance between their lives and the curriculum. I construe this as

the hallmark of a teacher who works hard to inform her teaching by recognizing that her racial

identity impacts the classroom setting.

    This is not to suggest that Ms. T's words translated flawlessly into practice. In fact, I

soon noticed that it was often quite the opposite, in practice. As with most English teachers, Ms.

T is tasked with teaching a range of canonical texts, including Shakespearean works. In the

twelve-week trimester, her particular school curriculum allots two full weeks to teach and assess

students on a series of Shakespearean works (e.g., Romeo and Juliette, Hamlet, and several

smaller works, on top of the historical contexts in which his works were written). I was not so much struck by the inclusion of Shakespeare in the curriculum (this is a uniform aspect of the English curriculum in many public high schools) as I was by the amount of time she had to teach what was required of her. The full-length texts she was required to teach in any given trimester were usually allotted, at most, two weeks. This timeframe included formative and summative assessments, and classroom activities that might make for a deeper engagement with a text, but necessitate stepping away from the text in order to engage it (e.g., debate and/or historical research). For this reason, classroom activities—especially within the Shakespeare unit—were few and far between. Ms. T would often narrow discussions to historical facts and plot details in an effort to complete the curriculum in a timely manner. It was as though the structure of a trimester demanded a superficial engagement with text, for both teacher and students.

Moreover, her students are not timid in their quest to understand why it is necessary to engage particular aspects of the curriculum. For example, during my very first observation, Ms. T was in the process of introducing Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliette*, and was teaching about the historical context in which his texts were written. Several minutes into this lesson, I noticed that many of her students began to display signs of disinterest; several students seem to be listening to music through their iPods, while others place their heads firmly on their desks. Ms. T was in the middle of lecturing on Shakespeare's geographical context when the following exchange took place between her and a Chaldean student, Ali:

> Ali: Why do they make us learn so much about this if they don't even know half this stuff
> is true. [I deliberately complete this sentence with a period, as opposed to a question
> mark, as this student does not quite seem to be asking a question; instead, he is making a
> statement.]

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Ms. T: In order for you to understand more about the stories that he wrote, you need to

know more about the life he [Shakespeare] was living at the time.

NaSeem: But they don't even know…

Ms. T: They have to piece together the records that we have…the reason that it is

important is because you need to understand the context of his life to understand why he

wrote the way he did.

[Students grumble inaudibly and do not appear convinced of Ms. T's explanation]

Ms. T: He wrote 37 plays total, they're divided into comedies, histories, and

tragedies…this is important for you to know. You should know this.

[Ms. T moves to a PowerPoint slide containing an image of Shakespeare's grave, and

reads the inscription to her students: "Good friend for Jesus sake forbeare/To dig the dust

enclosed here.

Blessed be the man that spares these stones,/And cursed be he that moves my bones."]

John: My life ended with a hatchet, live your life and stay ratchet.

[John's improvised inscription elicits significant laughter from the students.]

Ali, with a tone of disgust and a facial expression to match his tone, clearly rejected the notion

that he is required to learn about Shakespeare, and a context about which the "truth" cannot

accurately be determined ("they don't even know [if] half this stuff is true"). He received some

support from NaSeem, another student who did not seem to buy into the utility of this

curriculum. John improvises a tombstone inscription of his own, complete with the relatively

new colloquialism, "ratchet," which is used in popular media to describe behavior generally

deemed socially unacceptable. This was the only point at which students seemed engaged (by

laughing with John). After this exchange, Ms. T moved forward in her lesson as planned, which

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is to say that nothing changed—including the students' silence toward the subject matter and seeming disinterest.

A story about how high school students are bored to tears with Shakespeare is a (perhaps boring) story as old as time. The point, here, is not to draw attention to students' boredom, as boredom appeared to be a symptom of something larger. It is to point to the first of many ways that I notice students, particularly the Black and Middle Eastern students in her classes, challenge the traditional English curriculum. I asked Ms. T about this interaction after this particular class:

Ms. T: He [Ali] does not participate. According to [other teachers], he behaves like this in his other classes. He'll kick out the foundation of the lesson and say, [with emphasis] "*Nobody needs to know this.*" I think that's his attitude toward school in general. I don't see much motivation from him, when we've had any conversations about the future of his schooling or the future of his life, he shows no interest in the fact that a future exists. [She pauses briefly] It's very, very clear from interactions with him, that he doesn't like the idea of authority over him. And maybe a young woman having the authority is not a thing that makes him very happy….he seems at least, from what I've seen, to have that attitude about life: "Why should I be doing anything that people ask me to do?"

Christina: What do you know about him outside of school?

Ms. T: Very little? Um, I know he's had disciplinary issues at the school, but I don't know what they are. He was absent for three days because he was suspended, but I do not know what for. And he is very difficult to engage in conversation. So, yea, most of it is either like observational or I've heard it from other people. So I don't know too much about his personal life.

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Ms. T, defensive in tone, seemed to chalk up her issues with Ali, an older Chaldean student, to a lack of motivation and trouble with authority, particularly female authority figures. I was interested in how she came to these conclusions, so quickly, as it was the beginning of a new trimester; in other words, she had only recently met this current group of students. To this end, what stood out to me in our conversation is that she was not particularly knowledgeable about Ali. Because he "is difficult to engage in conversation," Ms. T relied on her interpretations of his classroom participation (or lack thereof), as well as what her colleagues have said about their personal experiences with him. Given how Ms. T has talked about how her Whiteness has influenced her schooling experiences—and her approach to teaching—I was (perhaps naively) surprised with how she located the issues and her struggles in the individual student.

Moreover, teachers talk to each other about students with whom they are familiar. I certainly remember some of my own discussions with veteran teachers about students with whom I've struggled. My discussions with more experienced colleagues varied in terms of usefulness, and admittedly, kindness and humanity. Sometimes, I was given real, thoughtful, and careful insights into a student's life outside of school to account for any number of things occurring inside of school. Other times—and much more often—I was made uncomfortable by the names my colleagues would use to describe our middle school students, particularly the students they did not care for (the term "slut" comes to mind, the use of which both perplexes and irks me to this day, eight years later). In either case, it was as though a student's home life, or assumptions about their personal lives, exempted me from critical reflection. As such, I was not often encouraged to examine my practices, assumptions, or the curriculum with which I worked—and to be sure, I was never encouraged to explore my racialized identity as a White teacher in a terrifically racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse school, much like the school

Ms. T taught in. In other words, if there was a problem, it was typically located in the student and his or her life outside of school. I was encouraged, in subtle ways, to locate any perceived classroom issues in my students themselves. My identity, my work, remained unchallenged; in a basic sense, the onus was often on the student to navigate and negotiate schooling, their teachers, and curriculum.

That Ms. T sought input from her colleagues about this student is not an odd phenomenon, or something to be discouraged. However, I do question the impact of this practice, particularly when teachers do not reflect the racial and cultural diversity of their students. Her Assistant Principal, a Middle Eastern man I refer to as Haris, had much to say about his own struggles as a student in schools with very low populations of Middle Eastern students, and teachers who were predominantly White American. In Haris' view, the completely White teacher population at Freedom High School, while hired because they were "excellent candidates and highly qualified" (interview), was a "problem," given the school's student population. In his words:

> They're pretty much all white. I do not think our teaching staff is reflective of our student
> population. I think this is a problem. Students are very comfortable when they see
> someone who looks like them. So they can connect. So they can feel like they belong.
> (interview)

Haris' words provide a nuanced take on what it might mean for students in this school to, well, be students in this school. In addition to the racial and cultural disparities between teachers and students, Haris went on to say how many students who are not White, or who come from other countries, find themselves embedded in an "identity crisis" (interview) and conflicts between their home culture and school culture in ways that their middle-class White teachers could not

possibly understand. For these reasons, in Haris' words, "We need our staff to be more reflective of our student body, absolutely."

On one hand, Haris' words speak to his desire to diversify his faculty; this issue, to be sure, is important—but beyond the realm of Ms. T's case. On the other hand, I invoke his words to nuance the above classroom exchange. It might be assumed that because the teacher demographics do not reflect the student demographics, students may not connect as easily, if at all. Might Ali reject the curriculum due to the cultural disconnect between Ms. T and himself? I cannot say for sure, but I do raise it as a possibility. However, even if the staff were more diversified, the curriculum is not diversified to reflect this student population. Even Haris, assertive in tone, expressed how he "hire[s] teachers armed with the classics" (interview). A diverse faculty, then, does not necessitate student belonging, for, as Brayboy (2005) points out, "[T]he modern-day canon that revolves around an established set of readings or 'classics' is one way White supremacy gets played out (Shakespeare and Dickinson are classics, but Louis Owens and Zitkala-Sa are not)" (p. 432) in schools and classrooms. In other words, a more racially and culturally diverse staff does not necessitate that students will feel as though "they belong" if other aspects of schooling (such as school curriculum) remain unwavering in the racial and cultural disconnect with students. Haris, a former math teacher, did not problematize this issue in our discussion; for him, the English curriculum was the English curriculum, almost as though decisions about curriculum are made in a vacuum. Because he is Ms. T's superior, I would expect her to teach in accordance with Haris' expectations.[20]

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[20] Although, I realize also, that curricular expectations are also a lot larger than Haris, and are in many ways a function of district and state mandates. He addressed this, but this specific issue is beyond the scope of this chapter.

I did not speak with Ali, so I am unable to make definitive claims about his classroom participation (or lack thereof) in relation to racialized issues or anything else. However, it was clear that he rejected the curriculum. According to Ms. T, he behaves in much the same way towards the other teachers. It was also clear that Ms. T located that rejection as a problem with his motivation, or with people in authority, particularly after speaking with her (predominantly White) colleagues who purported to have similar experiences with this student. I feared that because her colleagues were said to have stated similar experiences, their input may discourage Ms. T from any desire to dig deeper, thereby reflecting upon her role in the classroom dynamics, or the racialized role curriculum plays in the classroom and school (Yosso, 2002). In other words, I wondered if his classroom performance, because it seemed consistent with other teachers' experiences, provoked a discourse of dismissal about what it means to be a White teacher in this school. The scenario seemed very similar to what I had experienced numerous times as a teacher; I wondered whether Ms. T's identity and work remained unchallenged. The problem, in this purview, is located not in the curriculum, school structures, or the racial and cultural disconnect between Ms. T and her students. It is located in the seemingly unmotivated and unresponsive individual student.

Episode 3: "I find prejudice in school, at homes, and on the streets. Racist jokes, racist people."

According to Richardson (1994), "What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them….Because the individual is subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid" (p. 518). Ms. T is a White teacher; I recognize that she is going to enact Whiteness, and White privilege in ways that, perhaps, she does not notice. She is not exempt from this fact

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simply because she recognizes her own racialized privileges in our discussions. Part of the insidiousness of Whiteness and White identity development, however, is that it is part and parcel to a discourse of blindness; of not having to think about it. However, I also got the sense that Ms. T was structured, in subtle ways, to ignore or silence the ways by which Whiteness (her own, as well as the Whiteness of the curriculum) played out in classroom interactions.

I now turn to an aspect of the curriculum which Ms. T has explicitly identified as an opportunity to teach English for social justice. As you may recall from the above discussion, Ms. T has identified Elie Wiesel's novel, *Night*, as something of an outlier in her required English curriculum. For her, *Night* "acknowledges diversity"; it is a curricular opportunity that she (said she) seizes to teach English for social justice. For this reason, I have chosen Ms. T's approach to teaching *Night* as the focus of this following episode.

A unit in Holocaust studies is a required aspect of the English Language Arts curriculum at Freedom High School. Ms. T identified Elie Wiesel's memoir, *Night*, as one of few opportunities the curriculum provides for engaging diversity: "maybe with the exception of [Elie Wiesel's] *Night*, I haven't really seen content that directly acknowledges diversity, accepting diversity, wanting to learn more about other cultures." For Ms. T, *Night* provides a curricular opportunity to "talk about…major world issues" in her classroom:

> So [Night] really gave me that opportunity. To talk about you know, these are major world *issues*…as far as like, treating people with respect in *society*, and then also having that inside of the classroom where, you know, freshman English isn't necessarily the best place to find levels of respect. And yet, we got to talk about.

It is also within this literature unit that Ms. T has identified a space to teach English for social justice; she expressed her desire to teach *Night* as more than a piece of history. During our

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discussion, she draws from Wiesel's preface to call attention to the "silent bystander," and by highlighting that "this is still happening":

> The survivor's job is tell his story, because not telling their story is an insult to the past, and an insult to all those who died. And the survivor's job is to tell his story to prevent this from happening again. And I wanted my students to think about it in this way. That this is still happening. That if you get educated on the topic, you can be one of those to prevent it from happening again….So I wanted them to think about this in a way that does effect you, and knowing about the kinds of things that people can do, I think can help them think more about their actions toward each other, if nothing else. Which I would consider teaching for social justice in a lot of ways. (interview)

Ms. T opened this unit by asking students to comment on Wiesel's preface; to state whether or not they agree with Wiesel's argument that "the survivor's job is to tell his story to prevent this from happening again." Ms. T also assigned several pre-reading activities with which to introduce the novel. Students were asked to take a "Prejudice Survey," wherein, through a series of open-ended questions, they assessed the "prejudice within themselves," as well as "the world around them." She also asked them to complete a "likert-scale" type of survey, on which they should indicate whether they agree with statements such as "It is hard to make independent choices when you belong to a group," and "Victims are often partially responsible for what is done to them; they make themselves targets" (to list two questions on this survey). Given the potential Ms. T sees in Elie Wiesel's *Night*, in terms of both "acknowledging diversity" and teaching English for social justice, I have chosen to highlight this aspect of her school curriculum, and a particular slice of classroom discourse which occurs around it.

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Holocaust studies have been cited for their potential to "contribute to anti-racist goals by helping students to understand that ethnic and cultural prejudice and discrimination can take diverse forms"(Carrington & Short, 1997, p. 271). There is not currently legislation mandating that Michigan public schools address Holocaust studies in their English Language Arts curriculum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.), nor are Holocaust studies explicitly addressed in the Core Curriculum Content Standards, education standards which were officially adopted by the Michigan Department of Education in 2010. However, the Michigan Board of Education (2008) adopted a resolution which, following Congress' designation for the days of remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust (late April to early May), states that "the Michigan State Board of Education urge that the citizens of Michigan strive to overcome intolerance and indifference through learning and remembrance." As such, the Holocaust is commonly taught in secondary English classrooms during the spring semester.

I do not disagree with the potential for Holocaust studies to engage students in important thinking and learning about intolerance and the effects of indifference, and how these acts have led to the persecution of racial and ethnic groups both currently and throughout history. As a middle school English Language Arts teacher, I delved (headfirst, some might say) into Holocaust studies as both a teacher and student. I simultaneously completed graduate work in Holocaust studies and diversity education, while teaching Holocaust literature (memoirs and informational texts) to my 7th and 8th grade students; I visited Washington, D.C.'s *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* as a part of my graduate studies, but also with the goal of collecting materials for classroom use. I forged relationships with contacts in the field of Holocaust education, which led to a special classroom visit from Fred Spiegel, a Holocaust Survivor who walked my students through his memoir, *Once the Acacias Bloomed*, a visit and

book signing which was covered in a local newspaper. We had been studying his memoir for four weeks before he visited; *The importance of bearing witness against dehumanization* was the curricular theme around which our work, as a class, was focused. I believe, and still believe, that our work was important, and perhaps memorable for some. It had not occurred to me, however, to explore the racialization of the Holocaust, and the privileged knowledges embedded in Holocaust education. It had not occurred to me to explore, through my pedagogies and positionality as a White teacher, the ways by which I may have privileged and re-centered particular kinds of discourse, knowledge, and knowledge-making, over others. It had not occurred to me, in my very first year of "teaching the Holocaust," to question why I was expected to teach *Eleanor's Story: An American Girl in Hitler's Germany* (Ramrath Garner, 2003), an American/German perspective, given the myriad other texts (memoirs, anthologies, etc.) and perspectives at a teacher's disposal.

How, though, does race factor into teaching the Holocaust? In what ways is it a racialized text? For the purposes of clarifying the relationship between the two, and its impact on Ms. T's practices, I briefly draw from literature which illustrates the racialization of the Holocaust.

Notwithstanding the pedagogical opportunities afforded in Holocaust education, it has been argued that the Holocaust is, and has been, given a great deal of attention due to its location within White perimeters. For example, Tascón (2004) argues that

> the Holocaust has been given such visibility not only because of the numbers involved, but also because of its 'Europeanness'….There is an implicit suggestion that the Holocaust was so disturbing because the event took place within its own white borders. (p. 244)

Citing genocides and atrocities which have occurred since—as with several within African borders—the author suggests that the Holocaust was devastating because it is a decidedly White atrocity, given its centrality to White, Western Europeanness.

This perspective finds resonance with Tascón and Ife's (2008) deconstruction of the term "human rights," a term with both intellectual and political roots, the latter originating after World War II and in response to massive human rights abuses. According to the authors, the more recent concept of human rights is a

> reaction to the Holocaust, as a massive human rights violation that, unlike others, was perpetrated within the heart of white western Modernity, *and therefore could not be ignored*. The recognition of human rights abuse, on a massive scale, *as something that could happen in a so-called 'civilised' and archetypically white European nation*, the home of Bach, Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller, and the origin of half the royal houses of Europe, *demanded attention* in a way that previous abuses [and abuses since] did not [and do not]. (p. 316, italics added)

Tascón and Ife employ a Critical Whiteness lens through which to illustrate the racialization of a human rights framework which, they argue, was developed with and through a White lens *for* Whites; as a discourse developed in reaction to human rights abuse in an "archetypically white European nation," it is, they argue, "distinctly imbricated with white privilege" (p. 307). As such, the authors raise the question of "whose humanity?" to argue that the concept of human rights, as it has been defined post World War II, has privileged a particular (White, Western) humanity, a particular form of (racial/ized) knowledge-making, and a particular (racial/ized) identity. Simply put, the racialized concept of "humanity"—or being human—as a (White) privileged discourse, has implications for knowledge-making and identity development.

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The authors I sight above argue that the Holocaust has been given unmatched attention (unmatched as compared to the attention granted to other atrocities) due to the White borders within which it occurred. As such, the curriculum itself may necessitate a discourse of White privilege and represent a traditional curriculum discourse of Whiteness. To, here again, invoke Yosso (2002), "[t]raditional curricular discourses distort, omit, and stereotype" (p. 93) the experiences of students of color. Applying a critical Whiteness lens to the Holocaust, as do Tascón (2004) and Tascón and Ife (2008), I ask, in what ways might Ms. T already be positioned to enact Whiteness by the Holocaust curriculum? In what ways is she positioned to frame Holocaust studies, despite her wish to engage diversity in/with this curriculum? There are several aspects of this episode and the one which follows that I am going to tease out in order to address these questions. The first consists of a thematic focus on "self-reliance," and its relationship to discourses of White privilege. The second aspect of this episode that I tease out is a classroom interaction in which her student, Bobby, attempts to relate the Holocaust to structural oppression.

Ms. T has expressed a desire to teach about larger, social issues within Elie Wiesel's *Night*, including prejudice. In concert with her goals, she devoted the first four days of pre-reading activities to a set of anticipation guides (in this case, a survey with prompts related to one's role in society, e.g., "you should always do what you're told," and "It's better to just blend in with the crowd," to name two such prompts); a group discussion activity supplemented with a set of reflective questions (*Recognizing the Forces of Prejudice*);[21] and independent research in the school's library/computer lab during which students accessed the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website (http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/), a comprehensive resource for

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[21] See Appendix G.

students, educators, education professionals, and people in general who are interested in learning about the Holocaust.

Ms. T combined expectations for teaching writing with themes that her English department identified as important to teach in the novel. For example, on the first day of the unit, she extracted one of Elie Wiesel's quotes from the preface and devised a writing prompt:

Elie Wiesel once said that anyone who witnesses an atrocity, or an act of inhumanity, and does nothing to stop it, is just as guilty as the person committing the act. Those who know and remain silent are guilty of the same offense. To stand by silently is to participate in the crime. [Writing instructions:] Do you agree with his judgment? Write a short essay explaining whether you agree or disagree with his statement. Then provide at least three reasons to back up why you agree or disagree.

This prompt was supplemented with a "Prejudice Survey," with which students were asked to respond to questions related to prejudice they've "observed in others," as well as "prejudice within themselves." The majority of the pre-reading activities were not discussed in class; instead, they were assigned as homework and collected the following day. It was common for Ms. T to assign open-ended, thought-provoking questions as homework—questions and responses that ultimately were not given attention in class discussion. I saw her do this throughout the year, with different aspects of the curriculum. Her usual practice of collecting student work centered on these issues ran counter with what Ms. T identified as an opportunity within the Holocaust unit: "So [Night] really gave me that opportunity. To *talk* about you know, these are major world *issues*…"

Ms. T has provided me with select student responses to the prejudice survey (8, in total). Students seem poised, in their written responses, to discuss prejudice as they have experienced it.

Take, for example, the following small sample of students' written responses to the question, *Where do you find prejudice in the world around you?* More than half of the responses she provided for me (5, in total) reference school, specifically, as a site of prejudice:

> (1) The society we live in is full of prejudice. We see it on television, listen to it in songs, and witness it all around us in school. A lot of people judge each other by what they wear, what they listen to, how they talk, and many more.

> (2) I find prejudice in school a lot. Examples are racial prejudice, discrimination prejudice, and segregation prejudice.

> (3) I find prejudice in school, at homes, and on the streets. Racist jokes, racist people.

It seemed, through these students' responses, that Ms. T had set up the Holocaust curriculum in a way that held potential to make thoughtful connections between the novel and students' experiences with oppression. The opening activities seemed consistent with her stated goals of talking about the issues raced in this particular curriculum. Given Ms. T's approach to introducing *Night*, as well as students' early written responses, I was admittedly excited for the class to begin studying the novel.

However, Ms. T's goals appear to be cut short when it came time to engage the curriculum in ways predefined by the broader English department. On the very first day that her students began reading the memoir, Ms. T distributed a worksheet entitled "Night Introduction: Essential Questions, Themes, & Focus Areas for Reading" and introduced the worksheet by announcing to the class,

> I don't know if you know this, but every English class has a theme…the theme for this class is interrelationships and self-reliance. *Night* specifically deals with these two themes

very, very much. When you are put in a very, very, very difficult situation, relationships are tested.

Ms. T passively explained the theme chosen by the English department for her specific classes: "the theme for this class is interrelationships and self-reliance." In accordance with these themes, Ms. T asked students to engage a variety of "essential" and "guiding" questions. Several of these questions are as follows:

- Who am I?

- How do my skills and talents help to define me?

- How do I relate to my family, community, and society?

- How do I build networks of people to support me?

- How am I a reflection of my relationships?

- How do my relationships within and across groups affect others?

- What influence do class, religion, language, and culture have on my relationships and my decisions?

- What can I contribute as an individual?

- What is my responsibility to society?

- How do I see my beliefs reflected in government policies and by politicians?[22]

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[22] When considered in the abstract, these questions are important for youth to consider, in a general sense, as a group of people on something of a threshold into adulthood and self-discovery. When situated in the context of the unit's sub themes of "indifference," "desensitization," and "self-reliance," the questions seem to present a Freirean, "'problem posing' method of education" (Peterson, 2009, p. 306), a model which, according to Peterson (2009) centers questions "at the core of the curriculum" (p. 306). As such, "open-ended questions prod students to critically analyze their social situation and encourage them to ultimately work towards changing it" (p. 306). These questions, when connected to literature and other aspects of English curriculum, seem to be a purposeful way by which to encourage students to connect to literature, in a general sense. However, if we are to forget that these are the department-sanctioned "essential questions" developed for engagement with a Holocaust survivor's memoir, it would seem difficult—at least to me—to associate these themes and questions with a narrative which emerged from a historical atrocity in which millions of people were oppressed, brutalized, and systematically slaughtered by a government which deemed Jewish—and many other—populations as racially and culturally inferior. In other words,

As Ms. T reviewed the content of the "essential questions" worksheet, she asked a series of questions to check for students' understanding of the designated themes. I have recorded the following log of classroom discourse and notes to capture the nature of the dialogue around the assigned essential questions and themes:

Ms. T: What does inter-relationships mean?"

[Some students grumble; others remain hunched over with their heads firmly planted to their desks.]

Ms T: It's basically relationships with other people.

[A noticeable pause]

Ms. T: And then self-reliance. What's self-reliance?

Martin: Rely on yourself?

Ms. T: [She responds excitedly] Bam! Rely on yourself. This story is very, very, very much based on self-reliance.

Ms. T: So we are going to consider Elie Wiesel and his journey through the book. How did he grapple with these questions?

[She begins reviewing the bottom half of the worksheet, and the three main themes the class will focus on—Indifference, desensitization, and self-reliance—and offers similar explanations for both 'indifference' and 'desensitization': "Indifference is when you're not really focused on how it would affect you or others / "Desensitization is the idea of not being affected by something."]

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if I were to present these questions to a group of people (English teachers and educators, perhaps) in the abstract, I do wonder how many of them, without advance knowledge, would say, "Ah, yes! These questions are directly related to Holocaust studies/literature on the Holocaust/oppression," etc.

Jacob: Ms. T? Are you still in contact with people from college and stuff?

[Ms. T briefly entertains the question and nods her head "yes."]

It is a fairly one-sided conversation; very few students participate. When there is participation, it is an effort to change the subject (as with asking Ms. T a broad question about her college relationships). Ms. T's focus on the assigned themes (indifference, desensitization, and self-reliance) sets the stage for how Ms. T teaches (and, consequently, does not teach) the novel.

As Ms. T attempted to engage her students in a discussion about the themes, I surveyed the classroom. One student caught my eye and waved to me from across the room; several students rested with their heads on their desks, while other students tossed balled up loose-leaf paper to each other. I couldn't help but notice that one student, Bobby, a usually outspoken African American young man with whom Ms. T experienced considerable tension, appeared absolutely miserable, his expression exuding a sense of sadness. I noticed that, in an ironic sort of way, the prescribed themes of self-reliance, indifference, and desensitization seem to position students in exactly that way: Judging by the above classroom discourse (and lack thereof), as well as their physical responses to the discussion (e.g., sleeping and paper-ball fights), the students became indifferent and desensitized to the curriculum.

The novel's prescribed themes are consistent with what Schweber (2008) found as an approach to Holocaust curriculum commonly "molded to fit particularly American master narratives" (p. 158). For example, Schweber discusses a teacher who

taught the Holocaust as a story primarily about (rugged) individuals facing obstacles and overcoming adversity—the American mythos of individual agency—rather than as a story about people constrained in their choices by the constellations of historical circumstance. (p. 159)

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Through a thematic focus on individual agency (self-reliance), the Holocaust curriculum may be positioned to get enacted as a racialized text[23]. By focusing on individual agency, it is perhaps easier to hold individuals responsible for their own oppression, and to ignore the historical circumstances which gave rise to oppression.

In what ways does a thematic focus on "self-reliance" necessitate that Ms. T enact Whiteness at the expense of her goals for the Holocaust curriculum? Let's first keep in mind that Ms. T did not construct these themes; rather, they were assigned to her specific section of 9th grade English by her department. That being said, a focus on self-reliance, in relation to the oppression Wiesel personally experienced, is not automatically a bad, wrong, or uncritical approach to the curriculum in and of itself. As Leonardo (2004) points out "critical analysis begins from the objective experiences of the oppressed in order to understand the dynamic of structural power relations" (p. 141). However, when approached only through a focus on individual agency, the curriculum may locate the onus of oppression in individuals, rather than the systems and societies which create(d) the conditions for oppression and domination (Leonardo, 2004). Thus, a focus on individual agency as a curricular theme, while not problematic in and of itself, may be problematic to the extent that it does not engage a structural analysis of oppression.

I view a focus on individualism (self-reliance) in a curriculum ripe for engaging race and racism as synonymous with a strategy of Whiteness (Leonardo, 2004). According to Leonardo (2004), strategies of Whiteness "frequently serve to perpetuate white racial supremacy through color-blindness, ahistorical justifications, and sleights-of-mind" (p. 141). In this view, a focus on

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[23] To be sure, and according to Tascón (2004) and Tascón and Ife (2008), the Holocaust is *already* a racialized text. The point of this episode is to show how, through Ms. T's practices and classroom discourse, it becomes enacted as such.

self-reliance may be a form of hegemonic knowledge because of what it seems to ignore and evade: A serious and sustained encounter with the structures and conditions which lead to oppression of all kinds; in other words, "a story about people constrained in their choices by the constellations of historical circumstance" (Schweber, 2008, p. 159). Thus, a curricular discourse of individualism, agency, and self-reliance seems to serve the same function as discourses of White privilege: Discourses of White privilege, like self-reliance, occlude history and forsake structural analysis for a focus on the individual (Leonardo, 2004). The processes of racism and domination, then, are mystified (Leonardo, 2004) in and through a discourse of individualism. In Whiteness studies, this discourse perpetuates a bootstrap mentality where one's success is boiled down to "individual merit, exceptionalism, or hard work" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 37). In Holocaust education in high schools, a discourse of individualism yields confusion and questions like, Why didn't the Jews just refuse to be oppressed?[24]. This is not, in any way, to equate a curricular focus on the self-reliance of victims with racism or White privilege in individuals. It is not the same, and I do not intend to imply as much. However, a focus on the individual, in both scenarios, feeds into larger dominant narratives embedded in discourses of White privilege which ignore and evade analysis of the structural conditions which make (or have made) racialized oppression possible.

That Ms. T's section of English is assigned this theme by the English department ("the theme for this class is interrelationships and self-reliance") seems to necessitate that Ms. T enact the curriculum in ways that undermine her original goals of teaching English for social justice using this unit as a vehicle. She seems structured to ignore larger issues of race and racism, which may reveal how the Holocaust curriculum perpetuates discourses of Whiteness. Therefore,

[24] See Schweber (2008) for a discussion of the kinds of questions students ask of their teachers when class discussions evade a structural analysis of the Holocaust.

a prescribed and mandated focus on the individual, in the example of the Holocaust curriculum, may yield the kind of classroom episode and discourse which follows.

Episode 4: "In 1958, there was segregation in the United States."

In this episode, students had been reading *Night* for just under two weeks. They object, on this particular day, through audible groaning and sighs that "it is not *fair*!," to having to finish the novel for homework. Ms. T, through what had become commonplace negotiation, reminded students that "it is only seventeen pages," and that the night before they "read thirty [pages]." After a pop quiz on chapters five and six, about which students answer a series of multiple choice and true/false questions attending to plot details (e.g., "What is the name of the character that succeeds in playing the violin?", and "T/F: Akiba Drumer loses his faith and also fails the selection"), Ms. T launched a discussion about the nuances of particular concentration camps; I noticed two African American female students rest their heads on their desks as Ms. T began to speak:

Ms. T: The conditions of the camps he's [Wiesel] living in are superior to other camps. This is important to know.

[She explains the distinction between the labor camps and extermination camps.]

Ms. T: Birkenau, that is where conditions were much worse. Less food, the conditions were much worse. People were killed a lot more often, for much fewer reasons. So the camp he's [Wiesel] is living in [Buna, a labor camp]…Some days, he doesn't have it so bad there, ok? They're not getting a ton of food, they're getting enough to survive. At other camps, they didn't have enough to survive…These things are very important, when winter comes around, they get thicker clothes.

During this discussion, Ms. T drew attention to the distinctions between the labor camps and extermination camps (as though one might be thought of as "better" than the other). I argue that this is a symptom of a curricular focus on self-reliance; by suggesting that "Some days, he doesn't have it so bad there, ok?" Ms. T foregrounds Wiesel's living conditions, as though his navigation of his living conditions is the important issue, here. As a product of a curricular focus on self-reliance, she did not address the overall oppressive conditions which should have overridden any differences between the concentration camps, as both types of camps were breathed into being by the same oppressive regime. In other words, while the conditions may have differed slightly, all of the inmates were prisoners and forced into these camps (if they were not murdered in transit) under some arbitrary, Hitlerian determination that they were racially impure. I became concerned that students, through such an interpretation, might take away from this lesson that Wiesel "doesn't have it so bad there"; that he may have been fortunate to end up in Buna.

As I attempt to theorize this episode, I am reminded of Fanon's (1952) words, in his postcolonial work, *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> [I]t is utopian to try to ascertain in what ways one kind of inhuman behavior differs from another kind of inhuman behavior...I should simply like to ask M. Mannoni whether he does not think that for a Jew the differences between the anti-Semitism of Maurras and that of Goebbels are imperceptible. (p. 63)

In other words, "Is there in truth any difference between one racism and another? Do not all of them show the same collapse, the same bankruptcy of man?" (p. 64). And, is this the type of message we want students to walk away with after they engage Holocaust curriculum through

the lens of individualism and self-reliance? Is this how a teacher's focus should be directed? Fanon's words provide entre into the classroom discourse which follows.

As I surveyed the classroom, most students appeared disengaged, as they doodled, stared into space, or slept; very few contributed to the discussion. I suspected Ms. T was aware of this, as well. She then turned the discussion toward a focus on the brutality Wiesel experiences in the concentration camps (another example of individualism). It was at this point that Bobby, a Black student who frequently challenged Ms. T, spoke up for the first time. Bobby, in what seemed to be a bout of sheer exasperation, sat hunched at his seat and expressed distaste for the novel:

Bobby: I don't like this book.

Ms. T: [Somewhat critical in tone] You don't like this book. *Why* don't you like this book?

Bobby: It's stupid. It's not even, like, fun.

[Several students laugh at Bobby's comment.]

Ms. T: Do you *think* that it's meant to be *fun*. [Ms. T speaks slowly, slightly spacing each word, and somewhat exasperatedly.]

Bobby: No, but the story is not good. It's like the same thing, he gets mad about something and he gets smacked around.

Ms. T: [Directs this question to the class] Why do you think he tells the story this way if it's not good?

[Students begin talking at once; the cacophony of voices is unintelligible.]

Ms. T: Yes. He's telling his own story the way it happened.

Andy: [A White student] I think he's telling it so that there won't be another Holocaust, and so that people will know how to help.

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Ms. T: Yes, he's telling this story so that people will know what happened.

[Another student asks for clarification about the novel's date of publication; Andy looks up this information and announces that it was first published in 1958.]

Bobby: [Speaking quickly and somewhat angrily] In 1958, there was segregation in the United States. So obviously it [telling a story about oppression] wouldn't help anything.

Ms.T: Why would it not help anything?

Bobby expressed his distaste for the memoir, but there seemed to be something quite deeper than mere distaste. He described the novel as "not good" and said that this is because "It's like the same thing, he [Wiesel] gets mad about something and he gets smacked around." There is a hint of a critique of the theme of individual agency, here. In other words, why, in the grand scheme of things, would the story of one man's day to day experiences matter? What about the possibility of something larger at play? Bobby's subsequent reference to systemic oppression seemed to reinforce his idea that individual agency does not seem to matter when there are broader, systemic issues at play—like segregation—which *still* occur. As a researcher, I was impressed with Bobby's critique and historical insights/connections. However, in thinking back to my first year of teaching, I'm not sure I would have been astute enough to pick up on the salience of his input.

Ms. T attempted to unpack Bobby's input, and then solicited feedback from the broader class in order to reiterate (and re-center) the original thematic focus. A White student, Andy, responded to Ms. T's question and received her affirmation ("Yes, he's telling this story so that people will know what happened"); Bobby, however, did not seem convinced of this argument, and pointed out that "there was segregation in the United States" at the time the memoir was published. For Bobby, given the existence of racial segregation in the U.S., the simple act of

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story-sharing "wouldn't help anything." Furthermore, rather than affirming his input (i.e., affirming Bobby's knowledge-making in which he associated his knowledge of segregation with the Holocaust curriculum), Ms. T asked Bobby to elaborate; she did not ask the same of Andy. In a sense, Bobby's input (i.e., his knowledge) was denied while Andy's was re/affirmed.

This classroom discourse illustrates how Bobby's input also challenged another way by which the Holocaust is typically framed in American society and school curriculum. Novick (2000) explains how the discourse of uniqueness and incomparability embedded in the Holocaust promote

> evasion of moral and historical responsibility. The repeated assertion that whatever the United States has done to blacks, Native Americans, Vietnamese, or others pales in comparison to the Holocaust is true—and evasive. And whereas a serious and sustained encounter with the history of hundreds of years of enslavement and oppression of blacks might imply costly demands on Americans to redress the wrongs of the past, contemplating the Holocaust is virtually cost-free: a few cheap tears….It leads to the shirking of those responsibilities that do belong to Americans as they confront their past, their present, and their future. (p. 15)

To promote uniqueness and incomparability—like promoting self-reliance—is to promote evasion; it is a way to remain distanced from "moral and historical responsibility." Bobby connected racial segregation in the United States to what he was reading about in *Night*—his response challenged the idea that the curriculum was unique in scope. I am not suggesting that he did this deliberately; I do not have the data to make such a claim. More to the point is that he challenged a discourse that his peers and teacher seemed to consume without question. His input raises questions about the larger racialized narrative of how the Holocaust is taught in public

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schools. In the discourse which follows, I show how Bobby's input—his connection—was questioned and ultimately undermined by a larger discourse of dismissal and silence embedded in an approach to the Holocaust as unique and incomparable.

But first, I wish to revisit Ms. T's handling of the previous slice of classroom discourse. On the one hand, by asking "Why would it not help anything?", Ms. T may be encouraging Bobby to further articulate his point of view, an important exercise for students to engage in any context; any classroom; any subject-area. On the other hand, her question, in conjunction with the classroom discourse which follows, seemed to miss the ways by which Bobby is connecting (or not connecting) to the memoir. Ms. T required that he elaborate on his response, and again, it is not something she required of Andy (the White student). This is supported in and by the way she affirms Andy, the student who perhaps gave a more "correct" response. In other words, Andy, unlike Bobby, is not asked to elaborate; his interpretation seemed to gain credence over Bobby's. It seemed, here, that dismissing racial segregation as a possible way of making meaning and connecting to the Holocaust functioned to privilege only those connections to (knowledge about) the Holocaust as unique in scope and importance. In this way, Ms. T seemed structured to ignore larger issues of race and racism that might emerge from a study of oppression. In this way, she seemed to privilege and enact the authoritative discourses of Whiteness that might be embedded in the Holocaust curriculum.

Bobby's comment caused something of a commotion. Students began talking to each other and over each other; it took Ms. T about one minute (an eternity, it seems, when trying to get the attention of nearly thirty students) to regain her students' attention, and finally did so after she calls out to them, "Everybody, come back! Quiet, *please*!":

Ms. T: I'm going over this because I think it's important. [Addressing Bobby] You're not the only person who doesn't like the book. There are plenty of people who don't like the book. And there are people who *do* like this book. There are *a lot* of people who like this book. The book is not written necessarily to entertain. It's meant to inform….so that it doesn't happen again.

Bobby: But it *did* though.

Ms. T: It did, in a *way*. But the idea is, this is an extreme situation. There are genocides that happened throughout the world…

Ms. T seemed to equate Bobby's distaste for the memoir with the notion that he, perhaps, did not find it entertaining enough ("You're not the only person who doesn't like the book"/ "The book is not written necessarily to entertain"). Although he seemed to reinforce this idea at times (e.g., "the story is not good"), Bobby continued making subtle connections between the novel and his knowledge about racial segregation. In stating his objections to Ms. T's (somewhat repetitive) efforts to highlight the purposes of the memoir ("It's meant to inform….so that it doesn't happen again"), he seemed to attempt to re-center his identification with—and connections to—the topic, in relation to racial segregation ("But it *did* though"). He resisted the authoritative Discourses of the White curriculum to which Ms. T was holding fast.

Ms. T made a grab for her copy of the memoir, and re-read a paragraph in the preface, in another attempt to convince students (but perhaps mostly Bobby) of memoir's utility:

Ms. T: *For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.*

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Ms. T: [Addressing the class] Do you understand what he's saying?

Andy: [Almost adamant in tone] *Yes*. He's saying that he doesn't want people to do this *again*.

Ms. T: Yes. How can a book like this, how can telling his story, make it so that it doesn't happen again?

Katy: [A White student] Because it was so horrifying.

Ms. T: Elie Wiesel's belief, that by telling the story…people will be prepared, and will understand that this kind of thing happens, and will be able to stop it, or at least understand before it happens again.

Ms. T: Bobby, you were saying it did happen, how do you mean?

Bobby: It happens all the time, segregation, I guess.

Ms. T: Yes, so acts of inhumanity; those have not stopped. Even in America, the idea of segregation and all that stuff. These things are real. What makes the Holocaust *different* [she speaks with emphasis] is the scale of it. That's what I was trying to present in the beginning, with the math and the numbers. Almost 11 million people killed. The *scale* of this incident is something that should never be pushed to the side.

While this time, she seemed to affirm Bobby's input ("Yes, so acts of inhumanity; those have not stopped"/ "These things are real"), Ms. T invoked Wiesel's words, and also historical facts ("Almost 11 million people killed") to dissociate segregation from the urgency and uniqueness that has historically narrated the Holocaust (*To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.*/ "What makes the Holocaust *different* is the scale of it").

In the above classroom discourse, I illustrate how Ms. T's interactions with Bobby and Andy represent the validation—the granting of "knowledge-ability" (Tascón & Ife, 2004)—of/for certain responses to the Holocaust curriculum over others. According to Tascón and Ife (2004), "The process of [knowledge] validation has always been racialised both because it privileges and validates knowledges that reproduce specific forms of racially defined power, and also because this then grants knowledge-ability to some and not others (p. 307-308). Bobby, when he contributed to the class discussion, was tasked with elaborating on his connections between the Holocaust curriculum and racial segregation. His connection/knowledge was ultimately invalidated by the teacher. On the other hand, the students who fell back on the unit's designated themes (as with Andy and Katy) were positively reinforced; their knowledge (-ability) was validated. There was also an implied validation in that Ms. T did not ask these (White) students to further elaborate on, or justify, their responses. She did not ask them any questions about their responses. If anything, she expanded and expounded up/on them.

As I continued to survey the room, I notice a Black female student sleeping; many other students have laid their heads on their desks. Bobby was not an exception; as Ms. T moved on to reviewing plot points, he, too, put his head down on his desk. A White female student, Cynthia, made an observation and asked a question about Wiesel's hospital stay:

Cynthia: He's treated pretty nice in the hospital, is everyone treated the same way?

Ms. T: They're treated pretty *well* there. They're given better clothes, they're given better food. Why do you think…

Monroi: [a Chaldean male student] So when they get better they can go back to work.

Ms. T: Exactly.

[A Chaldean female student then asks why Wiesel did not just stay in the hospital, considering the hospital's treatment of the patients.]

Ms. T: Yes, this is a very interesting situation.

At this point in the discussion, a slight African American boy who sat several feet to my left took a deep breath; he slowly exhaled and muttered, "Oh, man…", while rolling his eyes, somewhat dramatically, somewhat exasperatedly. Furthermore, of the students who were present on this day, the vast majority of those who contributed to the discussion were White and Chaldean. The Black students were not involved in the discussion at this point; moreover, Bobby had not contributed in almost a half an hour, except to express an interest in "retaking the quiz" because he had not read chapter six for homework. Ms. T denied his request, and closed the discussion by reiterating the following points:

Ms. T: So while we're reading this novel, and we're hearing about, his conditions aren't that bad sometimes. He doesn't have very hard work, he's in good health compared to a lot of other inmates. What was happening is truly a tragedy; something that effected the entire world. It was World War II. The end of World War II was the end of this tragedy. So it's not just a simple thing that happened that we don't need to talk about anymore. The importance of reading this book in class is to not only inform you of what happened in the past; it is still a very good example of writing. This memoir was not made to entertain; it was made to inform.

Ms. T took the last word on the "importance" of the novel, and reinforced, as she had earlier in the class, the idea that Wiesel's "conditions aren't that bad sometimes." There were seven minutes remaining until the bell was due to ring. Ms. T instructed her students to continue reading silently, and perhaps even finish the memoir in the time which remained. The same

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young boy who rolled his eyes during the latter half of the discussion expressed that he did not "like reading"; whether he meant this particular text or reading in a general sense was not clear. Most of the students began packing their knapsacks and congregating by the front and back classroom doors eager, I assume, for class to end.

Conclusion

I fear that, in the episodes I've presented thus far, I have done nothing more than (possibly) contribute to another story about a White female teacher who is, say, ignorant of her racialized self. In the above example, Ms. T seemed to foreclose on opportunities to discuss race and racial issues in class. She all but outright dismisses Bobby's input in favor of the "right" (and seemingly White) perspective (e.g., those of Andy's and Katy's). On the surface, she seems wholly unaware of how she says one thing (during our discussions) but, in practice, does another. She critiques the curriculum, but does nothing about said curriculum. The opportunities she provides for discussion about prejudice (for one example) are reduced to homework to be turned in the following day for a grade. This occurred repeatedly throughout the year, and not just in relation to the Holocaust curriculum.

This combination of episodes raised questions for me about the subtle ways by which Whiteness gets played out in classrooms. It also raised questions about the subtle ways by which Whiteness is *structured* to play out in classrooms. For one thing, much has been said, particularly in the field of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies, about the need for teachers to critique Eurocentric curriculum and epistemology (Leonardo, 2004, 209; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004; Yosso, 2002). As such, curriculum discourses reflect the ideologies of the dominant White culture (Yosso, 2002). Furthermore, according to Yosso, "Teachers may not be able or willing to incorporate a challenge to the traditional, Eurocentric versions of history conveyed by textbooks

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into their class lectures or discussions" (p. 94). I agree with Yosso, but am struck by a disconnect: Ms. T seemed willing to at least *question* the utility of a curriculum that does not serve racially and culturally diverse students. Recall her words, which I cite above: "I would think especially in a district that acknowledges how diverse it is, it would try to teach to diversity…. it doesn't seem like something that's fitted to the student population in any way." She is both able and willing to see the ironic distinction between a district which purports pride in its diverse student population, but simultaneously unwilling to serve those same students with a curriculum reflective of their diversity. Despite our conversations where she openly critiqued her racial identity as a White teacher, she seemed less willing to implicate her racialized role, or the role Whiteness played, in the process of teaching a curriculum she was required to teach.

CHAPTER 6: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

"How many times must a man look around

Before he can see he must defy?

How many ears must one man have

Before he can hear people cry?

How many deaths will it take 'til they know

That they didn't all have to die?

The answer my friend is education.

The answer is education."

(Mr. Antolini, original lyrics submitted for an English methods assignment, 2010)

"While there is a lower class I am in it.

While there is a criminal element, I am of it.

While there is a soul in prison, I am not free." (Vonnegut, 1990, p. ix)

"Going back to poetry for a minute: I love metaphors, and for me hustling is the ultimate

metaphor for the basic human struggles: the struggle to survive and resist, the struggle to win and

to make sense of it all." (Jay-Z, 2010, p. 16)

White teachers are often entering the profession with a lifetime of hegemonic reinforcement to

see students of color and their communities as dangerous and at fault for the educational

challenges they face. (Picower, 2008, p. 211)

[Dominant narratives about White teachers],

if they remain the only ones we know,

sketch out impossibly narrow and regressive paths for white teachers.

If we are to imagine

other ways of configuring our teaching lives

in opposition to white supremacy,

we must find other stories—

and we must find more nuanced meaning

in the dominant stories that surround us.

(Lensmire, 2012, p. vii)

Of necessity, the previous chapters can only convey glimpses into the lives of three White English teachers; in those chapters, I explored their White racial/ized identities, their pedagogical practices, and what they had to say about both. I begin this chapter with the above quotes in an attempt to add to what I can only describe as the montage of complexity. The first quote is a verse from a song Mr. Antolini wrote at the end of one of his secondary English methods courses. He wrote this song to the tune of Bob Dylan's *Blowing in the Wind* to encapsulate his teacher philosophy. He set the lyrics to music and recorded the song on his computer in advance of our final class. I—along with so many of his peers—sat speechless at the sound of the first guitar chords and opening lyrics: "How many halls must a kid crawl down/Before you allow the kid the stand?"

The second quote belongs to the work of Kurt Vonnegut (1990), Mr. Kurt's favorite author (and hence, the pseudonym), a novelist known for his satire and critical social commentary. At the time of my study, I was not very familiar with Vonnegut's work, and decided to purchase one of his books (*Hocus Pocus*) in an attempt to better understand the

appeal. I was as far as page ix (where I found the above quote) when I gained a deeper understanding of Mr. Kurt's influences, goals, and overall approach to teaching.

Finally, the third quote belongs to international hip-hop icon, Jay-Z. I mention in my investigation of Ms. Tessa's practices that she has talents and interests which often mirrored those of her students; that these were to her (and her students') benefit. She spoke openly about how she was an avid consumer of Jay-Z's music, so much so that she purchased his book, *Decoded* (2010). She did not purchase this book as a pedagogical tool, necessarily. It just so happened that she was able to use the book in her classroom several years later to teach her students about poetry in a way that held meaning for them (as well as for her). Again, my goal in my investigation of Ms. T's work is not to contribute to the *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers* narratives that exist about White women teachers. I am rather concerned about this interpretation. But, in the end, I could not ignore how Ms. T was so open and unapologetic about her fascination with, and respect for, Jay-Z (for just one example), and rap music in general. She did not think twice about using Jay-Z's work to teach students who were also fond of his music; and why should she? I owe her the same degree of fearless candor as I share—and attempt to make sense of—her story.

The issues I describe in the previous chapters were guided by what the teachers identified as opportunities to teach English for social justice in their classrooms. In the cases of Mr. Kurt and Ms. Tessa, this meant seizing upon aspects of the English curriculum where they felt they were best able to tackle difficult topics[25]; places where the curriculum provided a vehicle through which to "open their [students'] eyes to the world" (Mr. Kurt, interview). In the case of Mr.

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[25] Be reminded, this is not a study of how teachers teach literature, multicultural or otherwise. The teachers collectively identified literature with opportunities to critically engage the world around them. It is why they became English teachers. It would have been odd, I think, to not incorporate their teaching of literature in a study situated in English education, even if the sole focus of the study is not on literature.

Antolini, I focused somewhat on the English Language Arts curriculum, to be sure, but was struck by the need to do things a bit differently to tell his story. His school was very different from that of the others; he was surrounded by an explicit curriculum of control (a curriculum simultaneously embedded in a hidden curriculum of Whiteness) which often dictated how he taught, spoke, and interacted with his students—his case, in particular, presented a language of teaching that, without careful analysis, could have constructed him as control-centered, anti-intellectual, and perhaps racist. I found that I could not simply think about his words, his teaching, and his curriculum, without also thinking about how he taught and spoke through a filter of a required behavior modification system; a filter which controlled both him and his students.

In this chapter, I draw from Bakhtin (1981) and offer examples from the teachers' cases to discuss how understanding Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse has helped me to productively consider how to move the discussion of Whiteness beyond a discourse of White privilege. I offer this discussion to illustrate how understanding enactments of Whiteness in more nuanced ways may get at why teacher education's goals for disowning, dismantling, and abolishing systems of Whiteness seem to position our White teachers—even those who dare and desire to do critical work—to fail. I then expand upon extant discussions of silence and Whiteness to illustrate the silencing impact of authoritative Discourses of Whiteness on teachers' practices. Finally, I borrow from the words of the participants to offer a "different angle" on Whiteness, and close the chapter by offering an example of how, in all of the teachers' struggles, contradictions, and silences, I have located a Discourse of possibility.

From a hidden curriculum of Whiteness to Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse

In the previous chapters, I chose to highlight aspects of the teachers' experiences that I thought best represented their struggles, their contradictions, their goals, and in some ways, how their goals were silenced; I explored what it means to enact Whiteness in their individual schools and classrooms. Throughout, I have illustrated how structures of school and curriculum work to shape (or work against) teachers' practices, classroom discourse, and interactions. In many ways, these structures and curricula represented a hidden curriculum of Whiteness. In Ms. T's case, we see how the Holocaust curriculum is embedded in a hidden curriculum of Whiteness, and how this directs Ms. T's attention. In turn, we see how she is positioned to ignore the racialized issues (e.g., segregation) that her students raise for discussion. In Mr. Kurt's case, he attempted to put a "different angle on racism" by exposing and discussing White privilege with his students. These attempts were undermined by an English department who, in Mr. Kurt's words, were "too afraid to talk about the real stuff" (i.e., White privilege). Finally, in the case of Mr. A, we see how he was positioned to teach with and through a required language of deficit, a behavior management curriculum which seemed to have an underlying racial component.[26] For all of the teachers, I was committed to getting to the nuances of how and why they enacted Whiteness (see Methods chapter), and ended up with a series of contradictions which fed into the working definition(s) of Whiteness that I built upon in the theoretical framework of this study.

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[26] Readers may have trouble tying Mr. A's case to a hidden curriculum of Whiteness given that there was also a significant portion of White students in this school (upwards of 40%). This is a valid question. However, I draw from Allen (1999) to argue that the psychological impact of such spaces, as with the school space created and managed by the behavioral management curriculum I describe in Mr. A's case, impacts students differently. For example, Allen argues that "the pattern of social encounters in space between Black and Whites…has the effect of creating different psychological spaces. Since Whites have more legitimacy in the corporate and educational world, interactions of White surveillance are more likely to have a negative psychological impact on Black people because of the historical legacy of discrimination and the current reality of exclusion. Whites often do not make much of these kinds of interactions because there are no serious consequences of surveillance for them. Racial surveillance is just another aspect of assuring White privilege and conferring dominance. [Moreover,] [t]hese types of interactions with Whites in space is more than just psychologically hurtful, it is a driving force in the production of non-White racial identities" (p. 10-11). The point, however, is not necessarily to discuss how students' responded to the curriculum, as I do not have the data to make such claims. It is to discuss how the curriculum positioned Mr. A to teach, and how it positioned him to construct his students.

In the theoretical framework, I described Whiteness and attempted to relate my

"un/settled" upon definition to sociocultural discussions of identity, Discourse, and ideology,

drawing on Bakhtin (1981), Britzman (1991), and Gee (2008). For the purposes of further

situating the teachers' work and my discussion of Whiteness and Discourse, I revisit Bakhtin in

an effort to move from a hidden curriculum of Whiteness to Whiteness as an authoritative

discourse; Bakhtin's (1981) discussion of the authoritative discourse became pivotal in how I

began to understand how the teachers were both enacting and enacted by discourses of

Whiteness.

Recall, in the theoretical framework, that I critique several discussions of Whiteness. In

that critique, I discuss how some extant discussions of Whiteness do not often account for the

potential for paradoxical arrangements to inform one's racialized experiences. I critique CWS for

its focus on individuals' White privilege, and borrow from Keating (1995) and Flynn et al (2009)

to illustrate how this focus has proven, in some ways, to be futile. As such, I ask in that chapter,

just as Whiteness is understood to shape institutions, can Whiteness also be understood to be

shaped *by* institutions? While I have attempted to give attention to both areas, in the teachers'

case studies, I wish, at this point, to draw from Bakhtin to further elucidate what I mean by the

latter component of that question: Can Whiteness also be understood to be shaped *by*

institutions?

During the course of this study, I began to understand particular enactments of Whiteness

as authoritative; as an authoritative Discourse[27] (Bahktin, 1981). For Bakhtin, "The authoritative

word is located in a distanced zone, *organically connected with a past* that is felt to be

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[27] Although Bakhtin does not capitalize the 'd' in discourse, I do here, to call attention to Gee's (2008) distinction
between discourse (utterances) and Discourse: Capital 'D' Discourse is used to signify that identities are "always
and everywhere social and products of social histories" (p. 3); Discourse, in the way that I use it, goes beyond the
spoken word.

hierarchically higher. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a *prior* discourse"

(p. 342, emphasis added). Whiteness, then, when understood as an authoritative Discourse, is

"framed by contexts" (p. 344) and external demands; it "is privileged language that approaches

us from without" (p. 424). As Britzman (1991) aptly explains, "[a]uthoritative discourse signifies

the received and institutionally sanctioned knowledge that demands allegiance to the status quo"

(p. 61). In this investigation, it was not only about how the teachers "enacted" Whiteness; it was

very often about how they were *positioned* to enact Whiteness. In Ms. T's chapter, we see how

she is positioned by the authoritative Discourse(s) surrounding the Holocaust as a racialiazed text

to enact Whiteness; in Mr. Kurt's chapter, we see how his English department's culture of

silence and, in his words, "scared teaching" worked to mute conversations about race. Finally, in

the case of Mr. A, we saw how he was structured, by his school, to treat his students as though

they brought deficits to the schooling experience. As I argued in my investigation of his work,

given the racial makeup of this school's population, in conjunction with the absence of similar

programs in the other schools I visited during this study, I could not help but to consider the

possibility of a racial component underlying the behavior management curriculum. I attribute

this curriculum to the authoritative Discourse of the school which structured the students and

teachers in need of behavioral modification. In these case studies, I have found Bakhtin's

discussion of authoritative Discourse helpful to moving beyond simplistic enactments of

Whiteness which are so often reduced to teachers' defensive, privileged ways of being

(Laughter, 2011; Lowenstein, 2009), and the language they use to "protect" their racialized

privileges (Haviland, 2008; Picower, 2009).

However, this is not to suggest that teachers are agent-less/power-less in the process of

their racial identity constructions; as Foucault (1982) suggests in *The Subject and Power*, "in

order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations" (p. 780; see also Fairclough, 2001). He offers the example of the term "sanity," and argues that, "to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity" (p. 780). In the following section, I offer examples from the teachers' cases to discuss how understanding Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse has helped me to productively consider how to move the discussion of Whiteness beyond White privilege.

Whiteness, deficits, and silence: Moving beyond White Privilege

I do not intend to romanticize Whiteness, or the teachers in this study. They do not romanticize their work. In many ways, they do not practice what they preach (does anyone, always?). Rather, my goal is to call attention to complexity and nuance in an attempt to move the discussion of White teachers' racial identity development and work beyond White privilege. I provide the additional snippets (above) and the discussion which follows with two goals in mind: I wish to re/present the teachers as multiple and shifting in their enactments of Whiteness; to re/present how identity construction is comprised of tension; to represent the teachers as *human*. Secondly, I wish to address what I fear is an inevitable outcome of this treatise. That is, I have become concerned, during this process, that the space of a dissertation was simply not enough with which to fully tell these teachers' stories. How, given space constraints, might I provide a nuanced account of a small group of teachers who (to be sure) have much to learn (don't we all?), but cannot accurately or even fairly be defined as "ignorant/oblivious/defensive" in/of their Whiteness?

To begin, I have found, across teachers, that they sometimes enact a discourse of deficit, which means that sometimes they say problematic things about their students. This looked

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different in Mr. Kurt's context. For example, he sometimes described his White students as "ignorant" of their White privilege; young people who "just don't get it" as a function of their upbringing in a White community. His sentiments were striking—not only because they suggest that his students are "deficit" in some way, but because they are reminiscent of Mr. Kurt's own experiences as a White pre-service teacher in his teacher education courses, as I came to learn during one of our interviews:

> Mr. Kurt: The diversity in our [teacher education] discussions about diversity was not very diverse.
>
> Christina: In what sense?
>
> Mr. Kurt: It seemed to me that it was pretty much, like, "white privilege, white privilege, white privilege."

As a function of his experiences learning about diversity in teacher education, Mr. Kurt explained that he felt "stereotyped" as a White teacher because of the ways by which he was "lectured" (and perhaps "preached at") about his White privilege, an approach which he resented. You may notice that he employed a similar approach with his own students; I do not only think of this as ironic—I think of it as revealing. In other words, I've wondered if Mr. Kurt's words are a symptom—an unintended consequence—of the larger condition of the ways by which White teachers are framed as deficit in their knowledge and willingness to learn about race and racism. White teachers are assumed deficit; they are assumed to come to "the profession with a lifetime of hegemonic reinforcement" (Picower, 2008, p. 211) about race. It is not surprising that he described his White students in much the same way. In this way, the discourse of deficit seemed to function as a prior discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), with which he constructed his students in much the way he believed he was constructed: As stereotypically deficient in their

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Whiteness. I wondered whether his approach may have explained the degree of student resistance he received in his class discussions.

Recall, also, that about midway through the school year, Mr. A took on a deficit way of talking about his students. He began to describe himself as "natural"—someone who had to "fight [his] natural instincts to be what they [the students] needed." Taken in the abstract, he appeared to be another White teacher with deficit views of his racially diverse students. However, I read his words against the backdrop of multiple behavior management systems that his school insisted the students (and teachers) needed. Over time, Mr. A's words did not surprise me; in essence, he learned and began speaking a language that he was virtually required to speak; a language which "signifie[d] the received and institutionally sanctioned knowledge that demand[ed] allegiance to the status quo" (Britzman, 1991, p. 61). I do believe that he did not uptake this language consciously. I do not think Mr. A realized that it was the curricula, in fact, that was not natural. It was confusing and cumbersome for all required to abide by its tenets. Moreover, there were consequences if he were found to be insubordinate. Thus, Mr. A's school and its required curriculum were complicit in his construction of his students.

Finally, recall the case of Ms. T. While I focused on the Holocaust unit in Ms. T's teaching, it wasn't the only unit where she seemed to "avoid" difficult conversations. For example, the issue of racism is prominent in *Of Mice and Men*; Ms. T taught this novel toward the end of the school year. Rather than being explicit about lynching and the novel's use of the "N-word"[28], she described lynching to her student as something that "took place outside of the judicial system" and "when a group of people took the law into their own hands to do this." On the N-word, she explained that "it's in the book *a lot*," and left the conversation there in favor of

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[28] I cannot, and will not, bring myself to spell out, or use this painful word in full. Perhaps this makes me a "bad" White, an avoider of the very issues I seek to critique in this study. In this instance, I will accept that.

reviewing literary devices. During this unit, Ms. T did not "name what hurts" (hooks, 2013) by delving into racism and the issue of those who were responsible for lynching (i.e., Whites), nor did she address the N-word in any substantive way.

You may recall Bobby, from the previous chapter. During this particular class (the one I describe in the previous paragraph), she angrily asked Bobby to leave the room. He had grown agitated by the discussion, it seemed, although, from where I was sitting, I could not identify any behavior, or response, that may have justified his exit (I noticed, also, that he crept back into the class and, with a big smile, answered Ms. T's question about when slavery ended). After this class, Ms. T burst into tears and explained how, when it comes to discipline, she did not have administrative support; that she "hesitated" to do anything in class (by way of discussion) because, if it caused a disturbance, the school Dean "makes teachers justify their decisions"[29] about discipline and circumstances leading up to said disciplinary action.

I am not suggesting that Bobby became agitated specifically over how Ms. T was talking about racism (in effect, she wasn't really talking about it. Even for me, it felt like the elephant in the room that she worked to avoid). I do not have the data to make such a claim. However, I began to wonder if Bobby was keen to her seeming avoidance, and, in his own way, objected to it—particularly given what occurred during the Holocaust unit, which I described in detail in my investigation of her work. And while I did not push Ms. T on these issues (see previous footnote), I got a very real sense that she was careful not to do anything that would inspire an

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[29] This aspect of the text is based on field notes taken in my car after school on this day. Out of respect for Ms. T, I did not push her with "research" questions during this emotional time, nor did I record the conversation. She was in pain and implicitly trusted me to handle her with care, as a former instructor and current friend and colleague. As such, and with the help of one of her school colleagues, we strategized and brainstormed ways to navigate her concerns. I realize I may have missed out on "good data" by not asking difficult—and perhaps important—questions about what I believe was a racialized classroom incident. This need took a backseat to my need for Ms. T to continue to feel safe and comfortable in my presence, and particularly under the circumstances. While participants' safety, as a researcher, is always the priority, I was exceedingly vigilant—and more sensitive—in this case.

intervention with her administration. Almost one full academic year becoming acquainted with this school, I began to wonder about the extent to which the structures, curricula, and discourses of Ms. T's school—the authoritative Discourses—promoted a discourse of silence which a) pitted teachers against students, and/or b) stifled teachers' goals. I do not assume, off the bat, and particularly given this day's events and others like it, that Ms. T defaulted to "evasion" of difficult topics for reasons related to her own personal discomfort with matters of race and racism.

I offer the above examples to illustrate a point I make in this study's theoretical framework: In their own ways, there are aspects of the teachers' work which indeed reinforce caricatures of deficit White teachers. Mr. Kurt critiqued the stereotype of White teachers, a stereotype he internalized in his teacher education program, only to stereotype his own White students in much the same way. Mr. A seemed to pit himself as "natural" against his students, a population he described as needing strict, rigid, perhaps even militant teachers. Finally, Ms. T seems to not only ignore and evade the topic of race, but she excludes the very student with a history of attempting to raise such discussions; a student who, it seemed to me, had much to say on these topics, and who could have enriched classroom discussion in meaningful and memorable ways. This, however, is but one read of the data.

I also offer the above examples to counter the very argument about White teachers that these details seem to buttress. Recall that I invoke Lensmire (2012) at the outset of this chapter; to briefly reiterate, "[Dominant narratives], if they remain the only ones we know, sketch out impossibly narrow and regressive paths for white teachers" (p. vii). So, how to avoid this sketch? In other words, how might I think about the above examples differently?

Understanding Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse has helped me to consider how schools, curriculum, and the prior discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) embedded in each are complicit in teachers' re/production of Whiteness. As I discussed through this study, there seems to be a default approach to White teachers as deficit in extant studies of Whiteness. This deficit, in my view, functions as a prior discourse; "Its authority was already acknowledged in the past" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342), in and by many extant studies of Whiteness. Mr. Kurt invoked this same discourse to talk about his students; students as deficient and unwilling to "get" why racism "matters." Moreover, recall that authoritative discourses represent "institutionally sanctioned knowledge that demands allegiance to the status quo" (Britzman, 1991, p. 61). As such, Mr. Kurt *could have* chosen to let sleeping dogs lie, by not addressing his students' responses and orientations toward race and racism. He could have done so without any real consequences to his work or relationships with students and colleagues. Many argue, as I pointed out in the theoretical framework, that the choice to avoid and ignore problematic responses about, and orientations toward, race and racism is a privilege of Whiteness. But how, exactly, is this a privilege? As Pinar (1991) argues, racism makes people stupid. All people. Mr. Kurt often referred to this same stupidity in our conversations, whether or not he was always able to disrupt it in practice.

Similarly, to ignore how Whiteness was re/produced outside of Mr. A's classroom is to misguidedly construct Mr. A as just another deficient White teacher. It is to ignore the ways by which Mr. A's racial identity and interactions with his students were co-constructed by the prior discourse of various school curricula. It is to ignore the ways by which very specific enactments of Whiteness, as I discussed in his case, were mandated of him. Recall, for Bakhtin, that authoritative discourses are insidious; they demand acknowledgement. I do not view these

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enactments as a "privilege," nor do I view them as embodying ignorance which may emerge from White privilege. In many ways, as I discussed in his case, it seemed that Mr. A was positioned, by the authoritative Discourses of Whiteness embedded in his school, curriculum, and expectations, to adhere a deficit approach and orientation toward his students. Recall that he did not begin the school year in this way.

Taken together, it is with the above examples that I employ a different read in my overall attempt to move beyond a discussion of teachers' enactments of Whiteness and White privilege. I invoke Britzman's (2003) discussion of how cultural myths promote particular conceptions of teachers, in order to make this clear:

> Cultural myths are not so much mechanical recipes as they are authoritative orientations for interpreting. They work to interpellate the world of teachers and students. There may not be a direct correspondence between each myth and a specific pedagogy, but the underlying values that each myth supports summon us to conform to bureaucratic expectations while obscuring the more complicated process of attempting to live these expectations. (p. 235)

Cultural myths, for Britzman, fuel interpretations. In many ways, they are authoritative. Like authoritative discourses, they "summon us to conform to bureaucratic expectations." As I mention above, I do not assume that Ms. T defaulted to "evasion" of difficult topics for reasons related to her own personal discomfort with matters of race and racism. The classroom episodes I explore in her case, and the examples I site above—along with the other teachers—illustrate the authoritative Discourses which complicate—through perceived deficits and silence(s)—the process(es) of enacting Whiteness.

On Dismantling Whiteness: "It was just something that was handed to me"

In the theoretical framework of this study, I explained how this investigation has required, for me, building upon—but perhaps, in some ways, moving away—from a sole focus on some idea that White teachers enact tools and educational discourses of Whiteness at their whims (or perhaps unknowingly), in a seemingly irrefutable defense of White privilege. In keeping with this goal, I offer a few more details about who these teachers are, where they came from, and what they brought to the educational setting in the discussion which follows. Recall that I provide these details in the interest of offering a crystallized (Richardson, 1994; Tracey & Tretheway, 2005) account of the data. Richardson's (1994) discussion of how crystallization is intended to function is poignant; the more I came to know these teachers (as teachers, now, versus the students that they were when we first met), the more I doubted everything I thought I knew; importantly, the more I came to know these teachers, the more I doubted what I was told, in much extant research, to believe about White teachers.

As I have described throughout, the teachers in this study do not hesitate to talk about race (including their own); they do not dismiss it as tangential to teaching. They do not "derail" the topic of Whiteness in our conversations, or "run for cover" (see McIntyre, 1997). As I describe in the individual case studies, their racialized experiences in the schools they attended as youth is the characteristic that each teacher brought to our discussions. In recalling my conversation with Ms. Tessa, she was perhaps the most dramatic in her explanation: "My school was white, white, *white*." As I point out previously, the data reveal that the teachers in my study were, at the very least, aware of the potential limitations that a lack of exposure to, and lack of experience with, racial diversity can have on schooling experiences; they describe their responsibility to prepare their students for participation in a world which, in the words of Ms. T, "is not all white." For Mr. Kurt, this came in the form of teaching students about White privilege;

Mr. A described his responsibility to teach students how to "access the culture of power" and, subsequently to teach his students that "they have the power to change things" (interview); in the case of Ms. T, it meant teaching students to navigate the school system in a way that "makes sense for them" (interview).

On one hand, I am concerned that their words function as fodder; in other words, here are three more stories about the racially isolated communities from which many idealist White teachers come (e.g., Sleeter, 2007). However, I desire to take a different approach in this study. I interpret the teachers' words as revealing a critical awareness of what they bring, as racialized beings, to their classrooms as a *function* of those seemingly isolated experiences. For example, Mr. A astutely described his early experiences in schools as "segregated" (interview); as cut-off from the communities of color who did not live very far from him, but who were often relegated to other area schools where—compared to his high school—funding and resources were fewer; where less attention was paid to whether or not students went on to college, or even finished high school. Mr. A spoke about how his (White) community would be so vigilant and enthusiastic when disaster struck at a distance (as with the tsunami of 2004), but disinterested in what was going on a mere several miles away, in the communities which sat, quite literally, next door. He smartly described how

> My community is very segregated. I went to a mostly white school. There were a couple of other very white schools…It's not because the whole *county* is white. It's because all of the African Americans and minorities live in the same area, and they go to two different high schools, and that's it, pretty much. We all kind of *knew* that things were a little rougher over there, there wasn't as much money, the schools were struggling more, that sort of thing, [that] there was a higher drop-out rate. We knew all of that, but the

general feeling from my community that I got was, that's *their* fault. They can't be helped. [It was a] white thing to do, um, you know, care about the poor foreigners over there [where the Tsunami hit], whereas, where I'm teaching now, we have a 70% free and reduced lunch [his voice trails off]... (interview)

Mr. A was critical of his home community; the language he used to describe his experiences continually impressed me (e.g., "segregated"). He recognized that his home community located the problems of the surrounding schools in the racially diverse student populations who attended those schools and the communities from which they came ("the general feeling from the community that I got was, that's *their* fault. They can't be helped"). He was cognizant and critical of his community's racialized decisions and investments ("[It was a] white thing to do…[to] care about the poor foreigners over there"), and seemed to reject his community's approach by raising his current school as a place deserving of the same degree of care ("whereas, where I'm teaching now, we have a 70% free and reduced lunch").

Mr. A brought these insights to his English teacher education program, and later, his classroom. Similarly, and as I discuss elsewhere in this study, Mr. Kurt and Ms. T were critical of the White communities and schools that comprised and defined their earliest experiences, such that they "missed out on diversity" (Mr. Kurt) until they attended college. Ms. T went so far as to explicitly critique her unearned privileges, indicating that they were not things she had to work for—such as her opportunity to take advantage of higher education which was fully funded by an inheritance her grandfather left for her and his other grandchildren. Instead, in her words, "it was just something that was handed to me." Such words reveal an astute awareness of her positionality and the unearned privileges associated with her upbringing.

According to McIntyre (1997),

When teachers' positionalities, school curricula, an educational practices are left unproblematized and unchallenged, we run the risk of passively transferring unexamined knowledge, thus, reifying and maintaining oppressive structures that ensure the sanctity of the dominant group's power, privilege, and ideology. (p. 117)

I agree with McIntyre, and am confident in my interpretations of how the teachers in this study were critical of their positionalities and also the curriculum with which they were required to work (whether that meant the English curriculum or other forms of curriculum discourses [Yosso, 2002]). All of the teachers commented on and critiqued their constraints in different ways. Mr. A was perhaps the most forceful. I met with him after school one afternoon; on this day, he had attended a meeting where the school Principal particularly adamant about transitioning, as soon as possible, to the curriculum which "covered the district's purchase." In our conversation, Mr. A angrily protested this change:

I'm a teacher, not a script reader. I mean it's [the curriculum] not awful, it's just that my favorite part of teaching is coming up with what I'm going to teach…this [curriculum] is, "here's your warm-up, here's what you should say. Here are your answers, here is how you should read your answers"….the teacher edition has the work sheets, the tests, everything…I just have no interest in doing a prescribed program. I don't think that's what's best for kids. That's not what teaching is. (interview)

Recall that Mr. A is expected, by his administrators, to carry out authoritative Discourses—to read scripts—in specific ways: Full adherence to delivering myriad behavioral management curricula, as well as an expectation that he "teach with fidelity" to what he has described as a prescribed curriculum, and to what I connected to a hidden curriculum of Whiteness in my investigation of his work. It became clear that Mr. A perceived his teaching identity as in direct

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opposition to the identity imposed upon him by his school ("I'm a teacher, not a script reader").

As such, he often found himself negotiating the collision between what his administrators

expected of him, and what he believed "teaching is."

As such, I have witnessed Mr. A's frustrations with various school policies, politics, and

curriculum, all of which he openly critiqued during our discussions; simultaneously, I have

witnessed his frustrations with his students who do not often buy into these same school-based,

authoritative Discourses. I have had conversations with Mr. A wherein he (problematically)

shunned his students' extra-curricular interests (for one example, as with when he said to me

during an interview, "They [his students] all think they're going to be NBA stars"), only to

observe him draw on those very student-interests in his teaching to build rapport with his

students, to generate interest in certain aspects of curriculum, to negotiate with students, and to

re/gain control of his classroom practices.

Mr. Kurt also openly critiqued his curriculum and colleagues' attempts to prescribe his

educational practices. He explained how his English department assigned him to teach the

Mississippi Trial, 1955:

> I just don't understand. It was my second day there [at school], or first day because I got
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> hired a week before school started. And it was the first day I sat down with my
>
> department. And they gave me the directions [and said] "this is the book, and this is what
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> we talk about in the book," to help me out, and I didn't say anything, because I haven't
>
> read the book. And as I was reading it, I was like, "I'm not gonna talk about 'courage'"
>
> [the assigned theme]. Like, what am I doing? So, no, I much would rather talk
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> about…White privilege just seems so much more important. And I kind of like the
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> challenge of them [students] being close-minded, small-town, that's the stereotype. I'm

stereotyping, but the general population of being close-minded, and, you know, white middle class white kids. I like that challenge, kind of, because it's me against them in some situations. (interview)

Mr. Kurt often discussed with incredulousness (and a tad bit of resentment) how his English department attempted to prescribe the direction of the curriculum. The practice of focusing on the "courage" of a White youth in a novel detailing the murder of Emmitt Till, a hate crime said to inspire the Civil Rights Movement, was something Mr. Kurt simply could not wrap his mind around ("I just don't understand"). For him, using literature as a vehicle with which to discuss White privilege and, as we see in my investigation of his work, institutionalized racism, is "much more important" than the race-less thematic focus his department attempted to prescribe. As such, he took surreptitious liberties with the curriculum, by taking advantage of vague curriculum standards, or conducting frequent classroom discussions about race and Whiteness.

In my view, the teachers in this study critique their own Whiteness. Whether it is in the "segregated" communities in which they attended school, the structures in which they taught, or the unearned privileges handed to them individually, the teachers are keen to their racialized privileges. They do not defend them. I realize, though, that even with the amalgam of examples I highlight to reveal where and how the teachers problematize and challenge their positionalities, school curricula, and educational practices, the mere practice of *critiquing* racialized privilege is not quite enough. For all of the teachers' self-awareness, for all of their critiquing, things did not seem to change. The curriculum (often) stayed the same; students did their homework, or did not; students took exams that they either "passed" or "failed"; teachers submitted grades and attended meetings centered on how "great" it would be if "they could get those scores up" (as in Mr. A's school). Many students asked, repeatedly, "Why are we doing this?", without

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experiencing any real revision to the curriculum that substantively addressed their skepticism. Not surprisingly, responses such as "We are studying Shakespeare's life to get a better understanding of why he wrote the way he did" (as had been Ms. T's response to such a question, at one point in the school year) did little to repair students' disinterest.

Even the teachers' myriad attempts to establish relevance between the students and the curriculum didn't seem to change anyone's reality. Sure, Ms. T used Jay-Z's work to teach students about poetry; it didn't change the fact that they were tasked with memorizing poetic devices and accurately identifying "meter" (and really, for what?) as dictated by the required curriculum; it didn't change the fact that Ms. T was required to teach it—instead, her alteration simply made the curriculum more palatable for all those required to engage it (including Ms. T).[30] Mr. A also commented on his efforts navigate the required curriculum in ways that might be "better" for his students:

> I don't think it is fidelity, but I don't think I really care. If that's [the new curriculum] what I have to teach with, I'm gonna try to find ways first of all, that I can stomach it, and second of all, doing that is better for them [students], too, and I think they'll be more engaged and interested. (interview)

You may recall, in his case study, that Mr. A was frustrated with the ways by which the curriculum ignored the structural causes for the racialized experiences discussed in a variety of short stories; that Mr. A imagined navigating a crossroad between the zone of "what matters" to him, his teaching, and his students' learning, and the zone where there are "standards" that he

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[30] Readers may be asking themselves why I've chosen not to highlight this particular unit of study in the data. I have made this choice deliberately—Ms. T's use of Jay-Z, in my view, was more so an example of differentiation. Had the study been about differentiation, it would have made sense to discuss this lesson in detail. And as I express above, I do not wish to contribute to any potential fodder Ms. T's practices and choices may have held for a simplistic "Freedom Writers" narrative.

has "to do, that the school cares about." However, I will never have the opportunity to see whether and how Mr. A was able to "find ways" to "stomach" the newly required curriculum. He became frustrated to the point of leaving the district, and secured a new position, this time as a math teacher, in another part of the state.

In all of this, the authoritative Discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) of Whiteness within which the teachers and students were/are embedded *stayed the same*. It is with trepidation that I borrow a phrase used in several extant studies of Whiteness in education: It was, in the schools in this study, "business as usual" (Sleeter, 2001). To borrow Castagno's (2008) words, it was business as usual because Whiteness remained entrenched, rationalized, operationalized, and legitimated. It is with even more trepidation that I borrow a phrase my father used often, as I was growing up, and continues to use to this day: "Nothing changes if nothing changes." No matter how much the teachers critiqued themselves and the conditions around them, their work did not often move beyond critique. It was business as usual. Nothing changed because nothing changed.

And so, I realize that it is not necessarily enough to critique Whiteness and White privilege, or to critique the systems of Whiteness and White supremacy within which one works. This process—critique, deconstruction—is important, to be sure. However, as Haviland (2008) argues, "recognition is only a first step" (p. 52; see also Picower, 2009). *Recognition is only a first step*…this sentiment inspires a question that I've had, a question which I've allowed, heretofore, to remain dormant: What, exactly, are we asking and expecting of these young people who enter teacher education programs and who, soon thereafter, become first-year-teachers? In some ways, research is beginning to address iterations of this same question. For example, Flynn et al (2009) point out, "A question that remains is what we expect our preservice teachers to do with their knowledge of white privilege and institutional racism, assuming that we are able to

mitigate their guilt without absolving responsibility" (p. 96). In their study, the authors profile

three different classroom scenarios where students are confronted with White privilege and

institutionalized racism in a variety of ways, and determine that "we need to make sure that our

pedagogies and texts do not end up reverting to the personal" (p. 95). While they submit that

McIntosh's (1990) *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* is accessible and "effective because it

personalizes structural inequity" (p. 95), the authors argue that a structural approach to

investigating the historical possessive investment in Whiteness (see also Lipsitz, 1995, from

whom they draw heavily) is needed.

Haviland's (2008) study of critical Whiteness in education, however, argues for

something a bit less tangible. I have referenced her study of White Educational Discourses at

various points throughout this dissertation; surely, there are other (so-called) critical studies of

Whiteness, but hers is representative example of what I mean when I say "a bit less tangible." To

begin, I respect her use of the pronoun "we" to suggest that she, along with her students, was

complicit in the WED she analyzes in her study. Among these discourses, she describes how the

students (as well as herself) evaded, in classroom talk, the power of Whiteness. Avoiding words,

false starts, citing authority, and silence were only a few of the ways by which she said this

occurred (p. 44). In her words,

> Each of these Discourse moves enabled us to shift focus away from the fact that our
>
> Whiteness gave us unearned power and dominance. By carefully avoiding
>
> acknowledgement of the power that Whiteness conferred on us and instead positioning
>
> ourselves as less than powerful, we avoided seeing ourselves as powerful agents with an
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> *obligation to disown our unearned privileges and fight to reform the institutions that*
>
> *conferred such privileges on us*. (p. 44, italics added)

I am befuddled, though, by this last sentiment: the *obligation to disown our unearned privileges and fight to reform the institutions that conferred such privileges on us*. Howard (1999) offers a helpful summary of what unearned White privilege looks like (the following summary of how White privilege is, in some ways, realized in daily life is not exhaustive—I do not believe it is even possible to provide a "complete" list of what it means to experience White privilege):

> Many privileges have come to Whites simply because we are members of the dominant group: the privilege of having our voices heard, of not having to explain or defend our legitimate citizenship or identity, of seeing our images projected in a positive light, of remaining insulated from other people's realities, of being represented in positions of power, and of being able to tell our own stories. These privileges are usually not earned and often not consciously acknowledged. That our privileged dominance often threatens the physical and cultural well-being of other groups is a reality that Whites, for the most part, have chosen to ignore. The fact that we can choose to ignore such realities is perhaps our most insidious privilege. (p. 62).

I do not fail to understand—nor do I disagree—with how White privilege is experienced in a general sense. Indeed, Whites *can* choose to ignore their privileges, but only if they recognize their privileges to begin with. Isn't this failure to recognize part and parcel to the insidiousness of racialized privilege? As Castagno (2008) points out,

> This is, in fact, the brilliance of the way Whiteness operates—just like any other hegemonic ideology and institution, it is most successful when the majority of its adherents are *least aware of it and its power*. (p. 329, italics added)

For many, many Whites, they do not know that they experience privileges that are racialized. As I discuss in the theoretical framework of this study, I was one such White person; quite simply, *I*

didn't know what I didn't know. It is perhaps the most hegemonic kind of "normal"; a reality with which I have struggled, and yes, have felt "guilty" about, upon taking my first "diversity" course as a Masters student at 26 years old. And while recognition might be the first step (Haviland, 2008), how does one, necessarily, *disown* their racialized privileges, particularly the way Howard describes them? As I also point out in the theoretical framework, recognizing that I'll never be pulled over in my car due to the color of my skin does not negate the fact that I will never be pulled over in my car due to the color of my skin. To invoke Scheurich (1993) here again: "[A]ll Whites are socially positioned as Whites and receive social advantages because of this positionality. No individual White gets to be an exception because of his or her antiracism" (p. 9). I am not an exception; the teachers in this study are not an exception.

In theory, I am in agreement with the arguments posited by those I cite above. In practice, I take issue with Haviland's specific suggestions for moving toward progressive, anti-racist education for two reasons: For one, and given the reasons I cite immediately above, a strict focus on White privilege locates the problem(s) of White/ness privilege in teachers themselves. I have argued against this focus by illustrating how various school curricula, structures, and relationships demand that teachers enact Whiteness in a variety of ways, and as such, by arguing that enactments of Whiteness often do not begin and end with teachers themselves; that enacted Whiteness is not always a simple manifestation (or defense) of White privilege, nor does enacted Whiteness begin and end with any one practice or a constellation of practices (e.g., Haviland, 2008).

Following my concern about focusing solely on teachers' White privilege is another that I have: Once White teachers recognize their unearned privileges (given the invisibleness of White privilege, is it even possible to "recognize" them all?) and "obligation" to disown them, they

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should then set out to fight, reform, and even "abolish" (Allen, 1999) the institutions that are set up to benefit Whites unfairly. They are tasked with all of this, in addition to learning to teach and coming into one's own as a new teacher. I am left worried that such suggestions, at best, reinforce the good White teacher/bad White teacher dichotomy, undergirded by the type of essentialized White identity where the only acceptable solution is to become a "race traitor" (Trainor, 2002), or a "White infidel" (Allen, 1999). Trainor (2002), I believe, said it best:

> In the end, if we are to deconstruct, even abolish, whiteness as a political and ideological construct, if we are to be "race traitors" as well as teachers, we may first have to find ways, paradoxically, to embrace discourses that we might have once "preferred not to honor, even with our gaze."(p. 647-648)

Trainor is calling to embrace the paradoxes; the tensions in Whiteness. This is meaningful. It seems to address how clarion calls to disown Whiteness and dismantle/abolish the institutions have created and promulgated a powerful—yet myopic and even utopian—image of the Good White Teacher which ignores how difficult it is to become a teacher, in any context. Trainor echoes Freire's call to "risk an act of love" (p. 648), to recognize that White teachers are "not abstract categories" (p. 648), but people. Her words dismantle what is, at best, an exhausting and daunting take on what it might mean to be a Good White Teacher.

I wish to repeat myself, here, lest my audience has become doubtful: I do not disagree with the need to recognize and ultimately confront White privilege and White supremacy in the interest of anti-racist education, and humanity in a general sense. I am mindful and respectful of the thoughtful anti-racist work Haviland and others have contributed to teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lensmire, 2010; Lensmire, 2012; Marx, 2006; McIntyre, 1997; Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2000; 2001; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). I agree with and

follow hooks (2013) in her contention that, "As long as this nation absolutely refuses to accurately name white supremacy then the roots of racism will remain strong" (p. 13). Numerous scholars have made meaningful contributions, in their own ways, to naming what hurts by putting a much needed spotlight on Whiteness, White privilege, and White teachers.

However, I borrow from Applesies (2006) to explain my conundrum:

[H]ere is where things get a bit sticky…All teachers, most people for that matter, work and live within institutions and structures that are, well, not made and remade in the best interest of everyone. Nor, realistically, do teachers have a whole lot of real agency to make radical change to these institutions. (p. 107)

Applesies' points are not news. But I wonder, often, why the reality she describes is left out of discussions of Whiteness in education, particularly those in which White teachers are tasked with radically changing institutions they are not likely able to radically change. I am not intending to sound defeatist, nor am I endorsing a strictly structural view of how Whiteness is enacted. I am not attempting, with this study, to suggest that White teachers be absolved of recognizing their privileges; I do believe in using and working with recognition toward transformative ends. But I have truly struggled with the reality to which Applesies refers. It has forced me to re/consider my own practices, as a teacher educator, as well as the research project I was to ultimately decide on. In truth, if I had stuck with my original goal of investigating how English teachers taught for social justice in their classrooms, my end product would have only mirrored to the very narratives I was attempting to challenge.

In other words, in many ways, the teachers did their best to teach English for social justice (however they defined the concept in their respective schools); in many more ways, they did not, they could not, or simply, they did not know how to teach toward transformative ends,

particularly given the myriad constraints imposed upon them. And regardless of whether they did or did not do, *nothing really changed*. And it is because of this that I knew I needed to take very seriously a suggestion Trainor (2002) offers to educators invested in critical pedagogies: "We need to be more aware of the rhetorical frames our pedagogies provide for students as they structure [their] identity" (p. 647). I knew I needed to find another way; to at least think about this work differently.

Understanding enactments of Whiteness in more nuanced ways may get at why teacher education's goals for disowning, dismantling, and abolishing systems of Whiteness might seem, at best, lofty. At worst, I suspect that they position our White teachers—even those who dare and desire to do critical work—to fail. What else could it mean when a White teacher fails to dismantle the system? Or, what about the teacher who fails to critique/change/dismantle their curriculum because they are fearful of being "called to the carpet," as with Mr. A? Or the teacher who is critical of grades but who is forced to fail students who consistently refuse to do work they have (both student *and* teacher) deemed meaningless? I do not intend to make light of extant research—but if the end goal is to disown, dismantle, disrupt, etc., "the systems/institutions of Whiteness," it has become hard to hold out hope.

A Closer Look at Silence

More so than any other theme, idea, or practice which ran across the classroom observations, discussions with teachers, and subsequent analyses was the ways by which the teachers navigated the silencing effect of authoritative Discourses. I choose to more deeply explore "silence," here, because of the way by which it always seemed to represent the "end" result. That is, for all of the negotiating with, distancing from, or even attempts to resist authoritative Discourses of Whiteness, I recall my father's helpful phrase: Nothing changed

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because nothing changed. And I argue that nothing changed because, in all cases, silence prevailed. In all three cases, on some level, the authoritative Discourses of the teachers' schools necessitated a discourse of silence about race and Whiteness.

That teachers are silenced (or silence their students) is nothing new. Silence and silencing, as an institutionalized practice, has long been explored in educational settings (Castagno, 2008; Delpit, 1988; Fine, 1987). With an emphasis on urban schools, Fine (1987) describes how

> silencing constitutes a process of institutionalized policies and practices which obscure the very social, economic, and therefore experimental conditions of students' daily lives, and which expel from written, oral, and nonverbal expression substantive and critical "talk" about these conditions….Silencing constitutes the process by which contradictory evidence, ideologies, and experiences find themselves buried, camouflaged, and discredited. (p. 243)

Fine's words are particularly useful in thinking about, for example, how Ms. T ultimately dismissed (perhaps buried and/or discredited) Bobby's knowledge of racial segregation in the United States, and possibly given its location within the category of "undesirable talk" (p. 243); in other words, discussing race is not desirable; in the context of a curricular unit on the Holocaust, perhaps it is not seen as applicable. Race, then, and is evaded and "subverted" (p. 243). Moreover,

> silencing diverts critique away from the economic, social, and educational institutions which organize class, race, and gender hierarchies. But the silencing process bears not only ideological or cosmetic consequence. These very demands permeate classroom life so primitively as to make irrelevant the lived experiences, passions, concerns,

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communities, and biographies of low-income, minority students. In the process the very

voices of students and their communities that public education claims to nurture, shut

down. (p. 244)

The irony to which Fine alludes in this last sentiment is, perhaps, best reflected in Ms. T's

practices. While Ms. T critiqued her school in terms of its failure to "honor" the diversity about

which it claims to be "proud," her practices seemed to take on a similar tone. As you may recall,

Ms. T silenced her students on issues related to race and prejudice explicitly (as with the

example of Bobby) and implicitly. In recalling students' pre-reading activities (discussed in the

previous chapter) which center racial prejudice in their responses, Ms. T chose not to review this

work in class; rather, she assigned it for homework, "collected" it, reviewed it, and redistributed

it for a grade (10 points in total) without discussion (other than the discussion about the work,

which occurred with me during an interview).

Castagno (2008) also explores the relationship between silencing and Whiteness. In her

study of how teachers respond to topics such as diversity and power, she argues that White

educators silence and ignore topics related to race, diversity, and oppression out of discomfort

and a desire to maintain "the established order" (p. 315). In her study, teachers are silent about

race and racism, and demand silence from their students; teachers, she found, "exhibit an

overwhelming aversion to acknowledgements that race exists or matters" (p. 329). Silence, for

Castagno, is a form of colormuteness. She draws from Pollock (2004) to describe how teachers

"delete" (p. 319) (i.e., silence) words pertaining to race. Whether intentional or not, teachers'

silence(s), in the end, "result in the legitimation of Whiteness" (p. 319).

Moreover, Castagno argues that silences and silencing endorse and enforce a hidden

curriculum of Whiteness: "The silences around race entrench and rationalize Whiteness because

they allow most White educators to maintain the illusion that race either doesn't matter or doesn't really exist and to continue schooling in a business as usual fashion" (p. 315). Silencing, then, is a deliberate attempt to evade issues of race. This, the author argues, is significant: "in [teachers'] prescriptions for colormuteness, educators are able to maintain the legitimacy of meritocracy, which serves to protect the status quo and the interests of White people and communities" (p. 329). However un/intentional, it would seem that silence and silencing, in this study, begins and ends with teachers themselves.

To be sure, I respect the above perspectives. They are important and revealing. Fine discusses the process of institutionalized silencing and examines a variety of school-wide discursive practices to reveal "what doesn't get talked about" (p. 243). Castagno concludes that educators are well-intentioned, but, through actively silencing talk about race, they "perpetuate Whiteness within our schools" (p. 329). I do not doubt that the researchers found what they claim to have found. I do, though, have a question: Is it possible that White teachers are silenced in their own work/efforts, and that the silencing of the teachers *contributes* to the silencing of students? Castagno's work would lead me to think so. Toward the conclusion of her study, she reminds readers that:

> I don't mean to imply here that educators engage in colormuteness because they are intentionally legitimating Whiteness. Instead, most of the teachers in this study were either genuinely afraid of explicitly naming and talking about race or did not know how to do so—or both. (p. 329)

The study foregrounds how students are silenced by teachers on matters of race; but what about when teachers are "*genuinely afraid,*" or do not know how to address something? These ideas resonate with me. They seem worthy of exploration. It seems to me that, in the case of being

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"genuinely afraid," teachers are not just silent and commit acts of silenc*ing* (Castagno explains this distinction), but they are also silenc*ed*. My concern in studies such as this is that teachers are instantly classified as willfully ignorant on issues of race because they are fearful "of explicitly naming and talking about race" or, worse yet, needing to learn how to *do* something. In the end, what we have is another group of White teachers who seem blissfully (or willfully) ignorant of their privilege. I have grown uncomfortable with such descriptors—and not because I am White, necessarily. It is because I am an educator, and am loathe to label people who, perhaps, simply have not yet learned what I want them to learn.

Silence, and the act of silencing, is thus associated with White oppression—the oppressive silence through and with which Whiteness is legitimated by teachers in schools. Winans (2005) interrogates common assumptions about silence in her study of White students' talk (or lack thereof) about race and racism; she investigated her White students' desire to remain silent on these issues. She found, for example, that her students sometimes did not know how to talk about the issues, and did not want to appear racist to others—and particularly to people of color. For Winans, "we need to attend to [the motivations of] self-protection/social safety and ethics—as well as the emotions linked to each" (p. 263). She argues for a "local pedagogy in a predominantly white classroom [which] entails taking students' ethical beliefs and goals seriously rather than seeing them as misguided assumptions to be worked through" (p. 263). A "local pedagogy" eschews a static view of Whiteness as strictly steeped in racism, and fits quite well with understandings of Whiteness as fluid, nuanced, evolving, and relational.

Winans' work is encouraging, and inspires a question about my investigation: Can silence mean/do other things, or is it always about protecting/defending/denying (or being oblivious to) White privilege? Lensmire (2010) offers a helpful summation:

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Winans did not imagine her students as a single thing, a single essence, did not assume

that a single desire (innocence or privilege) informed their words or actions. She took the

ethical beliefs and goals of her students seriously but then bent them to the purpose of

helping students explore the limits of their own colorblind stance. (p. 170)

My discussion finds resonance with Winans' approach. Recall the case of Mr. A, where he

operates, daily, under the surveillance of a numeric system which dictated when and how

students should (and should not) talk, and when, how, and for what purposes teachers should

(and frankly, should not) talk. Also, remember the term "teach with fidelity," and what that

meant for his teaching and curriculum? Mr. A expressed concern about how this impacted his

teaching in the presence of his school principal:

If anything it would be funny, because next year [when the new curriculum is instituted

in full] I may actually do my "less good stuff" when he's there because there has to be

fidelity to the program [laughter]. (interview)

Because his school principal planned to surveil the extent to which teachers were teaching with

fidelity to the new curriculum, Mr. A submitted that he will have to teach in ways that, well,

silenced good teaching ("I may actually do my 'less good stuff'). This form of silencing was just

one aspect of a constellation of authoritative Discourses that muted his original goals for

teaching English in a way that empowered his students.

The effect of silence was not merely pedagogical; as I have argued before, the

authoritative Discourses of Whiteness in his school also shaped his interactions with—and later,

perceptions of—his students. Moreover, he seemed largely unaware of this process, nor did he

seem conscious of how his own attempts to resist these Discourses relied on his students'

acquiescence to these same discourses. It made for an unending cycle of struggle which

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produced some combination of teacher vs. student vs. curriculum vs. self. However, I could not seem to reconcile how Mr. A critiqued his institution, on one hand, but also located the source of his frustrations with his students, on the other. Toward the end of the school year, I attempted to reconcile this issue during one of our interviews:

> Christina: So here's what's interesting to me. The last time we talked about this sort of thing, it seemed to me that you…you expressed this issue with, "I don't have the personality that these kids need." So when you said that, I thought maybe you were locating the source of your frustrations with your students. Now the way you talk, it's almost as if you're saying, "It's not the students, it's the structure…."
>
> Mr. A: Yea…and I am…but I don't like doing that, because I prefer to try to just figure out what I have to do, and I can get as mad at the structure as I want, but it's not necessarily going to budge any time soon.
>
> Christina: Do you feel sort of agent-less?
>
> Mr. A: Yes. I know I can try to push and make some things happen. But it's much easier for me to just take it all on myself and have it be my problem that I can find a way to deal with, as opposed to me trying to deal with the structures in place. (interview)

For Mr. A, "the structure" is not going to change, or "budge any time soon." Rather than attempt to make changes to "the structure," he decided to deal with his troubles privately and independently. However, impressed but unsatisfied, I continued to push—more specifically—on how he previously located some of the issues in his students, rather than on the source of the matter:

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Christina: You were talking about how, you kept on referring to them as "these kids." "These kids" need the kind of personality in a teacher that you don't think you have. Do you still feel that way?

Mr. A: As I battle with that…It's just…What these kids need is a different teacher that's supposed to be the rigid drill marshal, because that's not me. (interview)

What is striking, here, is that his students never requested a "drill marshal"—it seemed that the discourses of the school suggested they needed as much. At the end of the year, Mr. A remained largely unaware of how the authoritative Discourses of the school shaped his perspective of what his students "need." I am not sure he was ever given the opportunity to assess those needs for himself. His own capacities, to that end, were silenced by the various curricula—the prior Discourses (Bakhtin, 1981)—in place before he walked through the school doors.

Mr. A's experience, his words, his struggles reminded me of Foucault's (1977) discussion of the panopticon. Within this discussion, Foucault argues that

[p]ower has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up….*There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference.* Consequently, it does not matter who exercises power. (p. 202, italics added)

Granted, Foucault's discussion is about the birth of prison, and the disciplining which occurs within such an institution. However, his discussion is not limited to prison; in his description of how "the body [became an] object and target of power" (p. 136), schools are included in the range of institutions which set out to "[control] and [correct] the operations of the body" (p. 136).

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I relate Foucault's discussion of power to my discussion of authoritative Discourses of Whiteness. That is, I view Whiteness as a panopticon of sorts: So invisible and insidious and ubiquitous was this process that the culprits—the true designers and producers of the school curriculum and discourses—always managed to evade the struggle (in Mr. A's words, "But it's much easier for me to just take it all on myself and have it be my problem"). My time with Mr. A has inspired me to think about exposing Whiteness in a different way—that is, exposing the ways by which teachers are targeted, positioned, controlled, and muted by—"caught up in"—the ways by which they, too, are surveiled and silenced by the structures, the authoritative Discourses, of their schools.

Mr. Kurt, unlike Mr. A, had a little more independence in his school. He was silenced (or encouraged to be silent) in different ways. You may recall how his students accused him of "making something out of nothing" when he attempted to deconstruct racialized representations in Disney films. They resisted and attempted to silence his efforts to get them thinking about their White privilege and institutionalized racism. This wasn't a big deal to Mr. Kurt; he openly talked about how he enjoyed "riling" them up in such conversations. In Mr. Kurt's words, that's why he does it—"they'll never remember 'subjunctive mood,' but they'll remember why they got angry." I have always admired Mr. Kurt's resilience in the face of a fairly hostile student environment—how he impressively surged forward, without any *discernible* fear.

However, in speaking to him later, he revealed how it was almost necessary to teach under the radar (my metaphor), for fear of being reprimanded:

Most of my colleagues, I don't share much of anything with. I don't want to step on any toes. I don't want to get in trouble. If I do mention to someone, "Oh yea, I'm talking about white privilege in my classroom," and then I hear them say, "Uh, you really

shouldn't do that." Then I start thinking, "Wow, should I really not do this?" If my

mentor teacher says, "Wow, don't do that," It's harder for me to then rebel. Once I know

[that he shouldn't talk about it], I can't un-know it. (interview)

Mr. Kurt seemed to enact, for his own purposes, a personal policy in teaching about White

privilege and institutionalized racism in which he acts now and apologizes later ("It's harder for

me to then rebel. Once I know [that I shouldn't talk about it], I can't un-know it"). I take this

concern seriously. It was not the first time he expressed to me his trepidation about turning to his

colleagues for assistance, or even initiating a simple conversation about issues important to him.

To be sure, he forged ahead with the kinds of critical discussions he felt were important in his

classroom—I have witnessed this practice a number of times. But he did not go "public" about

those discussions with his colleagues, for fear of repercussions. He was, in a sense, on his own.

I realize that this example may seem to be an atypical way of exploring "silence," for he

did not seem silent about issues of race with his students. Moreover, I am not attempting to paint

a portrait of Mr. Kurt as heroic. It is to illustrate the silencing impact of his schools' authoritative

Discourses of Whiteness on what is, perhaps, a life expectancy of his critical practices.

Somewhere along the way, Mr. Kurt was taught that he had to remain silent about his critical

goals with his colleagues. This silence was very often manifest in practice (to be sure, Mr. Kurt

did not deconstruct Whiteness and racialized representations on a daily basis with his students.

Over time, I noticed that he did this less and less.). I have always encouraged teacher education

students to seek out like-minded colleagues, and never once considered the question of, What if

there did not happen to be any?

Collegial support can be crucial to a teacher's identity development. For example,

Franzak's (2002) study of what she calls the *Critical Friends Group* encourages collaboration in

schools; for the teachers in her study, such groups provided "a psychological safety net" (p. 277). To the contrary, I have witnessed how being on his own, without a real support network, was deeply stressful for Mr. Kurt. This eventually took its toll. Without the necessary support structure, and under the constant stress of being revealed as a teacher who often deviated from the curriculum and the decisions his colleagues made *about* curriculum, he began to do exactly what was expected of him by the end of the school year. In the end, true silence prevailed. His goals were silenced. As he explained to me about three months before the end of his first year of teaching, he "just need[ed] to get through the year" (interview).

Silence also had an impact on what Ms. T taught and how she taught it. In many ways, she appeared "colorblind" to curriculum discourses and the issues her students raised in class. I was often troubled by how she would insist that racial issues did not play out in her school in any meaningful way; in her words:

There are little things that I'll hear, here and there. Small things, when I hear a kid making a joke about themselves and their own race. If I hear that, I consider it a more positive thing. A lot of things I'll hear kids acknowledge their differences in kind of a good way. I'll hear people make comments sometimes about groups of kids who are very verbal. With my senior classes, the senior class right now has more black female students than any of the other grades. And they are a really, really loud group of girls, who are all really good friends with each other. And they're all really known throughout the school, and they are *loud*. Really loud. And I know students make comments about this specific group of girls. And they're not positive comments. And if there are comments made about them, they were made by black guys in the class. But really, I don't hear too much. I think it might be one of the effects of, people are continuously around people who are

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very different from them. So they got used to it…And didn't feel the need to point out

differences anymore? (interview)

For Ms. T, racial issues did not appear to play out in negative or blatant ways in her classroom

and the school. It seemed that, for racial issues to play out, there needed to be obvious tension or

strife. Furthermore, she seemed to interpret her students' close proximity to diverse populations

to mean that they are simply "used to it [people who are very different from themselves,]" and,

for this reason, the students do not "feel the need to point out the differences anymore."

Meanwhile, during my visits, I was exposed to myriad ways by which the school

operated as a racialized text. I outlined some of these examples in the previous chapter, but those

were not exhaustive. For example, there was also a hallway that both teachers and students

referenced as Little Africa—it happened to be an area of the school where the African American

students were said to congregate before and after class. Earlier in this chapter, I also mention that

Ms. T struggled with difficult topics because she was under the threat of administrative

intervention (however real or imagined) in the event that a discussion took a wrong turn. Perhaps

more so than the other teachers in the study, Ms. T was exceedingly critical of her Whiteness and

her upbringing, but in many ways, left that criticality at the school doors. Her work perplexed me

the most. I did not want to chalk her decisions up to a logistical issue about a lack of time. That

was too easy, and perhaps, a cop out (although I maintain that such logistical issues are real). As

such, I sought to have a conversation with one of her school's assistant principals. As you may

recall from my investigation of her work, I call him Haris.

Haris was a young, candid, affable administrator. He would often enter a teacher's

classroom and "fist-bump" the teacher, only to leave as quickly as he came. I noticed that the

students seemed to adore him—he would fist-bump them in the hallways, but maintain high

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expectations for their behavior. I could tell that he was no push-over. Rather, his friendly demeanor and respect for teachers and students seemed to contribute to the overall morale of the school. Everyone I encountered seemed to speak with respect and admiration toward him. Ms. T was not an exception.

My visits to the school lead to my wanting to learn more about Haris. During our interview, he was terrifically open about his experiences as a Middle Eastern teacher in his previous school. He told me a story about a workshop he was in charge of running, about White privilege. He described how, during this workshop, he explained to his fellow teachers how he and his wife struggled to choose a name for their newborn daughter. They wanted her to have a "strong, traditional Muslim name" (interview), which honored their parents' heritage, and were considering the name Basimah. However, they realized that this decision likely had consequences. In other words, and as he explained, when it came time for her to submit her resume to prospective employers, would the name "Basimah" disadvantage her and reduce her prospects? Or should they decide on a more traditionally American name, such as Katherine? He laughingly recalled how his White colleagues, fellow teachers, stared at him, mouths gaping. Quite simply, they never considered the potential consequences of naming a child—at least not the way Haris described them. He explained how, for his colleagues, it was a different way of thinking about oppression; a way they had not considered before. He explained to me how he and his wife took their chances: Their daughter, Basimah, at the time of our discussion, was four years old and soon to enter the public school system.

Haris' story intrigued me. I was certain that he would have something to say about the "Little Africa" hallway, the school's English curriculum, and a variety of other racialized texts. However, when I asked him to describe how issues of race play out in his school, he paused, for

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a notably long while. With a shrug of his shoulders, a dismissive tone, and a frown which I had not seen earlier in our discussion, he then said "Nope. I don't see anything [racial issues] happening here" (interview). In an attempt to follow up with a specific example, I asked about the Little Africa hallway, and was met with a similarly dismissive response: "Yea, the kids call it that." Admittedly, something in Haris' tone, and even his eyes, precluded me from pushing the issue further.

I can say that, after meeting with Haris, I was significantly less surprised by why and how Ms. T seemed silent on issues related to race in her school (other than her frequent commenting on the racial diversity about which she was proud and found "so interesting"). If Ms. T's administrator, someone with whom she works closely, insists that there are not racial issues that play out in this school, it makes sense that Ms. T would suggest—or not make much of—the same. This is not to excuse Ms. T, or absolve her of any responsibility to recognize the ways by which Whiteness plays out in her school, classroom, and teaching; it is to simply suggest a facet of silence that runs deeper than the surface suggests. It is to also suggest how silence is perhaps institutionalized, and not something that begins and ends in Ms. T.

It might seem strange, and perhaps a little random, that I brought this segment into the discussion. I am reminded, however, of Kirkland's (2010) essay on collecting noise. He argues that discourse analysis alone cannot capture the nuances of meaning; he invokes Gee's discussion of big "D" discourse to conceptualize the silent noises that integrate with the spoken word. As Kirkland explains, silent noises "[surround] communicative dialogue or discourse" (p. 146). Further, silent noises are

> systems of representation, of being and of living, [which] carry within them unseen and
>
> often unheard elements of people, such as the intentions of others, desires and

motivations, various and sometimes competing ideational limits (both constraining and

expanding), and importantly power. (p. 147)

Kirkland ethnographically captures noise to better understand "what literacy truly means to

people" (p. 146). I apply his words to argue how noise—and silence—in the case of the teachers

in this study, is about much more than what they say or do not say. Had I not spoken with Haris,

Ms. T's administrator, I would not have gotten a sense of how foregrounding issues of race

seemed to be discouraged (silenced), in her school. Had I ignored the language of the hallways

down which Mr. A walked, daily, I would have formulated misguided assumptions about the

language he used with/about/against his students. Had Mr. Kurt never mentioned the ways by

which he "smiles and nods" (interview) during English team meetings so as not to be revealed as

a teacher who actively explores with his students a "different angle on racism" (interview), I

would not have gotten a sense of how the stress of working amongst "scared teachers" eventually

silenced his critical practices. These examples represent, in their own ways, and to their own

degrees, the noises embedded in the silences re/produced by authoritative Discourses of

Whiteness. The ways by which, as Kirkland (2010) explains by citing Bakhtin (1981), noise is

"populated—over-populated—with the intention of others" (p. 149).

Some might ask why, in this chapter, I have chosen to raise discussion about what might

appear to be the kind of data that is not doing the teachers any favors. Are these last examples

not contributing to the larger narrative of institutionalized silence (Fine, 1987) and the ways by

which teachers legitimate Whiteness (Castagno, 2008)? I am, however, reminded of Trainor's

(2002) call to embrace tensions: Here again, "[W]e may first have to find ways, paradoxically, to

embrace discourses that we might have once 'preferred not to honor, even with our gaze'" (p.

648). The teachers have presented paradoxical discourses in their words and actions; to be sure,

sometimes I wish they would have said (or done) something differently. However, it is through these tensions that possibilities crystallize.

As I discuss in the theoretical framework, crystallization, as an analytic tool, allowed me to move beyond simplistic conceptions of enacted Whiteness and White privilege, and move to toward more nuanced understandings of the teachers' racialized identities and work. For example, recall Mr. Kurt's mocking tone and description of "scared teaching," in his data chapter. His use of this metaphor seems to encapsulate his struggles with—and critiques of—authoritative Discourses of Whiteness. I interpret this metaphor as a means by which to distance himself from the White teachers who are "too afraid to talk about the real stuff"; it also provides a sense of the epistemological tensions and paradoxes with which Mr. Kurt grappled in a variety of ways. By invoking this metaphor he, in effect, describes what he is not: Put simply, a "scared [White] teacher." Invoking this metaphor is perhaps his way of grasping a sense of agency in a department which mandates enactments of Whiteness in ways that are inconsistent with his goals. To be sure, those "scared teachers" ultimately silenced his efforts. For a new teacher, I'm not sure I would have expected a different outcome. The trick, I think, is to teach teachers how to work with/in/from those silences to produce their own versions of noise.

A "different angle" on Whiteness: From Impossibility to a Discourse of Possibility

According to Winans (2005),

Many scholars addressing whiteness repeat arguments that equate whiteness with a uniform white privilege and construct a generic, middle-class white student [teacher] who needs to learn about his or her own racism, but who is unable or unwilling to do so. (p. 256)

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In this chapter, I am talking back to the repetitive arguments that "equate whiteness with a uniform white privilege." By raising a different view of how silence seems to function in the schools in this study, I ask, is it possible that the same (White) structures which silence students also silence the White teachers who dare to enter schools with a critical awareness and orientation toward race? The cases of Mr. Kurt, Mr. A, and Ms. T might suggest as much. While, more times than not, "legitimating Whiteness" (Castagno, 2008) seems to prevail as a function of silence, the teacher's experiences and words suggest that it is necessary to move beyond simplistic conceptions of enacted Whiteness and White privilege; that it is necessary to embrace the tensions. In what follows, I offer a few more examples of how I believe aspects of the teachers' work and words may be taken together to consider a Discourse of possibility; as such, I borrow Mr. Kurt's words to offer a "different angle" on Whiteness.

As I discuss in this study's theoretical framework, much has been said about the impossibility and limits of Whiteness in teacher education. The list of terms with which I began that discussion encompasses some of those impossibilities and limits. For others, Whiteness imposes upon critical Whites a Catch-22, or "double-bind" (Ellsworth, 1997), damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't process of benefiting from the very institutions they attempt to critique, expose, and dismantle. To this point, and as Marx (2006) argues, "no one gets to be the 'good White' who is no longer affected by racism just because he or she recognizes and rejects it" (p. 6). While these specific tensions are real, I question their utility in matters of educating future teachers.

In terms of working with teachers, I do not dispute what Whiteness seems to make impossible, nor do I deny the following ideas: Whiteness depends on racism. Whiteness is White supremacy, and as such, it wields power. Whiteness is related to (but should not be conflated

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with) White privilege. Whiteness is (very often) invisible. Whiteness is unearned, often unquestioned, and inequitable access to any number of psychic and material resources. As I mention earlier, Mr. Kurt said, and a bit forlornly and with a twinge of resentment in his voice, Whiteness is also a "stereotype." My concern is that, by focusing on the impossibilities of Whiteness and White privilege, the research loses sight of the possibilities White teachers bring to the profession. It forgets to account for how White teachers are positioned in, and become constructed by, larger racialized Discourses and epistemologies. In a strange way, and perhaps most ironically of all, these Discourses and epistemologies of Whiteness both position teachers as dominant while simultaneously expecting little from them by way of meaningful, transformative work (Lowenstein, 2009).

In the previous three chapters, I presented case studies of what it looks like for three different teachers to enact Whiteness in their English classrooms. I have been referring to authoritative Discourses of Whiteness to argue that enactments of Whiteness do not always begin and end with the teachers themselves. I have located the term within the work of Bakhtin (1981) (and others) to describe enacted Whiteness (in some ways) as a "prior discourse" and "framed by contexts" (p. 344). Bakhtin's take on discourse has inspired James Gee's numerous discussions of how Discourse functions. In Gee's (2008) words,

> Most of what a Discourse does with us and most of what we do with a Discourse is
> unconscious, unreflective, and uncritical. Each Discourse protects itself by demanding
> from its adherents performances which act as though its ways of being, thinking, acting,
> talking, writing, reading, and valuing are 'right,' 'natural,' 'obvious,' the way 'good,' and
> 'intelligent' and 'normal' people behave. In this regard, all Discourses are false—*none of*
> *them is, in fact, the first or last word on truth*. (p. 221, italics added)

Enacting Discourse, and being enacted *by* Discourse, for both Bakhtin and Gee, is insidious. We do not often know that it is happening. I argue that authoritative Discourses of Whiteness, in particular, "protect themselves" because, to resist them is to—perhaps—take a risk. Some risks are small, as with when Mr. Kurt attempted to deconstruct racism in Disney films with his students. Surely, his students resisted his efforts at first, but so what? Other risks are much, much larger; for Ms. T, it might mean administrative sanctions, particularly given the classroom scenario I describe above. For Mr. A, authoritative Discourses of Whiteness demanded that he fly under the radar in discreet ways. Authoritative Discourses of Whiteness have provided a generative conceptualization which has allowed me to see the myriad control mechanisms and arrangements (some overt, some hardly detectable) in place in schools which intersect with re/productions of Whiteness. In other words, what if it were not (only) a simple matter of how teachers re/produce Whiteness (e.g., McIntyre, 1997)?

Again, I do not wish to paint the teachers as agent-less (although it seemed to me, in so many ways and so often, that their hands were tied on certain issues). Even authoritative Discourses of Whiteness are not simply, well, authoritative. Mr. Kurt, for example, explained how he used his Whiteness to his advantage in teaching his predominantly White student population:

> I don't have a firm grasp on understanding the *experience* of it [racism], but I feel like I have a good understanding of why it's important to talk about. So, if I'm coming as a white guy, I can be more straight up with my white kids, and say "we have so much privilege." And we do. And I can say "we." And I'm gonna be honest no matter what, because I'm gonna say, "I know that I am a white guy who's benefiting from all this

stuff,' and I'm gonna be honest with my students about it. That [his Whiteness] makes it easier to talk about white privilege. (interview)

According to Thompson (1997), "Linking racial consciousness among white people solely to those who have faced discrimination underestimates the possibility that people can raise their racial consciousness without having experienced oppression themselves" (p. 359). If a White teacher's racial consciousness can only be meaningful if linked to experienced oppression, are we not setting them up to fail? The above quote illustrates that Mr. Kurt has openly admitted that his Whiteness precludes him from truly understanding racism. Put simply, he hasn't had the experience of it. I argue—and it has been argued—that this is true of all Whites. For Mr. Kurt, however, this doesn't stop him. And, why should it? For him, being White made it "easier" to talk with his White students about White privilege. He recognized that his Whiteness has made certain discussions possible. His words are astute and insightful.

Consequently, Mr. Kurt has identified a "different angle" through which to teach about racism. He has located, within the discourse about White privilege, a discourse of possibility. In his words:

I feel like that would be a really cool thing to have for *9th graders*, so when they go read in 10th grade about discrimination, they have that background knowledge, about like, how, Scout and Hirem see the world this way because they're White, and they have this white privilege, and all this kind of stuff. I thought that would be kind of cool. So I think there are spaces everywhere, if you look hard enough. But that's English. I think that's the advantage of [being] an English teacher. (interview)

Approaching literature through the lens of White privilege has provided Mr. Kurt and his students a means by which to approach racism in literature from a different angle. As you may

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recall from his chapter, it is also a way by which to mediate against students who have "heard," "a million times," that racism is wrong. For Mr. Kurt, "there are spaces everywhere, if you look hard enough."

I am reminded of the case of Mr. A—remember how a variety of school discourses sought to tightly control teaching and learning in his context? As I illustrated in my investigation of his work, Mr. A was required to teach ELA curriculum through a behavior modification framework. The framework embodied deficit assumptions about students; the framework, by sheer virtue of its existence, suggested that teachers were also incapable of engaging their students; that both teachers and students required this intervention if the school was to run smoothly. As such, everyone's behavior was a target of modification. Mr. A's English team (in his case, all of the English teachers in the school, across grades 6-8, and all of whom were veteran, White, female teachers) agreed that they would dutifully abide by the program's tenets in the interest of "consistency for students" (interview). For these reasons, Mr. A found subtle ways to skirt the program. In the following exchange, Mr. A discussed how he attempts to reclaim a sense of agency in the face of this mandated curriculum:

> Mr. A: I think I'm skimping. I think I'm supposed to hang one up [CHAMPS posters] for testing, and pair work, and there's another one...Bell-work, or something, warm up work. But I decided that bell-work, for me, would be the same thing as independent, and I decided that pair work would be the same thing as group [he starts laughing] so I didn't have to print as much stuff off. And administration hasn't said anything yet, but technically I'm supposed to have one of those huge ones up for every single different type of activity, and like, before we do the activity, point the kids to it: [In a mocking, patronizing tone] "*Remember*, we're doing a *group* activity, therefore you should be at a

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level one. If you want *help*, you should raise your *hand*, if you want to do *this*, you

should…[his voice trails off]

Christina: Do you feel like this curriculum limits you in any way?

Mr. A: No, because I ignore it most of the time.

This example of negotiation and resistance may seem small; a non-example, perhaps. However, as Foucault (1982) argues, "analyzing power…consists of analyzing relations through the antagonism of strategies" (p. 780). Mr. A's own resistance to these programs (even as he enacted them) exists in his choice to limit the number of CHAMPS and P.R.I.D.E. posters in his classroom. It was a small way by which he attempted to dissociate from the authoritative Discourses of Whiteness in a space constructed on a foundation of deficit orientations toward the racially diverse students in this school. Mr. A's words and mocking tone suggested that the policies to which he is required to subject his students is patronizing and perhaps even insulting to their intelligence ("*Remember*, we're doing a *group* activity, therefore you should be at a level one. If you want *help*, you should raise your *hand*").

As such, within those constraints, Mr. A also looked for spaces to reclaim some control. During an interview, he explained to me how:

I guess I just kind of think about what matters…and I feel like I can discuss some of that, and get them thinking about some of that while I teach the standards that I have to teach, that the school cares about. You know, I'm gonna teach them how to write a paragraph, sure, but I might as well have them write a paragraph about cultural capital, or the media, instead of them just, teaching them to write a paragraph on their Christmas vacation. They're both [about] writing a paragraph, but one involves thinking, and one doesn't. (interview)

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Like Mr. Kurt, Mr. A has located spaces through which to "think about what matters," even as he has to do the things that, well, perhaps do not seem to matter as much ("while I teach the standards that I have to teach, that the school cares about"). For Mr. A, what he cared about was distinct from what "the school cares about." Also striking about Mr. A's words is his assumption about what students are capable of; that is, his students are fully capable of "writ[ing] a paragraph about cultural capital, or the media[.]" I raise this point because, sometimes, he did not hold out hope for his students. The way by which he seemed to oscillate, as a teacher, reminds me of how shifting and multiple Whiteness is, in its enactments. The White teacher who employs the demand "We're at a zero" is the same White teacher who demands that his students think and write about cultural capital; he is the same teacher who "skimps" on hanging up posters which suggest that teachers and students are in need of a peculiar language of control, in the hopes that he doesn't get caught by his administration who continually demand that teachers justify any number of district purchases, no matter how "purposeless" (in Mr. A's word).

In this same conversation, Mr. A also revealed an interest in starting off the following school year "with a unit on the education system" to discuss "why things are the way they are." Had I only revealed the segment of discourse in which he seemed to pit himself (as natural) against his students, I would not have captured—or been able to illustrate—this shifting dynamic. I find Mr. A's words nothing short of revealing, even if only subtly. His words are a far cry from the White teacher who leaves his positionality and practices unquestioned.

My conception of Whiteness and how it is enacted in schools builds upon the work of those whom I discuss throughout this study. However, I attempt to extend the conversation by explaining how Whiteness is not strictly, or simply, an expression of (deep, unchecked) racism (Winans, 2005). I borrow from Ellsworth (1997) to explain Whiteness as yes, an "identity," but

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also a complex "social relation" (p. 260). I borrow from Ellsworth to consider (versus "define") Whiteness as contingent, "multiple[,] and shifting" (p. 261) in its enactments. For Ellsworth,

> What whiteness can and will mean, how it can and will be performed, and with what consequences to relations of power and dynamics of social interrelation—cannot be specified before any particular performance, or projected to other times and places. (p. 261)

As I have illustrated in the previous chapters, how Whiteness is ultimately enacted, then, is contingent upon space and time; upon relations of power and dynamics of social interrelation. Taken together, my investigation of the teachers' work reveals how multiple and shifting Whiteness is; it also reveals how different enactments of Whiteness look across contexts. In this way, and for these reasons, I am eschewing an approach to Whiteness as a universally applied construct; I eschew the idea that Whiteness is Whiteness is Whiteness (Ellsworth, 1997).

But even still, I am left a bit unsatisfied with this approach. Is Whiteness *always* enacted? Most scholarship in this area would suggest as much. But, can I stop at/with enacted Whiteness? Or, are there other/more possibilities embedded in these enactments? For instance, is Whiteness ever negotiated? How and why? Is it ever incentivized? How and why? Is it ever resisted and/or distanced, and especially, how and why? Can these other questions, these other possibilities, yield insights into how teachers enact Whiteness? The case studies I present here suggest as much.

As Giroux (1997) has argued, "while the debate within identity politics has made important theoretical gains in rewriting what it means to be black, it has not questioned the complexity of "whiteness" with the same dialectical attentiveness" (p. 294-295). It is with and through the above discussion and subsequent questions that I argue for a framework of

Whiteness which also includes a Discourse of possibility. It is thus in the spirit of hope and transformation that I circle back to the beginning: I am moved by hope for and responsible action toward White teachers to, yes, understand what they make of school, but to also understand what school makes of them. In the final section which follows, I revisit the case of Ms. T; in this next vignette, I offer an example of how, in all of the struggles, contradictions, and silences, there is a glimmer of possibility. While I foreground the work of Ms. T in what follows, I wish to remind readers that my arguments also apply to the words and work of the other teachers; that what I have learned from Mr. Kurt, Mr. A, and Ms. T should be taken together as I attempt to crystallize a Discourse of possibility in discussions of Whiteness.

As I mention in Ms. T's case study, I fear that I have done nothing more than (possibly) contribute to another story about a White female teacher who is, say, ignorant of her racialized self. To some extent, this concern applies to each of the teachers I discussed in this study. In the above example, Ms. T seemed to foreclose on opportunities to discuss race and racial issues in class. As you may recall from her chapter, she all but outright dismissed Bobby's input in favor of the "right" (and seemingly White) perspective (e.g., those of Andy's and Katy's). On the surface, she seemed wholly unaware of how she says one thing (during our discussions) but, in practice, does another. She critiqued the curriculum, but did nothing about said curriculum. The opportunities she provided for discussion about prejudice (for one example) were reduced to homework to be turned in the following day for a grade. This occurred repeatedly throughout the year, and not just in relation to the Holocaust curriculum.

In truth, my time observing Ms. T at Freedom High School left me with significantly more confounding questions than clear answers. She was anything but silent with me on issues of Whiteness, race, and racism, whether as a student or as a novice teacher. As such, I found myself

asking during the analysis phase of this study, Why was Ms. T so vocal in the safety of our discussions, and yet so "silent" and seemingly evasive on those same issues in practice?

I argued that Ms. T—like the other teachers in this study—was *already* positioned to privilege Whiteness in certain ways, using the Holocaust curriculum as one example of this. She was tasked with curriculum requirements and department expectations for teaching curriculum in particular ways, and ways that are consistent with—if not identical to—what her English teacher colleagues were teaching/doing with the same curriculum. I have witnessed other teachers disseminate curriculum materials to Ms. T; I have accompanied Ms. T on walks to the faculty room where she copied those materials for classroom use later that week. In many ways, this was the reality across the teachers.

Ms. T did not often question the materials publicly (that is, outside of conversations with me). Furthermore, in the middle of the spring semester of this school year, Ms. T learned of the distinct possibility (in talking with her school's Assistant Principal) that her position may be cut due to budgeting decisions, and as such, she would quite possibly be out of a job the following year. While this was the most harrowing of potentialities across the teachers, there were always degrees of concern for their respective statuses in their schools. For Mr. Kurt, I discussed this in terms of how he described his silence in department meetings; in Mr. A's case, the sanctions were punitive, as I learned during my attendance at his professional development meetings. These issues are real; not only do they potentially represent structures of schooling which intersect with re/productions of Whiteness in the teachers' practices, but they represent some of the very real causes for how and why teachers might "toe the line" (Mr. Kurt, interview) with curriculum and expectations.

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To be sure, Ms. T—as with the others in this study—certainly had a degree of agency. She constructed aspects of the curriculum (as with all of the anticipatory materials she uses to introduce *Night*). Some might say she chose not to take up important issues (e.g. racial segregation) when the opportunity presented itself. I argue that she did not necessarily recognize the opportunities. I argue, also, that her failure to recognize had dire consequences. When she ultimately dismissed Bobby's attempt to draw connections, while honoring those of Andy, the White student with the seemingly "correct" (or sought after) answer, she created distance between herself and her students of color, and between her students of color and the curriculum. This can be seen in their overall silence and body language throughout the discussion (e.g., especially the eye-rolling). I do not believe that the classroom discourse I discuss in her chapter represented an outright attempt to evade discussions about racial segregation.

I ask, above, the question of why Ms. T was so vocal in the safety of our discussions, and yet so "silent" and seemingly evasive on those same issues in practice. Surely, the answer may seem obvious. It's easy to talk the talk. Walking the walk is another story. Moreover, a story about a teacher who says one thing and does another is absolutely nothing new, and not a difficult story to tell. Of the three data chapters comprising this study, Ms. T's work has confounded me the most. In several ways, of the teachers in my study, she was the "most" critical of her Whiteness, and perhaps the most reflective of how her Whiteness impacted her teaching.

I do not intend to suggest that I employed a "measure" for such things. That would be a ridiculous assertion. Nor is it my wish to compare the teachers to each other, necessarily. They face their own set of struggles in their own ways; as Bakhtin (1981) reminds readers, authoritative discourses are framed by contexts. In this study, I have told the stories of three

different teachers, in three different contexts. To stop at comparisons, in my view, would be a disservice to their work. I borrow from Lensmire (2012) to remind readers that this study is not intended to be a story of similarities. However, I did notice that, when compared to my discussions with the other teachers, Ms. T required the least "prodding" on issues related to her own Whiteness. Moreover, she deliberately inserted herself in settings and situations which virtually guaranteed a more expansive participation in the world around her (such as consciously seeking a diverse community in which to live, and a diverse school in which to work). My relationship with Ms. T before, during, and after this study has provided me with profound insights into how she thought about herself as a racialized being.

At the same time—and unlike the other teachers—she seemed least resistant to the traditional curriculum, even as she critiqued it; she was least inclined to alter the curriculum in ways she deemed appropriate, and as such, she appeared to be the most loyal to departmental expectations (this stood in stark contrast to the other teachers in this study). It also seemed that she struggled the most with her image—underlying her day-to-day life at Freedom High School was the desire to appear competent and meet expectations. To this end, the responsibilities to which she was assigned seemed excessive; as advisor to both the school newspaper and the yearbook, Ms. T often stayed at school until 10pm. I often wondered how she fared (beyond what she would smilingly brush off in conversation), in terms of her physical health, given the demands placed on her. This is certainly not unique to Ms. T; teachers, and new teachers in particular, desire to prove themselves to their (often) veteran colleagues and administrators. They over extend themselves by taking on any number of extra-curricular activities.

I note above that, underlying Ms. T's day to day life at Freedom High School—as with Mr. Kurt and Mr. A—was the desire to appear competent. This pressure was very real. She often

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talked about "having to cut whole-class] conversations short," or having to "skip over" meaningful discussions altogether.

> I would like to have more class discussions. The main thing I feel like I miss out on is getting to hear their [students'] thoughts. I give them an assignment where they write it down at home, and then they turn it in, and then I look at it a few days later. But I feel like I have to shorten up the amount of class discussion we have, because I have to teach certain things and move on to the next unit, but I think it would be very helpful for students to hear from their peers. [This] is one of my main goals in teaching *English.* So I consider one of the best ways for them to [learn] is for them to speak their thoughts and have their peers hear them and respond to them and stuff. And I think that's something I have to skip a lot and that makes me sad. (interview)

Ms. T explained how she has to forego on one of her main goals (class discussion) in order to complete the curriculum in ways expected of her. This explained how, time and time again, I would observe how she breezed through curriculum, in favor of covering facts and details, and at the expense of discussing important topics. She acknowledged how time constraints (teaching as much content as possible within a "12-week span of time" on a trimester schedule) "have had a negative impact" on her teaching, as well as her students. In part, this is why she assigned the open-ended, thought-provoking topics (as with the Prejudice Survey I discuss previously) for homework.

However, also underlying Ms. T's day to day life is also the need to honor her students' privacy; she does not assume that they would be willing and able to have whole-class discussions about difficult topics. During one interview, she discusses how a literature unit on *Speak*

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(Anderson, 1999)[31] "deserve[d] a lot of discussion" that she did not have time to allow for; as such, she assigned students' written reactions to the novel for homework. She explained:

> Only I get to see them [their written responses], their peers don't. And I know a lot of it [their responses]…they don't want to share with their peers, because it is a very touchy subject in a lot of areas. Through the journals, I found out that one of my students had almost the exact same experience as the character in the novel. I don't think that she would have shared that with her peers in class. I found out about it through the journal…. But because I'm limited on how much time we have to talk about it [issues present in novels], it doesn't happen that much. You know, they really only got their own perspective of the novel, and they didn't get to hear other perspectives of it, enough. (interview)

Speak was the very first novel Ms. T taught as a first-year teacher. It was through this experience that she learned that students may not be willing to have open discussions about difficult topics (such as sexual assault). One student, by way of journal writing, entrusted Ms. T with the knowledge of an experience she had with sexual assault—an experience akin to the "character in the novel." For Ms. T, assigning written reactions to content (versus requiring whole-class discussion) was, to be sure, a way by which to cope with the time constraints and expectations imposed upon her by a trimester schedule and her English department (she is the only teacher in this study with this kind of schedule). However, it served a double purpose: It provided an outlet for students who may not be comfortable talking about difficult topics with their peers. In the

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[31] The novel *Speak* is young adult novel which tells a difficult story about a young girl's rape and recovery. It is critically acclaimed and taught in high schools across the country. Due to its controversial content, it also made the American Library Association's *Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books: 2000-2009*.

end, however, she noted that there was a downside, in that the students did not get "enough" of each others' perspectives on a difficult topic.

I interpret structural conditions—as with the constraints of a 12-week schedule where a teacher is expected to teach 4-6 texts (including lengthy Shakespearean plays)—as a very real silencer of critical issues. However, it also presented an opportunity Ms. T seized upon privately with students. I do not interpret them (aspects of the school schedule) as excuses to avoid difficult topics. For example, I was present one day in particular during the Holocaust unit when Ms. T privately confronted a White student about his racist views toward people of color. He had written, on the Prejudice Survey, that he believed people of color had a particular "place" in society, among other upsetting and inappropriate perspectives. Before the class began, Ms. T quietly engaged this student in a discussion about his stated views; sitting four feet from them, I could not hear this discussion. This meant to me that she was deliberately careful in her tone and volume. When I asked her about the interaction later that day, she explained that the student felt justified in his views about people of color, insomuch as he was often teased about his red hair color. At the end of their discussion, she asked him to think very deeply about his stereotypes, as well as his comparisons.

Ms. T (rightfully) did not raise the issue with the class. To do so, perhaps, would have had unfortunate consequences. Maybe several students would have turned on him, or, perhaps just as bad, agreed with his perspective. Perhaps Ms. T would have lost credibility with this student, a noteworthy consequence, insofar as she had built the sort of rapport which allowed for the conversation to take place to begin with. Haviland (2008) argues that silence allows for dominant perspectives to remain unchallenged. I do not disagree. She also argues that "paying attention to behaviors that 'speak' during silence is an important way to recognize what silence

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may mean" (p. 47). Because Haviland references one particular student's "silence" in a group discussion, I apply her sentiments here. Ms. T's decision to privately engage the student with his responses on his Prejudice Survey was a silence that "spoke"—it spoke to what I argue was astute decision making, even if it meant that the rest of the class was not afforded the opportunity to engage a discussion about race and racism. Sometimes these are the difficult decisions teachers have to make.

I am not suggesting that Ms. T moved mountains by speaking to a student about his racist views for two minutes before class was to begin; such an assertion would be laughable. The same goes for Mr. Kurt—to what extent did his students actually internalize the class discussions about White privilege and institutionalized racism in critical ways? And to be sure, while Mr. A critiqued his de-raced curriculum, it was there to stay. Not only were the English teachers in his school tasked with justifying the "district purchase" by teaching with it "to 80% fidelity," but they would also be "called to the carpet if the curriculum [did not] pan out."

In Ms. T's case, it is likely that the student remained unchanged in his seemingly racist views (but really, who knows? The other possibility is that he has a deep respect and trust for Ms. T, and perhaps heeded her advice about thinking deeply about his stereotypes. I will not claim to know either way). I am arguing, however, that she was anything but evasive—or silent—in her efforts. She located a problematic student response and confronted it head-on; in so doing, she dismantled the response; she did not dismantle the student. I am not suggesting that all teachers, or most teachers, or even many teachers would operate in this way. Perhaps many *would* be silent and evasive. But because Ms. T was not, I have trouble lumping her into current studies of Whiteness which talk about White teachers as though they are all branches of the same tree.

This is also to say that Ms. T has found ways to make curricular constraints work in her favor. They account for why Ms. T was anything but silent with me on issues of Whiteness, race, and racism, and yet so "silent" on those same issues in practice—an interpretation which, in many ways, now seems misguided. All of the teachers in my study experienced the silencing of structural conditions to some degree. There is likely very little a new teacher would be willing to do—or even say—about such constraints to those in charge, or to those more experienced. In such instances, they find ways to fly under the radar. For Ms. T, this has meant killing two birds with one stone by assigning homework about important topics and conducting private conversations in the face of time constraints; in so doing, she also did not assume that students from all walks of life were necessarily willing to publicly bare their souls to their peers, or their teachers—an astute observation which she picked up on at the outset of her first year of teaching. I plan to allow her thoughtful approach to inform my own practices, as a teacher educator.

Conclusion

This chapter was intended to offer a discussion which moves teachers' racial identities and work beyond simplistic conceptions of White privilege. My goal was to keep with a more expansive view of Whiteness informed by recent critical studies of Whiteness; in all of this, my goal was to represent the teachers as human. I attempted to move the discussion from the hidden curriculum of Whiteness (something seemingly so hopeless and intractable) toward Whiteness as an authoritative Discourse, by offering alternatives to discussions about deficits and silence. In this chapter, I considered Laughter's argument for "the need to rethink ways in which [teachers] embod[y] and [enact] Whiteness" (p. 44), with the intent to show how a teacher's Whiteness might be shaped *by* institutions. However, my intent was to also show how teachers, in some ways, resist those Discourses—how they attempt to "dissociate these relations" (Foucault, 1982).

In the case studies and the discussion which informed this dissertation, my hope was, ultimately, to show how yes, Whiteness is steeped in double-binds (Ellsworth, 1997) of impossibility, but, in small ways, imbued with possibility. I close this chapter and borrow from Mr. Kurt's astute observation: There are spaces everywhere, if you look hard enough.

CHAPTER 7: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING

In the spring of 2013, I attended a talk given by renowned education researcher Lisa Delpit. During this talk, Delpit deferred to extant research, as well as her own personal experiences as an educator and researcher, to argue that "the achievement gap should not be considered a gap between White and Black students. It should be considered as the gap between Black and White children's mediocre performance, and the possibility of what they could do if they were in a different environment" (lecture, 2013). In framing her argument, Delpit offered poignant and memorable critiques of the American education system, such as:

- American schools have the tendency to teach Black children *less*, teach *down*, and teach for remediation.

- It is convenient to choose poverty for reasons of poor performance.

- Blaming poverty works out for school systems because then you don't have to change your lesson plans.

- True culture supports its people; it does not destroy them.

- When teachers are not teaching, the children are doing worksheets, doing seatwork, [and] answering questions. There is little interaction except for discipline. When teachers are not teaching, neither will bother the other if everyone stays quiet.

- Black children learn from—but more so *for*—a teacher; if they feel that relationship, they will perform.

- If you do not have a challenging curriculum, they [Black children] will believe that you do not think they're smart.

To drive home her argument, and particularly the last bulleted point, Delpit offered the example of a 7th grade writing assignment in a predominantly White middle school in California,

and juxtaposed that assignment with the type of writing assessments typically offered in

predominantly African American schools. These assignments, as she discussed in her lecture,

were as follows (see Figure 4):

Figure 4
Writing Assignments

Grade 7 Writing Assignment (predominantly White school)	Grade 7 Writing Assignment (predominantly Black school)
Essay on Anne Frank: Your essay will consist of an opening paragraph which introduces the title, author, and general background of the novel. - Your thesis will state specifically what Anne's overall personality is, and what general psychological and intellectual changes she exhibits over the course of the book. - You might organize your essay by grouping psychological and intellectual changes, or you might choose 3 or 4 characteristics (and offer some explanation of this).	Essay topics: - My best friend - A chore I hate - A car I want - My heartthrob

This figure represents the disparate writing assignments Delpit (2013) found in her research on students' academic achievement.

Furthermore, Delpit's audience, it seemed, consisted of two types: Those in attendance

presumably for class credit, namely the sea of White preservice teachers who occupied the entire

right-hand side of the room, and those in attendance of their own volition (this type of audience

seemed much more racially diverse). I offer this detail because I do wonder what the preservice

teachers thought; on one hand, Delpit's talk was about the education of Black children, and how

"one reason for the lack of African American success in schools is that many low-income

African American students are simply not being taught" (lecture). However, because her talk was

about Black children, it is also about their White teachers; that is, you cannot have Black

children who are not being taught without the White teachers who are not teaching them. Indeed, "*[W]hite* does not exist apart from *black*" (Pinar, 1991, p. 13). To invoke more of Delpit's argument, everyone is effected by the smog of racism (see also Carter Andrews and Tuitt, 2012). Did the preservice teachers see themselves reflected in this discussion? In what ways? Did it fall on deaf ears, or did they reflect deeply on their work with children, as a function of this talk? Or, did the talk somehow reinforce the well-worn caricature of the Ignorant White Teacher?

At the time of this talk, I was finishing up data collection at all four of my research sites. All sites were complex and perplexing in their own ways. I saw aspects of each school, and each teacher, represented in Delpit's critique, and not in ways that gave me hope. At the end of her lecture, she invited questions. I am always nervous (of the perspiring/shaking variety) in such situations, as I had a question to ask this renowned scholar, not only on behalf of the teachers in this study, but on behalf of the preservice teachers in that room who may find themselves in environments where they are not given any say, not only about the texts they teach, but how to teach them; the teachers who enter environments with hope for their students, and hope for their own work, but who may ultimately unlearn how to have hope for anyone, or anything, in the school setting; teachers who enter environments where they are taught that "teaching" and hope are treated as mutually exclusive.

Delpit's lecture reminded me of a discussion I had with Mr. Antoloni, about text choice. I highlight some of this discussion in my investigation of his work, but it holds relevance, here; its reiteration is warranted. Our discussion occurred several months before Delpit's talk; as you may recall, he was tasked with assigning his students to read a play entitled, *Sorry, Wrong Number*. I observed the lesson during which he assigned this play to his students, a play where a seemingly paranoid woman continuously called a telephone operator because she felt her safety was at risk

as she sat home alone one night in her apartment. For an assessment, students were required to

re-write the ending to the play (the original ending makes clear that the woman was not

"paranoid," as the operator had assumed). Having read the play with his class, I questioned his

"choice" to use it, in terms of what his teaching and learning goals were. He explained that "The

play is not that deep, but it is a 'Common Core Exemplar,' so it must be 'best' [he uses air

quotations to indicate that he does not agree with this text's designation as an "exemplar"]. As

you may recall from my investigation of his work, the following exchange took place:

> Christina: Do you think it was too easy for your students? When you say "not all that
>
> deep"…
>
> Mr. Antolini: I mean, in that way, I think so? Um, it's an ok way to give them a little
>
> introduction to reading a play, and how that works and what it is, they like it for the most
>
> part and seem to enjoy it. In [that case] it's good…As an English major, I can BS and
>
> drag some things out of there if I need to. [*Sorry, Wrong Number*], as far as I can see, is
>
> not written with much purpose other than, "Oh, I have a good idea for a one-act suspense
>
> play, so I'm gonna write this and it will be fun." It's an entertainment piece and that's
>
> kind of it.

It was this exchange with Mr. Antolini, among many more, that inspired my desire to ask Delpit

to help her audience better think about these kinds of school dynamics: Where teachers are

required to "choose" from a sanctioned and de/limiting curriculum which, at times, does not

seem to serve much purpose beyond having (for example) "a good idea for a one-act suspense

play."

Moreover, in asking Delpit my question, I was anxious about the possibility of coming

across as just another defensive, seemingly unreachable (and perhaps un*teach*able) White

teacher. But, my desire to ask my question trumped the risk of putting Lisa Delpit, and others, under a mistaken impression; my desire to learn (and teach) trumped the risk of embarrassing myself. Having little to no time to think about how best to structure my question, my hand shot up, and before I knew it, there was a microphone inches from my (increasingly dry) mouth. In what follows, I offer my best recollection of my brief, public exchange with Lisa Delpit. The following paraphrase relies, also, on notes taken during this talk:

> Christina: In many ways, new and veteran teachers alike are increasingly expected to teach a prescribed curriculum, with little choice as to what that curriculum includes and how that curriculum is delivered. What advice can you offer teachers in that position?
>
> Delpit: They have got to learn how to choose appropriate texts.
>
> Delpit's response is consistent with one of the main questions and themes around which

her argument was based: "Are we making connections between young peoples' lives and curricular content?" She closed her lecture with the following takeaway: "The object is not to lower standards or to teach only those things that interest students, but to find students' interests and connect them to the academics you need to teach." Hence, choosing culturally appropriate and challenging texts may begin to address the issue of educating Black children, a population historically—and currently—failed by the education system. For Mr. Antolini, *Sorry, Wrong Number* peaked students' interests: "they like it for the most part and seem to enjoy it." However, it was a district sanctioned Prentice Hall text which, in Mr. Antolini's view, did not seem to go beyond entertainment value. It is only one of many such texts that Mr. Antolini is required to use in his classroom. Furthermore, it is a text chosen in collaboration with the other 8th grade English teachers (as all teachers are expected to teach the same texts in much the same ways and, for the most part, at the same time), and again, meets the Common Core's notion of an

"exemplar." It is from a list of exemplars that they work together to "choose" the texts with which their students will engage.

The anecdote with which I open this discussion of implications for research and teaching is not intended to argue against Delpit, necessarily. To be sure, her work has shaped and informed my approach to teaching and education research, and continues to do so. However, after our brief exchange, I retreated to my seat disappointed. It was not that I expected Delpit to offer "strategies"; looking back, I think I was hoping for a more complex treatment of the White teachers who "have got to learn how to choose appropriate texts," but am also cognizant of the time constraints within which she responded to my question. While I am not arguing her response, per se, many teachers are entering contexts and classrooms where teacher "choice" oftentimes comes down to "choosing" between a Prentice Hall or Scholastic textbook, "options" which are pre-determined by principals and supervisors with test scores (and not much else) in mind. She has addressed this in her own work (e.g., Delpit, 2003). As I discuss in the case of Mr. A, I was in attendance at several English Language Arts team meetings during my time as a researcher at Pryde Middle School. During one meeting in particular, the team was working together to discuss how they were going to implement their English curriculum the following year. The school principal was in attendance at this meeting, and set the meeting's objective by saying, "We have to go with some purchase from these people [the district], and we have to figure out which one it will be." The English teachers' choices were thus reduced to "[figuring out] some purchase from these people." In other words, the teachers in this particular department are not given a real choice at all. Not one of teachers in this study had a "choice" about much of anything, whether this message was delivered explicitly and written into school policy (as in Mr. A's case), or implicitly and symbolically (as in the cases of Mr. Kurt and Ms. T).

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I argue that learning to choose appropriate texts—as I'm sure Delpit would agree—is only a part of the puzzle of learning to teach, and that "choices," as well as the pedagogies with and through which texts are approached, warrant careful analysis if one is to avoid trite constructions of the White teacher who has failed in his/her efforts to teach children of color. I am also not suggesting that teachers are exempt from exploring their own pedagogies and finding the potential in even the most mundane and banal of required curriculum, for the sake of both their practice/s as well as their students' learning. I am arguing that, as educational researchers and teacher educators, we owe it to teachers to treat this complex dynamic—this oftentimes mythic construct of "choice" and how it positions teachers to teach (and not teach)—complexly.

I fuse the above anecdote with this dissertation as a springboard into this study's implications for research and teacher education:

Education Research:

This study contributes to an understanding of the ways by which Whiteness gets enacted in schools. It sheds light on the ways by which school structures intersect with re/productions of Whiteness, and how teachers unconsciously uptake these re/productions, but also how they resist them. This dissertation explores the work of three White English teachers in three extraordinarily different schools; in these schools, the hidden curriculum of Whiteness is expressed and enacted in different ways. It disrupts that idea that "Whiteness is Whiteness is Whiteness" (Ellsworth, 1997) and shows how

> What whiteness can and will mean, how it can and will be performed, and with what
> consequences to relations of power and dynamics of social interrelation—cannot be
> specified before any particular performance, or projected to other times and places.
> (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 261)

Enacted Whiteness, then, as I attempted to portray in this study, is contingent upon space and time. What Whiteness meant in Mr. Kurt's school was something entirely different from what Whiteness meant in Mr. A's school, and so forth. I am inspired by Ellsworth's argument; it is one way to rethink extant research which has contributed to an essentialized White identity (Trainor, 2002). In my view, more research talking back to the essentialized White identity is needed in order to contribute to productive discussions about the co-construction of White teacher identity and practice.

I borrow from Leonardo (2004) to offer a potential line of inquiry. According to Leonardo, "The hidden curriculum of whiteness saturates everyday school life and one of the first steps to articulating its features is coming to terms with its specific modes of discourse" (p. 144). The issue of the hidden curriculum of Whiteness, in this study, has haunted me. I would often ask myself, *So, what does your study hope to do about this?* It finally dawned on me that "doing something about it"—solving the problem of the hidden curriculum of Whiteness, however it is expressed—is not necessarily the goal; the goal is to get an understanding of its specific modes of discourse; grappling with how teachers are embedded in (and stifled/silenced by) these modes of discourses. Doing so may help researchers who desire to get a well-rounded view of how Whiteness is enacted in a variety of schools; doing so may also move discussions beyond extant approaches to Whiteness as Whiteness as Whiteness. To this end, I believe that more research is needed to advance the discussion beyond attributing Whiteness to something other than deep racism and unchecked White privilege, as this narrow approach to Whiteness no longer seems productive. As Trainor (2008) argues, "our metaphors for white privilege need to be more complex" (p. 130). She also argues that Whiteness researchers can get at this complexity without "los[ing] sight of the fundamental realities of racial inequality and race privilege in and

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out of school" (p. 130). As such, it may prove generative to more closely explore the complexities of how teachers' racial identities interact with institutions, while fully acknowledging that yes, they are, and always will be, embedded in a discourse of privilege.

Notes on Implications for Methodology

This work follows others in their quest to implicate themselves as White participants (e.g., Borsheim-Black, 2012; Haviland, 2009) in Whiteness studies. As I argued previously, using Lather (1992) for support, I have taken a reflexive approach to this study by weaving my own experiences into the teachers' stories; I have intertwined my own stories with my attempts to make sense of theirs. This process was inevitable and, in my view, anything less would have been disingenuous. Additionally, I noticed during this process that my Whiteness made certain classroom discussions im/possible; as such, I inflected and influenced the research process. I offered examples of this in Appendix A. It is with and through this research experience that I would encourage others studying Whiteness to consider how they inflect and inscribe the research process. For example, a research question to explore might be, how does the White researcher role influence the nature or the type of data collected during the research process? Moreover, I would suggest further exploration into questions such as those inspired by conceptions of Whiteness as multiple, shifting, and paradoxical. Ellsworth's (1997) work inspires one question, in particular: What sorts of stories about Whiteness, and engagements with Whiteness, do researchers hope to construct in the research process?

Moreover, in the theoretical framework of this study, I discuss exploring constellations of teachers' practices, and suggest building on constellations with crystallization in studies of critical Whiteness. I ask, in that section, whether we find the "recognizable," defensive and evasive White teacher that we expect to find in and through a constellation of their practices; as

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such, I ask about the myths we might instantiate and perpetuate as a function of "recognizing" him or her. In this study, I have turned to crystallization as a tool with which to explore not only how English teachers produce and enact Whiteness in their practices, but how Whiteness is produced and enacted *for* them, and, at times, demanded of them. It was with and through crystallization that I hoped to shed light on the institutional structures which may account for how and why the White English teachers in my study practice in ways which actively work against their stated goals and critical orientations. More work which explores conflicts and tensions in teachers' practices, and how these conflicts and tensions might shed new understandings about White English teachers' racialized development, is needed.

English Teacher Education and Whiteness in Teacher Education:

Miller and Kirkland (2010) offer an acute insight in relation to the potential for English education to play a role in striving for social change: "[W]e are met with an urgency to solidify our commitment to social change, particularly in English education, a field that seems to embrace the immediacy of this work" (p. 10). From here, I wish to describe the role English teachers play in this process; it is from this description that I offer several implications informed by this study.

Teachers of English assign and grade papers; they implement grammar lessons employing Standard English; they teach lessons using canonized literature; they are in a position to define acceptable notions of language and text and can opt to eschew engagement with nonstandard languages and texts. Even if they strive/desire to implement critically oriented pedagogies, they may become members of school communities that sanction and shun curricular materials and ideas about teaching and learning, as well as the capacities of particular students, at

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the whims and behest of those in power. We saw these issues play out in several ways, across the teachers' cases.

Furthermore, a teacher's propensity to question, interrogate, and support students may depend on other institutional structures, such their tenure status, or it may depend on the nature of the broader discourse around accountability and assessment infiltrating schools at the time of their employment. It may depend on their school's record of government-sanctioned benchmarks for Annual Yearly Progress, or even how open-minded their superiors are, regardless of their school's standing and the factors influencing such. Indeed it is a powerful position to hold, as teachers' epistemologies, pedagogies, and practices can either serve to divide students into predetermined tracks, or they can prepare students equitably for life's chances while recognizing that some students naturally have more advantages than others by virtue of race, class, culture, and other factors. These realities are precisely where the work of teacher educators is brought into sharp focus. Extant explorations of Whiteness have attempted to address some of these issues, as I discussed throughout this study.

While this study took place in the classrooms of fulltime teachers, I argue that it has utility for teacher education in the following ways. First, this study, in its own small way, is intended to problematize the "master myths" (Gee, 2008) about White teachers in research on teaching and teacher education. According to Gee, master myths "hide from us other ways of thinking" (p. 111). With this study, my goal was to offer a counter-narrative to Whiteness and White teachers' racial identities (Laughter, 2011). The findings of this study suggest that there are White teachers who might bring assets to teaching and teacher education. They might bring hope, and in many ways, they might bring a critical awareness of race and their racialized privileges. I am not suggesting that there are not White teachers who bring problematic

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assumptions about race to their work; I am not suggesting that many students arrive to teacher education wholly unaware of their racialized privileges. However, this research builds on the work of those who have pointed out that this assumed paradigm is harmful and perhaps futile. Those interested in unpacking Whiteness and White privilege might find utility in exploring, with teacher education students, how Whiteness and privilege are expressed in institutions, school culture, structures, and curriculum. In so doing, teacher educators may discover "more nuanced meaning in the dominant stories that surround us" (Lensmire, 2012, p. vii). As such, this study suggests that teacher educators pay close attention to the distinctions between dismantling Whiteness and dismantling White people. As Flynn et al (2009) reveal in their work with education students, and as I hope to have revealed, it might possible to address Whiteness while leaving teachers' spirits intact.

Additionally, this research calls into question a sole focus on teachers' White privilege, and also suggests that White privilege may not always be a benefit. In this study, we saw how teachers' critical goals were silenced, either by the curriculum, or by colleagues (this was particularly true in Mr. Kurt's case). To be sure, White privileges are associated with being able to ignore, or "not see" racism; they are predicated on being able to ignore the very racialized privileges from which Whites benefit. This ignorance is real. Moreover, a failure to confront racism is a form of cultural and social incompetence; as Pinar (1991) argues, "racism makes one stupid" (p. 17). This is certainly the case for Whites, but it may also be generative to explore the ways by which teachers might be on their own in their quest to recognize their White privilege; how they may be on their own in attempting to use that recognition toward transformative ends. Prior to carrying out this study, I (perhaps naively) never banked on how teachers may be alone in their more critical goals; how the stress of such isolation may ultimately impose an expiration

date on a teacher's critical practice. Teachers need support in this area. It may be generative to explore where and how teacher educators may provide them with such support in their teacher preparation programs and earliest years of teaching. This may come in the form of coursework during their teacher education, but I imagine that extending professional development opportunities to early-career teachers in the area of Whiteness and anti-racist education might be fruitful. My work with the teachers in this study inspires the following questions: How do teachers learn to notice when they stifle opportunities for knowledge-making across the English curriculum? How do teachers learn to notice knowledge-making as racialized, and their own implicatedness in knowledge as racialized? What is the task of teacher education in these processes, particularly when teachers fall back on a hidden curriculum—and larger narrative—of Whiteness and, in so doing, validate particular kinds of (racialized) knowledge over others? What is the role of teacher education in teaching teachers to notice their own embeddedness and implicatedness in the hidden curriculum of Whiteness/White discourse/ racialized knowledge, as these ideas play out in their classrooms and curriculum? Finally, how do teachers learn to notice when they are silencing students, and as importantly, how do teachers learn to notice when they're being silenced? What are the possible authoritative Discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) embedded in silence?

This study suggests that calls to dismantle structures and systems of Whiteness are not realistic goals to impose upon teachers. I mention previously that clarion calls to disown Whiteness and dismantle/abolish the institutions have created and promulgated a powerful—yet myopic and even utopian—image of the Good White Teacher which ignores how difficult it is to become a teacher, in any context. As such, I have argued for the need to rethink, as teacher educators, what we ask of beginning teachers in our quest to encourage them to address race,

racism, and their racialized identities. I envision more manageable ways to "dismantle the structures," by working specifically with curriculum, policy, and school documents, as well as stories teachers share about their struggles doing anti-racist work. I follow Flynn et al (2009) in their suggestion that productive dialogue is essential to creating the conditions for a critical engagement with race.

A Note on Theorizing Whiteness

In following the above discussion, this study has implications for expanded understandings with which to theorize the work of teachers, schools, and of research conducted in/about them, in several ways:

- As I note early in the study, it is not necessarily about defining Whiteness. This static approach seems to fuse with the essentialized White identity (Trainor, 2002) that recent studies of Whiteness are attempting to move away from. As such, a possible direction for investigation may be to explore the ways by which Whiteness is multiple and shifting, and the different ways Whiteness is enacted across different contexts. This direction keeps with my theoretical orientation which posits that Whiteness "cannot be specified before any particular performance, or projected to other times and places. (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 261), and thus may help to contribute to the growing field of Whiteness studies which seeks to eschew arguments that Whiteness is Whiteness is Whiteness.

- As I have argued throughout, it may be productive to focus more on how institutional structures collude to re/produce teachers' Whiteness. More studies about how Whiteness might function as an authoritative (prior/institutionally sanctioned) Discourse which demands allegiance to the status quo (Bakhtin, 1981; Britzman, 1991). Studying institutions' investments in Whiteness (Flynn, Lensmire, & Lewis, 2009; Lipsitz, 1995)

and White supremacy (hooks, 2013) may contribute to extant theorizations of Whiteness, thereby revealing how teachers are structured to re/produce Whiteness, in more nuanced ways.

Conclusion

Dialogue cannot exist…in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself….Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others….If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue. (Freire, 1970, p. 89-90)

I find it appropriate to circle back to Freire's prescient and moving words as a way to conclude this study. Freire was not only motivated by hope; he was motivated by love. In this, I am reminded of a Whiteness scholar highly influential to my own work. Applesies (2006) reminds readers that "Stories are important" (p. 137). And as poignantly, she notes that "[l]istening is important" (p. 137). During the course of this study, I've learned to listen to the words the teachers shared with me; I've learned to listen to what they left unsaid; often, what they did not say was captured in a facial expression, a gesture, a frustrated or angry sigh, and sometimes, tears. As such, what they did not say was often as loud as what they said. And during this time, I've learned to unlearn. And it is in this learning, unlearning, and listening that I am reminded that it is possible to care about teachers as much as we care about students; in many ways, they are one and the same. The process of caring, here, is not mutually exclusive. It was Lowenstein (2009) who said, "just as we want teacher candidates to view their K-12 students as bringing resources to their learning, teacher educators must also view teacher candidates as

bringing resources to teacher preparation" (p. 165). Her words resonate. If we can translate the words and work of the novice teachers I explore in this study to the English teacher education classroom, the schism does not seem so wide. These teachers were not at all far removed from the space they occupied in the English methods courses in which we taught each other and learned together over the span of two years.

I conclude this dissertation with a renewed sense of what teachers are capable of, and with a greater commitment to revealing and building upon those capabilities. Like Freire (1970), I remain moved by hope and love. As I reflect back on the teachers and their work, I recall snippets of hope: Whether in Mr. Kurt's attempt to remove his students from their comfort zones, or in the risks Mr. A took to remove himself from a discourse of schooling that attempted to construct his every move, his every word, and in many ways, his beliefs. I am also reminded of Ms. T's struggles with making curricular constraints work on her terms, and how she found ways, small ways, to provide an outlet for difficult conversations in the face of structures which discouraged and precluded them under the guise of the constraints of a trimester schedule. And one last time, I wish to invoke Mr. Kurt's astute observation: "[T]here are spaces everywhere, if you look hard enough…I think that's the advantage of [being] an English teacher."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CRITICAL REFLECTION

A Reflection on How My Whiteness Inflected and Influenced the Data Collection Phase

In the methods section, I described how I critiqued my role in the research process on a theoretical level. However, there were very real, tangible ways by which it became clear to me that my Whiteness inflected and influenced the data collection phase. I expand upon examples of this, here.

Part of the insidiousness of Whiteness and White identity development involves not having to think about it. In not having to think about Whiteness, or White identity, it is re/instated as invisible. Further, it is through its invisibility that "whiteness becomes the unarticulated normative structure [and] the absent presence" (Apple, 1999, p. 183). One of my early goals in this study was to expose what I assumed was the invisibility of Whiteness on teachers' practices and understandings of themselves as White English teachers, in and through the questions I ask my participants. For example, about midway through the year, I asked my participants the following question: "What does it mean to be a White teacher, and when did you notice that being White held meaning for you?" I did not, however, think about this question (and others) in terms of what it meant to be a White (and female) researcher in the classrooms I was studying; I did not think about the myriad ways by which my very presence in classrooms would influence my data collection. Indeed, it was not until my very first classroom observation that I naively permitted my own Whiteness—in my mind—to remain the absent presence. In other words, it wasn't until my first visit to Mr. Antolini's racially diverse classroom that I was forced to consider my own Whiteness in the study I was attempting to conduct (discussed more fully in the methods chapter). Likewise, it wasn't until I began visiting Mr. Kurt's classes on a regular basis that the extent to which my own Whiteness influenced data collection in *his* context

became clear. And it wasn't until I met Ms. Tessa's freshman English classes that I began to understand my presence as potentially negative for some students. In what follows, I offer one example from three sites of research to illuminate several ways by which I began to understand how my presence as a White researcher impacted the classrooms I studied.

Example 1: My very first visit to Mr. Antolini's (Mr. A's) classroom, for me, marked my first experience having to confront the impact of my own Whiteness on the educational setting, an aspect of my identity which, until then, remained (in my mind) under-theorized. It was mid-fall, and I bustle into his classroom, naively hoping to find my way to the seat Mr. A had chosen for me in a way that was minimally obtrusive/intrusive. I knew that the students, the sea of Black and Brown faces occupying the weathered and graffitied desks/chairs, would, at the very least, notice another adult in the room (the goal of invisibility, I realized soon thereafter, was made even more impossible by my loud, cheap, fluffy, white faux-fur coat that I bought on sale at Sears eight years before). I took my seat and removed my pretentious coat. Without going into the sorts of details bound to bore any school-aged student, Mr. A briefly introduced me as another English teacher who was helping him with a project. As soon as the introduction was over, I heard a student say, "She a racist." Another student responded to him and said, "KKK." While I was fascinated with this exchange, I was also naively surprised. I realized immediately the extent to which my presence in this classroom breathed life into my identity as a racialized being. I found (and find) this realization humbling; indeed, I entered this room not thinking of myself as White, per se. Instead, prior to this experience, I constructed myself as an innocuous visitor with the desire to remain invisible as I occupied a seat in the corner of the classroom, eager to get started on "collecting data," whatever this may ultimately come to mean. However,

as the above exchange between two students might suggest, my presence was anything but innocuous, and whether or not students decided to comment on it audibly.

Example 2: At around the same time, I paid a visit to Mr. Kurt's classroom. As with the above vignette, I hurried into his classroom, hoping that my entrance was minimally disruptive. His students (all of whom are White) do not appear to take any notice of me, as they have been assigned to put the finishing touches on speeches that they will deliver to their peers that hour. About ten minutes into the hour, Mr. Kurt asked for a volunteer to begin the class with his or her speech. One student offered to present her speech on childhood obesity rates, disaggregated according to race. She presented a chart which showed that 17.8% of Black children are obese; also according to this chart, the percentage of obese Black children is higher than White children who are obese (a figure resting around 13%).

In response to the data portrayed in this chart, I heard a boy sitting nearby say: "Too much Kentucky Fried Chicken." As with the vignette above, I was naively surprised by what I had heard. I would be remiss if I did not admit that I was also disgusted by the ease with which this student expressed an unbridled, racialized (and racist) stereotype. I am doubtful that Mr. Kurt heard this comment, as he was clear across the room; I, on the other hand, was sitting approximately three feet from this student, and was more than confident in what I heard him say. It was through this experience that I began to understand how my presence as a White adult in this classroom impacted the classroom discourse. In this way, my Whiteness functioned as an asset (Castagno, 2008) at the research site. The students likely "assume[d] a sort of compatibility with me and assumed that I would have similar beliefs about race as them" (Castagno, 2008, p. 317). In other words, would this student have made this comment to his peers if I were a person of color sitting within earshot? My own Whiteness, in this classroom, was anything but invisible;

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it instead enabled particular kinds of discourse, which in turn impacted the data I was able to collect. I suspect it would have been a very different story had I been a person of color visiting this classroom.

Example 3: My final example for how I have come to notice my race as impacting the research environment is shorter and less explicit, but no less thought provoking. On this particular day, I was shadowing Ms. Tessa for the first time. She taught in an affluent community; her school is representative of this fact, as it is abundant with resources and set up to cater to a variety of students' academic needs while providing a seemingly endless number of creative and athletic outlets. The students in her school comprise a vibrant blend of racial diversity. On this day, I accompanied Ms. Tessa to a freshman classroom I had not visited before. Out of nearly thirty students in this class, twenty of them are male; of the twenty, ten are students of color. I took my usual seat at the teacher's desk, and smiled at the students to whom she introduced me. One young Black man, sitting about four feet from where Ms. Tessa stood, and about eight feet from where I sat, took on a pained, perhaps even exasperated expression. He then asked, several times, in a low voice, "When is she leaving?" Considering how his question coincided with my introduction, I had little doubt that his question referred to my presence in the classroom. I discerned from both his expression and his tone that he did not want me there. Ms. Tessa proceeded as though she did not hear his question.

APPENDIX B: PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Interview 1:

The initial interview consisted of asking participants to share their reasons for becoming English teachers. My goal was to open the interview broadly, and move into topics more related to my dissertation topic.

Questions included:

- (Because I am already professionally and personally familiar with all of my participants): Remind me…what are you reasons for becoming an English teacher?

- Describe where you went to school and community/ies it served. What stands out about your schooling experiences, if anything?

- In what ways does your school community differ from the community in which you are now teaching?

- There is a lot that's been said about social justice and education. I want to get your sense about what it is and what it means to you. How would you define social justice?

- How would you describe what teaching English for social justice looks like?

- Some people argue that there are characteristics like race and class that might impact education. How do you see race/class influencing education? How do you see gender influencing?

- What types of social ideas that factor into how you understand social justice? That is, what are the social characteristics that play a role in how you define social justice?

Interviews 2 - 4:

Latter interviews were designed to understand intersections between race and teaching; I also incorporated data from classroom and school observations into latter interviews. As such, in

some ways, the interviews were more personalized to individual teachers and their respective contexts.

In these interviews I was attempting to understand how participants thought about their racial identities in relation to teaching. A secondary goal of this interview was to get a sense of how participants felt their teacher education has prepared them to navigate racial and cultural differences in the classroom.

- There are people who believe that race has an impact on what and how a teacher teaches. To what extent do you feel that this is true?

- How do you remember some of your first encounters with racial difference?

- Can you recall any experiences you may have had with oppression?

- How do you think race has had an impact on how you relate to students, and how they relate to you?

- Have you ever heard your students express ideas about race? Unpopular ideas about race? Their race? Your race?

- What does it mean to be a White teacher? (Lensmire, 2012, AERA paper) When did you notice that being White held meaning for you?

- How do you make decisions for which curriculum materials to choose for your instruction?

- In what ways would you expect curriculum materials to attend to difference and diversity?

- In what ways has TE (particularly secondary English) prepared you for issues related to race (including your race)? How did TE address issues of race?

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- How would you say your understandings of social justice were informed by your teacher preparation program? (Your secondary English preparation, in particular.) How was TE helpful in your understandings about race and social justice? How was TE unhelpful? In what ways did TE challenge your thinking about social justice, if at all?

- What type of assignments in TE were you most committed to? What readings stand out to you?

- What does anti-racist teaching mean to you?

APPENDIX C: TEACHER AUTOBIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Your Teacher Autobiography (senior year secondary English methods course)

Think about all that we have discussed since the outset of the semester: What is English? Why teach English?

This statement should be 2 - 4 double-spaced pages in length (*with a reasonable font and size/try to stick to Times New Roman, size 12 for consistency*) and include thoughtful responses to the following questions:

Why did you decide to become an English teacher?

- What about teaching English is important to you? Not important to you?

- What ideologies drive your thoughts about the type of teacher that you want to be?

- How have societal, historical, familial, etc influences factored into your development as a teacher?

- How do the readings factor into your thinking, if at all? If the readings were insightful, say so! If the readings reflect what you already believe, say so! If the readings are completely antithetical to everything you believe about teaching English (and learning), vent! In any event, there must be some evidence in your piece that you have (thoughtfully) incorporated the reading material. Feel free to incorporate outside readings as well.

- One or two more questions that you create on your own (perhaps these questions emerge from your own experiences, class discussions, the readings, etc.)

APPENDIX D: THEMES

Themes generated from interviews, classroom observations, and school shadowing

- Making something out of nothing

- Everyone gets along (i.e., racial issues do not play out in school)

- Authoritative Discourses

- Authoritative Discourses of Whiteness

- Distancing

- Negotiating

- Incentivizing

- Critique of Whiteness of the curriculum

- Critique of Whiteness of home town / school

- Critique of administration / colleagues

- Racing a de-raced curriculum

- Silencing

- Silence

- Beyond white privilege

- Whiteness is never one thing, and never the same thing twice (Ellsworth, 1997)—
  Whiteness as multiple/shifting

- The use of literature to teach English for social justice

- Forgetting about the book

- Curriculum doesn't "fit" the population

- Under the radar

- Resistance (students)

- Resistance (teachers)

APPENDIX E: CRYSTALLIZATION AND "GETTING IT DIFFERENTLY"

Crystallization, for me, in addition to representing Whiteness as multiple and shifting, has been a way for me to "get it differently" (Richardson, 1994). As I discussed in the methods section, by "differently," Richardson refers to the contoured and nuanced perspective(s) afforded in and by this metaphor.

I was reminded of an email exchange with my Advisor. In this exchange, I had recently conducted an interview with a participant. I was initially surprised and disappointed with how he referenced social justice during our conversation. Unsure of what to do with this new data, I sought the advice of my Advisor. With his permission, I offer the following exchange as a small example of crystallization, and explain why this is so:

4/13/13:

"I conducted another interview yesterday, and almost dropped dead when my participant shared the following words with me: "Part of social justice is giving them [students] the cultural capital that they lack."

I'm not sure if I should bring up this line during our next interview, or just leave it be and talk about it in my dissertation (assuming it makes the dissertation). But, in any event, I wanted to share it with you.

Christina"

4/14/13:

"One could read the teacher's comment in a variety of ways, some more generous than others. One could, for example, argue that all of schooling is providing students with cultural capital they lack. And, following early Lisa Delpit, one could also argue for this in the context of teaching minority students. All this is to suggest that it could be an

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important comment in the context of your dissertation if it depicts a theme or you could consider it benign in nothing else corroborates the statement otherwise."

My initial interpretation of the teacher's words was deficit-oriented. It was a less-than-generous read. As I discussed in chapter 2, sometimes it "makes sense" (Becker, 1998) that they do and say what they do and say. In the case of this teacher, he read Delpit during teacher education program; he invoked her in discussions of his work (in fact, he often invoked Delpit during our discussions). As such, and as my Advisor reminded me, the teacher's words are a reflection of Delpit's (1988) early work. This exchange represented an opportunity for me to "hold up" a particular aspect of data to the light, to see the different ways by which it reflected and refracted, and thus, to discern the different ways by which any single piece of data may be interpreted.

The teacher's words competed with my background in Critical Whiteness Studies; my Advisor's attention to a "variety" of interpretations mitigated against, and broadened, my first read. Crystallization, as an analytic tool, allowed me to move beyond simplistic conceptions of enacted Whiteness and White privilege. Be reminded, it is not the crystal that is of concern to this metaphor; it is the way by which crystals are formed. My concern is with the tense and sometimes contentious conditions which give way to these formulations (including my earliest interpretations of teachers' words and work): Here again, a process dependent upon seeking to understand "the various discourses through which they [crystallized selves] are constructed and constrained" (Tracey and Tretheway, 2005, p. 186).
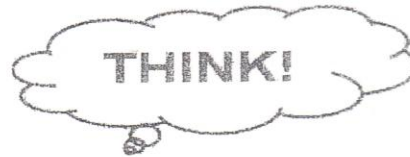
(See *The Case of Mr. Antolini*)

Figure 5
The Outsiders **survey**

Name:_____   Number:_____   Hour:_____

The Outsiders
by S.E. Hinton

THINK!

A Survey

Write whether you SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree) or SD (Strongly Disagree) to the statements below. First, do so in the "before" column.

Before	Statement	After
	1. Nothing can replace or fill in for family.	
	2. Violence can be justified.	
	3. Violence never solves anything.	
	4. I would rather be hated than pitied and felt sorry for.	
	5. People purposely treat certain types of people differently.	
	6. Everyone changes depending on who they are around.	
	7. Life for people with lots of money is very easy.	
	8. My friends affect who I am.	
	9. If somebody is poor, it is their own fault.	

Be prepared to explain your answers!

(See *The Case of Ms. Tessa*)

Figure 6
Holocaust Anticipation Guide

For each of the following statements, decide if you strongly agree, agree, feel neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. Mark the appropriate boxes.

	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Feel Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
1. You should always do what you're told.	___	___	___	___	___
2. It's better to just blend in with the crowd.	___	___	___	___	___
3. What's in the past should stay in the past.	___	___	___	___	___
4. The Holocaust (or something similar) could happen again.	___	___	___	___	___
5. There is no such thing as evil; people just make mistakes.	___	___	___	___	___
6. You need to look out for yourself first.	___	___	___	___	___
7. You should never lose faith.	___	___	___	___	___
8. Parents and children shouldn't keep secrets from one another.	___	___	___	___	___
9. If someone hurts you, you should turn the other cheek.	___	___	___	___	___
10. People are amazingly resilient.	___	___	___	___	___
11. Reports of Holocaust atrocities are exaggerated.	___	___	___	___	___
12. It is harder to make independent choices when you belong to a group.	___	___	___	___	___
13. No one can force you to conform.	___	___	___	___	___
14. Victims are often partially responsible for what is done to them; they make themselves targets.	___	___	___	___	___

Figure 6 (cont'd)

Name: _____   Hour: _____   Date: _____

Recognizing the forces of prejudice

Directions: Now that you have met with your group of red, green or blue, answer the following questions. Think back to what your group decided today, and remember our previous discussions of prejudice, and be honest as you respond to these questions.

1. How easy was it to begin thinking of the other two groups as "them"? Why? How did this affect your decision making process?

2. Look at the questions you answered with your group again, to see how you would answer them if the decisions were not group decisions, but personal ones. Would your answers have been different? Did group pressure influence your answers? Do you think it would be harder or easier to make the morally correct choice if you were acting outside of the group? Why?

3. What did this exercise teach you about prejudice, authority, and group pressure? What did it teach you about how hate is spread? What did it teach you about the Holocaust?

4. How well did this activity help you meet the following learning goals? Please comment on each.
   - Begin thinking about major themes that will be discussed throughout the *Night* unit
   - Consider own prejudices and the prejudices of others
   - Discuss how "group mentality" thinking can affect individual decisions
   - Create a thoughtful environment to discuss important social issues, while being open to and respectful of the opinions of others
   - Discuss how prejudices can affect decisions/interactions and lead to discrimination
   - Prepare for discussion about prejudice throughout history

Write your answers on the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper

Figure 6 (cont'd)

Night Introduction
Essential Questions, Themes, & Focus Areas for Reading

from this day

1. Guiding Questions for the 9th Grade English Theme: "Inter-Relationships & Self Reliance":

- *Who am I?*
- *How do my skills and talents help to define me?*
- *How do I relate to my family, community, and society?*
- *How do I build networks of people to support me?*
- *How am I a reflection of my relationships?*
- *How do my relationships within and across groups affect others?*
- *What influence do class, religion, language, and culture have on my relationships and my decisions?*
- *What can I contribute as an individual?*
- *What is my responsibility to society?*
- *How do I see my beliefs reflected in government policies and by politicians?*

As you read, consider Elie Wiesel and his journey through this book. How did he grapple with these questions?

2. In addition to these essential questions, we will be focusing on three main story themes. These will act as the "lens" through which we'll look at this book:

- *Indifference* → *whos?*
- *Desensitization*
- *Self-reliance (Survival)*

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