BELIEFS. BARRIERS. BECKYS: USING CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES TO EXAMINE TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

BELIEFS. BARRIERS. BECKYS: USING CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES TO EXAMINE TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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This dissertation uses the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) across three discrete articles to examine teaching and teacher education. CWS offers a mechanism to highlight and critique the ways Whiteness operates within teaching and teacher education. Across the pieces, I argue that Whiteness is both pervasive and shifting as it takes shape in many different forms to help maintain power.

In the first article, I examine how a White, female elementary student teacher's beliefs about race emerge through her personal experiences, professional experiences, and in discussing her pedagogical choices. While I argue that Ms. B's beliefs about race are problematic, this article is really a story of missed opportunities. Despite the best of intentions on all of our parts, I will show how each of us—Ms. B, her teacher preparation program, and me as a researcher—had and missed chances to do better when it came to her racial beliefs.

The second article follows Ms. B (who becomes Mrs. B) into her first year of teaching. The purpose of this article is to highlight the ways Whiteness prevents teachers like Mrs. B from engaging in the issue of race in meaningful ways. Findings demonstrate that Mrs. B attempts to teach about race in critical ways, but falls short. She also perceives barriers to teaching about race in critical ways, such as prohibitive district stances and a lack of time. In this article, we see the ways Whiteness is perpetuated throughout Mrs. B's practice through the uncritical ways she teaches about race and her inability to overcome the barriers she perceives as preventing her from doing this work.

The final article is unique in that it is not an empirical study, but rather a fictionalization grounded in tenets of CWS that draw upon my own experiences working with "Beckys" within teacher education. This story is written in the form of a monologue that describes what happens when a teacher educator crosses a "Becky" (a White woman who weaponizes her racial identity) in their teaching—how Becky's visceral response to being confronting about her racist ideas results in tangible and negative consequences for the teacher educator. While I draw upon my own experiences to write this fictionalized monologue, it is purposefully written in a way that the reader could (hopefully) be able to identify with the protagonist as they struggle with the ramifications of confronting a Becky about race through the monologue.

By using a shared framework of Critical Whiteness Studies across the three distinct pieces of this dissertation, I am able to interrogate the ways Whiteness operates in similar, yet different ways in both teaching and teacher education. Across the pieces, I argue that, without sustained and directed focus, Whiteness will continue to morph and maintain power, despite anyone's best intentions.

For my parents—thank you for everything.
For Luke, because I miss you.
For Erin. This could not have been done without you. LUG!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I think about the past five years and the people who have impacted and influenced the work that follows, I am a bit nervous. Watching the Oscars on television, I often scoff at the winners who reach into a pocket and bring out a list of people to thank. While I used to think that was a bit tacky, as I finish this large, exhausting project, I now see the importance of taking the time to make sure that everyone who helped me finish this gets their due. So this acknowledgement section is both similar to and different from an Oscar's acceptance speech. Though I am almost certain considerably less people will read my dissertation than watch the Oscars (perhaps just slightly…), I feel more pressure to make sure I do not forget anyone in this section who has helped shape both the product that lies before you and the scholar who is emerging through this process, since I will not have a band playing me off when I run out of time.

First and foremost, I need to offer my deepest and most sincere thanks to Mrs. B—a teacher who graciously let me pester her with questions during her student teaching experience, yet still was willing to work with me for another year as she moved into her own classroom. Thank you for sharing your life and your story with me. I appreciate your openness and vulnerability and that you are constantly striving to be a better teacher for your students. I also offer a special thank you to the Michigan State University College of Education for their financial support throughout my program, and the work I was allowed to do through both my summer and dissertation completion fellowships.

I am extremely grateful for the committee of scholars who agreed to work with me on this dissertation. While this product is, in the end, mine, it definitely has the fingerprints of my committee all over it. I was fortunate in that I was able to take classes from each of my

committee members at different points in my career. My interest in Critical Whiteness was piqued when I had a chance to take a seminar with Dr. Ricky Lee Allen at the University of New Mexico. I appreciate every conversation we have, and feel like I learn so much by sharing time and a beverage with him. Dr. Terry Flennaugh led one of my first courses at MSU, which was focused on urban education. From watching and talking with Terry over the years, I have learned how to be a better questioner—his go-to question of "How do you know that?" continues to be a key part of my pedagogical toolkit. Dr. Niral Shah led my qualitative methods course. Niral was key to helping me think about the seeds of this dissertation, and I hear his voice in the back of my head asking me about my grain size when conceptualizing a new study. Dr. Chezare Warren led a seminar in urban politics and school reform that I was fortunate to take, and since taking his course I have been constantly thinking of how I collaborate with communities. When I think of Chezare, I think of relationships. Finally, to my chair, advisor, co-author, co-teacher, and confidant, I owe so much to Dr. Alyssa Hadley Dunn. From our first experience teaching a course on immigrant language and culture, to her coming over to our house at 10pm to help figure out what to do with an infant foster child, Alyssa has been there for me 110%. I feel so fortunate that I have Alyssa as a role model, as I know my future students will benefit directly from her influence. I cannot put into words how thankful I am to have been so fortunate to work with her for the last five years. To take my last course as a student with her—a course on Critical Whiteness—was the icing on the cake.

I have also benefitted immensely from other amazing faculty and staff at Michigan State University. Central to any graduate student going through the program at Michigan State University is the one and only Terry Edwards. She jokes that she is responsible for doctoral student triage, but really is a first-responder of sorts to all the crises I and my colleagues have

had during our time at MSU—both real and imagined. While I think she likes me, she *loves* my kids and demands to see pictures any time I see her. Terry really epitomizes the familial feel of MSU. I was also fortunate to get to work with Dr. Dorinda Carter Andrews in the phenomenal seminar in Critical Race Theory she led. This course fundamentally shaped my understanding of how to study and think about race in critical ways. Her comments on my writing pushed me to become better as I consider each word I use. I appreciated her thoughtfulness and heart not only in academic spaces, but loved seeing her and her family out in the community, as well. Dorinda truly cares for my family and me, asking how the kids are anytime she sees me, and serves as a role model of the type of scholar I would like to become. Dr. Lynn Fendler opened my eyes to the possibilities of graduate school and taught me to think about the ways I think. Taking her course on humanities oriented research, she reminded me to keep my passion for the thing I was researching at the center of my work, and encouraged me to do my scholarship in ways that made sense to me. I would never have the courage to have done the dissertation that I did without her voice in the back of my head. I also feel fortunate to have been able to take Dr. Django Paris' course on humanizing research. Django's thoughtfulness was woven into everything he did—from his syllabus to our weekly check-ins. Both the course content and attention Django put into each class session drives me to emulate him in my scholarship and teaching.

I had a chance to work with Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen and Dr. Corey Drake on large research projects they directed at different points of my program—Anne-Lise at the beginning, and Corey at the end. I learned from each how important it is to care about both the topic I am researching and the people I am working with. Both Anne-Lise and Corey were models of how generosity and scholarship work together. Dr. Randi Stanulis and Dr. Joanne Marciano were key

in my learning about what it means to be a teacher educator. Randi helped me fundamentally change the way I approach observations in classrooms, and I feel immensely proud to have been a part of her Mentors As Teacher Educators (MATE) project. Randi's kind spirit and constant energy are worthy of emulation. Joanne led a team of us as we continued the MATE work and examined this type of mentoring as it happens in the moment of teaching, and I am forever grateful for her leadership. She made me a better writer and showed me what it looks like to collaborate with graduate students.

My career in academia began in rural New Mexico when I was asked to join the faculty at Western New Mexico University, and the people there hold a special place in my heart. Even though they had moved on and away from New Mexico, both Dr. Pat Maguire and Dr. Julie Horwitz were outstanding mentors as I struggled to step into the rather large shoes they left. I will be also be forever grateful to Martha Gomez and the ways she talked and taught about students and families. I treasure the two years we got to teach together, and marvel at the ways we were able to both keep the program going together while not getting sick of each other! Even further west, Dr. Kevin Roxas has been key in my final two years of the program with his priceless encouragement and advice about the dissertation and job search process from afar. I feel fortunate to have Kevin as a sounding board and cheering section. Finally, Dr. Cheryl Matias and her work is instrumental across this dissertation, but I'm especially grateful for her help in writing the final chapter of this piece. Her insights and generosity were invaluable.

One of the most beneficial aspects of the graduate program at MSU is the ways doctoral students support one another, even after they have moved on. I will be forever grateful to the slew of students who stepped up to support me and my work over the last 5 years, and will make it my life's work to repay the debt I owe to all of them to my future students. In Dr. Matt Deroo,

I found a partner in both teaching and writing, and am grateful that he was so open in sharing his dissertation experiences with me. Likewise, Dr. Cassie Brownell made it a point to share what she learned with me and others as she completed each milestone in the program so that we could learn with and from her. Dr. Adam Schmitt was the mentor assigned to me when I arrived at MSU, and has also been extremely helpful in getting past the various pillars of our program.

My writing group has helped lift me up through sharing laughter, tears, and critical feedback. Thank you to Dr. Lindsay Wexler, Dr. Amy Guenther, Dr. Christa Haverly and Brian Hancock (ha!). I could not have made it through all of the hoops without their support. Special thanks especially to Amy and Christa, who were especially present during the entire dissertation process. Likewise, Dr. Davena Jackson and Dr. Ashley Johnson were key in meeting to write and commiserate about our dissertations as we bounced ideas off of each other via Zoom. Dr. Chris Bacon was a lifesaver—even though he was far away at Boston College, I could always count on getting real feedback and Midwestern advice as we tried to figure out what it meant to dissertate together.

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take a course on Critical Whiteness (the last course of my career) with an amazing group of doctoral students who pushed me to consider the work I was doing in bold(y) ways. They helped me think about how we might deconstruct Whiteness as educators and scholars. I also leaned heavily on a group of critical friends during my dissertation data generation—thank you to Vivek and Mary, along with Tashal Brown, Hannah Grisham, and Cait Bergeon for talking with me about my dissertation, and helping make sense of what I was seeing. I owe a special thank you as well to Vy, who helped guide Davena and me though our chapter examining our identities as doctoral students and teacher educators. To Dr. Kraig Wray and Patrick Beymer, a special thank you for the Cream Ale and cornhole that gave us a chance to talk about anything but graduate school—except we did not know how to talk about anything else, so it was always about graduate school. Finally, a special thank you to the person who was assigned to be my mentee, but became a mentor to me in her own right, Effat Id-Deen. Effat's encouraging texts, critical eye, and perfectly-timed coffee drop-offs helped me through many dark places.

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INTRODUCTION

Pinaka Dasig

We could see the outskirts of the town in the distance. Framed by nipa huts and palm trees, the dirt path we were on as we stumbled down the mountain with our full packs slowly opened up to become a road. I was late. Our trip hiking up into the mountain rainforest had been amazing. I had joined Kevin, another Peace Corps volunteer, and a team of local environmentalists to check out one of the research stations high above the island of Panay for a week—but the hike back down had lasted longer than I thought it would, and my clunky candybar cell phone did not have service. I needed to get to another island to meet my wife for New Year's Eve, and was not sure how long the ferries ran between the two islands. As we trudged through town, there were no *trikes*—the motorcycles with sidecars that served as the main form of transportation in the Philippines—that were willing to take me to the boats in Katiclan, about 40 miles away. One man overheard our conversation, though, and offered to take me and my oversized pack to the ferry for a reasonable price on his own regular sidecar-less motorcycle. I was really worried about missing the boat, as I had no place to stay on this island, so I readily agreed. As the rain clouds began to swell and darkness began to fall, I climbed behind him on his bike, still worried I would miss the boat. As he started the engine, I yelled in his ear, *"Pianaka dasig!"*—literally, "the ultimate fast!"—generally understood to mean "as fast as you can!" He looked at me and smiled, nodding. Of course he could take me there *pinaka dasig.* No problem.

I regretted saying it as soon as it came out of my mouth. What I really wanted to say was "Please go as fast as safely possible since I don't have a helmet and it's rainy and getting dark out and I really don't want to die tonight." My Kinaray-a was not that great though, and I was

already on the bike, so *pinaka dasig* it was. My 40-pound pack kept trying to drag me off the back of the bike as I clung to the driver with all my might. It was clear he was intent on getting me to Katiclan and was taking my request to get us there *pinaka dasig* seriously. The engine whined as the RPMs hovered in the red zone the entire way. We dodged potholes, pedestrians, and poultry the entire ride, rain flying in our helmet-less faces as we zigged and zagged through each town. The driver was happily pointing out various landmarks as I squeezed back tears and held ever tighter. We arrived nearly an hour later, my arms sore from holding on so tightly. I was grateful to the driver for getting me to the ferry before it left, though as I tried to regain my balance after the ride, I wished it had been a little less *dasig.*

Connecting to Graduate School

I share this story because my journey toward this dissertation has felt very much like that motorcycle ride almost 15 years ago. Much like how I told the driver to go *pinaka dasig,* not really knowing what that meant, I entered my Ph.D. program not quite sure what I was getting myself into. Quite honestly, I came to Michigan State University not knowing what it meant to be a doctoral student. I definitely did not appreciate what a dissertation entailed. I knew I liked writing and I wanted elbow patches on my jacket—a doctoral degree sounded like a great way to do both. I quickly found myself hanging on tightly, oftentimes crying, as the ride toward this dissertation kept trying to jostle me off. Like the motorcycle ride, I should have been a bit more careful what I wished for as I began this academic journey.

I came to graduate school as an elementary teacher who was interested in becoming a teacher educator. The program at Michigan State provided me opportunities to do that right away—teaching courses and leading student-teaching field experiences. In fact, my experiences teaching a course on immigrant language and culture my first semester led me to my advisor and

dissertation chair. Alyssa Dunn was the faculty advisor for a course we taught, and she joined me at the end of the semester help me talk to a trio of White preservice teachers who had trouble understanding how they were engaging in cultural appropriation. The memory is blurred by the tears of the trio of women we had met with, but after they had left, the emotions of the past two hours still running high, I turned to Alyssa and said something to the effect of, "Well, I guess you're my advisor now!" She agreed. My origin story of sorts. Like my *pinaka dasig* declaration, I did not fully comprehend what that would mean for the following four and a half years of my journey in graduate school.

As the years went by, I continued teaching courses and working with student teachers, but I started seeing a major disconnect between the work I was doing in my teaching and what I was seeing in the field with my student teachers. Basically, the work I was doing with preservice teachers to help them better understand and confront systemic issues like racism in their first and second years of the program were not being taken up in their student teaching. It was troubling and something I wanted to study more.

Teaching EDU 101

I taught a course that I refer to as EDU 101 throughout this dissertation. Undergraduates often refer to it as the "diversity" course. In this course, students learn about ideas of privilege and opportunities in relation to social systems. Most of my students in this course throughout the years were White. Many came into class with color resistant, bootstrap, meritocratic ideologies—not unlike the ones I had myself growing up in small town Michigan. I often heard this type of rhetoric in class or read it in assignments.

I don't see color.

We need to help students learn to work harder.

I never got any special treatment—I earned everything I have.

Each day I made it a point to over-prepare for class and for the resistance I would encounter. Most of my work centered on me trying to show students (again, mostly White) things many had never seen, experienced, or considered—like their own Whiteness or how we have been socialized through this Whiteness to believe certain things about certain groups of people. Not all my students in this course had privileged identities, though. Some knew these concepts of power and privilege better than I do as a White male, since we live in a world where ideas of marginalization collide with them personally on a daily basis. Besides pushing students to consider ideas of how race or class or gender have impacted their schooling and their lives, I also worked to give space to students who have been marginalized because of their various identities to describe their experiences and use their voice to push against dominant norms. Many took this up and bravely shared their experiences of being pushed to the margins in a society that exists on socially constructed norms.

Many times at the end of the semester, I would think about the students who had seemed engaged—that had seemed to take up the ideas I had presented and be satisfied that I had done my job as an instructor. There were always a few who seemed to leave class with a new perspective on ideas of power and privilege. Their final papers talked about how important it was to consider identities in a classroom and how systems are structured in our society to privilege some and oppress many others. I would think to myself that they were progressive. That they "got" what we were learning over the semester. That they would be able to teach in ways different from how they were taught—that they had somehow broken the cycle of socialization in their own lives. That because of our work tougher over 16 weeks that they were somehow going to turn into anti-racist teachers. That by not resisting the ideas we encountered in class

they would go into classrooms and do "good" work. I think I was naïve to say the least. A sort of *pinaka dasig* all over again.

Working with Student Teachers

Another major part of my professional life as a doctoral student was working with student teachers who were completing their fifth year in the field—what we at Michigan State University call an "internship." Each year I would be in charge of three or four elementary interns in their school placements. My job was to serve as a sort of conduit between the university and the classroom. I would meet with the interns each week, observe their practice, meet with their mentor teachers, and coordinate between them, the university, and the school they were working in. Every other week, I would teach a two-hour seminar focused on logistics of the program or things that came up in their practice. I was one of the main people responsible for their progress through this final step in their teacher preparation program.

As I visited classrooms each week observing student teachers or conducted seminars in the evenings, I would debrief what I observed with the intern, work with them in planning lessons, or serve as a sounding board or confidante to these beginning teachers who were pulled in many directions—and extremely stressed—by the competing demands of being a student teacher for an entire year. I would listen to tear-filled tirades about the toughness of teaching. I would offer insights into ways they could talk with a university instructor they were having issues with. I would offer advice as to how they might talk with their mentor about something that was bothering them. Whatever it was, our conversations were often focused on the immediate and the now: the things that were impacting their lives at *that* moment. Instead of talking explicitly about ideas of structural racism or gender normative behavior, or pushing against ideas that race did not matter, like I did teaching EDU 101, I found myself focusing

almost all of my energy on things like managing a classroom. How to stand at the front of the room and talk and see and teach all at the same time. How to structure and implement lessons. How to connect with families. How to talk to a co-worker or principal. These things are important for beginning teachers and *can* be connected to ideas of power and privilege, though this was not the way I engaged these interns. But the way I was approaching it, it felt like those immediate needs were more important than and disconnected from what I was teaching in the university. I struggled to find time and space to help these interns connect, for example, ideas of classroom management to structural racism.

I was troubled because I was not having the same conversations with my interns that I was having in my university classrooms. Race might be something that I tangentially talked about with interns (who, over the course of two years, except for one who identified as bi-racial Black and White, all identified as White), but it was not always the focus on our meetings and discussions. To counter this, in my second semester of being a field instructor, I designed and implemented an Action Research (AR) project as a way to connect these two worlds. Throughout the semester-long study, I focused on improving my practice as a field instructor by explicitly talking about race with my interns during our debriefs or in our seminars. I wanted to have them think about systems and structures that impact individuals and groups to counter the talk I was hearing from them about meritocracy and grit and "we are all one race."

We discussed redlining and ideas of implicit bias in our seminar, but it felt at times contrived and artificial. It felt like the student teachers were sort of placating me—they nodded and we talked a bit, but they had trouble seeing the urgency of connecting these ideas to their everyday practice. And perhaps more importantly, I had trouble working with them to make those connections. The interns seemed to view these concepts I was bringing into their classroom

as something "extra" to add onto their teaching—which can be difficult enough for established teachers who already have experience with how to "do" the everyday task of teaching, but felt nearly impossible to do well with interns who were being pulled in various directions by their mentor teachers, the principal, students, families, university instructors, and me. What I offered seemed to just be something else crammed onto their already over-filled plates. Each seminar, my part of talking about and pushing interns to consider race was pushed to the end of the agenda, as we talked about their immediate concerns that impacted them the next day. *What should I do about this student? How can I plan for that math lesson? Where should I look for other resources about poetry?* These were important things for me to help with, as these student teachers were going to be faced with a classroom of nearly 30 faces twelve hours later and needed to think about the immediate. Inevitably, it felt that we would run out of time before we had a chance to engage in meaningful discussion about race each seminar.

Connecting to my Dissertation

As I began to think about the culminating crescendo of my program—my dissertation—I wanted to get at the heart of what I was seeing and experiencing. I found myself gravitating toward Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as a theoretical framing. It seemed to offer me a way to analyze how Whiteness impacts both teacher preparation and teaching. The resistance to what I was teaching about race in my coursework, the reluctance to talk about race in classrooms—looking at those experiences through a lens of CWS allowed me to critique the pervasive and problematic concept of Whiteness and how it operated and perpetuated within those spaces.

I was initially unsure of how that would look. How could I capture all of these things in a single dissertation? Again, I had very little understanding of what a dissertation was or could be when I began my program and had trouble reconciling the experiences I had teaching and

working with student teachers. That changed when I took a course on Humanities Oriented research with Dr. Lynn Fendler. Throughout the course she had us considered a simple, yet key question: what is a dissertation? As doctoral students, we thought it was a bit of a silly question. Most of us had always considered it to look like a book—five chapters revolving around a single study. But she pushed us to think differently. Her answer to her own question changed the way I think about the possibilities within academia. It was also simple, yet transformational in my understanding. She believed a dissertation is whatever I—with the support of my committee—think it should be, with the important caveat that it can be completed in time.

This was revolutionary thinking to me. I began to picture a whole slew of dissertations in my head. I talked excitedly with my Alyssa about the ways my own work might look. After a number of conversations with her and my committee, I crafted a dissertation that looks a little different than a traditional one does. Instead of one five-chapter tome, I wrote three separate articles. Each is connected by my use of CWS across each of the pieces, but each is written so that it can stand on its own as a discrete article.

I found a White, female elementary teacher who was willing to work with me during her student teaching to explore her beliefs on race. Our work together resulted in the first of three articles in this dissertation as I examined how her beliefs about race emerged during this time. She graciously agreed to continue our work together as she transitioned from student teaching to a first year teacher. This collaborative work resulted in the second article in the dissertation as we examined if and how she taught about race in critical ways during her first year of teaching. While these two studies were foundational in helping me understand the ways Whiteness operates within classrooms, they did not include a large piece of my own journey through graduate school. Neither of those pieces touch on my own experiences working with preservice

teachers who resisted learning about race—which was a central part of my story as a graduate student and a central challenge in the field of teacher education writ large.

One thing I missed while in graduate school was writing. Those who are in or have been in graduate school might see this as a preposterous sentence, as we write hundreds of thousands of words during a Ph.D. program. We write papers and presentations and articles. But in a life before I began graduate school, I would write for my own enjoyment. I would write for *fun*. As I neared the end of my program, I found that I missed that kind of writing. So I took a break in the middle of my dissertation and I wrote for fun. I called it *productive procrastination* as I tried to both think about and not think about my dissertation—Schrödinger's dissertation perhaps.

I sat down and wrote about an experience I had with some White students, but with a fictional twist. It was based on my life and things I had experienced, but it was also different. It did not have any citations in it, but the whole premise revolved around the ways Whiteness had manifested itself in my teaching. It was academic, without being academic-y. I wrote it in the style I love to write in—free flowing, jumping back and forth in time. Though it was at times difficult to write the content, I cannot stress how much I enjoyed writing in that style. It felt like a fitting end piece for my dissertation.

A Three-Article Dissertation

This dissertation is made up of three articles that are connected through a shared foundational understanding and theoretical framing of Critical Whiteness Studies, with each article presenting different manifestations of Whiteness and racism. These pieces—two empirical on teaching about race in elementary classrooms and one fictionalized reflection on teaching about race in teacher preparation—are significant for the field. In particular, this is because each

article presents a unique insight into various parts of teaching and teaching through a lens of Critical Whiteness Studies.

Article 1: "Beliefs." The first article in my dissertation is the result of my work with Ms. B—a white, female elementary teacher who allowed me to follow her throughout her yearlong student teaching experience. Grounded in Critical Whiteness Studies, the article is guided by a single research question: *How do a White teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching experience?* Examining Ms. B's beliefs through a lens of CWS shows us how tied up in Whiteness she is. Specifically, I draw upon Boler's (1999) work on "passive empathy" and DiAngelo's (2018) work on White fragility to demonstrate how Ms. B cannot escape the powers of Whiteness. Ms. B's beliefs emerge in three different ways: through her own personal experiences, her professional experiences, and through discussions of her pedagogical choices. While this article demonstrates how Ms. B's beliefs about race are problematic, this is ultimately, unfortunately, a story of missed opportunities. Despite the best of intentions on all of our parts, I will also show how each of us—the student teacher, her teacher preparation program, and I as a researcher—had, and missed, chances to do better when it came to this teacher's racial beliefs.

Article 2: "Barriers." The second article in my dissertation is a continuation of my work with Ms. B during her student teaching as she moves into her first full year of teaching on her own. I again use Critical Whiteness Studies as a lens in this article, specifically extending Mills' (1997) notion of White normativity, as well the description of how such views perpetuate the racist system of schooling in this country set forth by Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, and Galindo (2014). Two research questions that guide this piece are: *How does a White, first year elementary teacher attempt to teach about race in critical ways?* and *What barriers do a*

White, first-year teacher perceive see as preventing her from teaching about race in critical ways? Findings demonstrate that Mrs. B attempts to teach about race in critical ways, but falls short. She also perceives barriers to teaching about race in critical ways, such as prohibitive district stances and a lack of time. In this article, we see the ways Whiteness is perpetuated throughout Mrs. B's practice through the uncritical ways she teaches about race and her inability to overcome the barriers she perceives as preventing her from doing this work.

Article 3: "Beckys." The final article is unique in that it is not an empirical study like the first two articles. Rather, it is a chance to explore the ways I experienced resistance within the teacher preparation courses I taught through a fictionalized account of my experience with a "Becky"—often conceptualized as a white woman who uses the racial privilege she has as a weapon (Harriot, 2017). While I have written and presented about resistance within the teacher preparation courses I have taught in the past, I was fascinated with the way scholars had used stories and parables to examine race and racism (Bell, 1992; Montoya, Matias, Nishi, & Sarcedo, 2016). I used these pieces as a foundation to further explore and process my own experience. Like the other two articles in the dissertation, this piece is grounded in Critical Whiteness Studies—specifically, in the ways the emotionality of Whiteness play out within the context of teacher education (Matias, 2016) and the ways White women can (and do) turn instances of White Fragility into manifestations of power (DiAngelo, 2018).

The literature is rife with examples of ways White women resist learning about issues of race or equity (see, for example Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Matias, 2013, 2016; Matias & Liou, 2015; Matias & Newlove, 2017). This is a story of the ramifications for a teacher educator after they confont a student's problematic racial views. I wrote this story in the form of a monologue that describes what happens when one crosses a Becky in their teaching—how her visceral

response to being confronted about her racist ideas results in tangible and negative consequences for the instructor—but also how a "Rebecca" (the College Dean) works to maintain Whiteness in her own ways, by siding with the Becky character. The inspiration for this article came from a call for book chapters from Dr. Cheryl Matias, who was interested in creating an academic characterization of "Beckys," which would also demonstrate the need for such characterizations, and describe how this these characterizations might impact the hope for diversity, racial justice, and equity in the P-20 pipeline.

While I draw upon my own experiences to write the monologue, it is a work of fiction meant to demonstrate the ways "Beckys" (and "Rebeccas") have been able to wield their Whiteness to maintain current power structures. I made a purposeful decision to write this piece in a in a way that the reader could (hopefully) be able to identify with the protagonist as they struggle with the ramifications of confronting a "Becky" (and a "Rebecca") about race and racism. Like the style of the mentor text I tried to emulate (Montoya et al., 2016), I also contextualize the fictionalized narrative with a prologue and an epilogue in order to provide a theoretical grounding for the story, as well as a literature-informed discussion of what occurred during the story.

Final Thoughts

This dissertation helps offers a glimpse into spaces of teaching and teacher education through a lens of Critical Whiteness Studies. While each of the three articles in this dissertation can stand on its own, taken together, they paint a picture of how Whiteness operates within teaching and teacher education. By examining and bringing to light the ways Whiteness maintains power within these spaces, and the ways Whiteness interacts with White supremacy

and racism (Gillborn, 2006; Leonardo, 2004; Sue, 2006), I hope I can also find ways to push back and against these forces in my teaching and scholarship.

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CHAPTER ONE—BRINGING BELIEFS TO THE CLASSROOM: USING CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES TO EXAMINE A STUDENT TEACHER'S BELIEFS ABOUT RACE AND WHITENESS

Introduction

With each flick of my thumb, the news appeared over and over again in my feed. As I scrolled through Twitter on my phone one early morning in November 2018, I read about how 14 teachers in an elementary school in Idaho had dressed up as a border wall decorated with the words "Make American Great Again" while wearing ponchos and sombreros and holding maracas. The smiles on the teachers' faces as they posed for the picture seemed genuine—they looked like they were laughing and having a great time (Vagianos, November 5, 2018).

As a scholar focused on how issues of race are taken up within educational spaces, I was all too familiar with how this incident was just another in a long (and unbroken) line of overtly racist episodes by teachers in schools across the country, and should not have been surprised or thought this was parody. Whether an elementary teacher wearing blackface at a party in Iowa (Ta, October 25, 2018), an elementary principal from California calling Colin Kaepernick a "thug" on a public Facebook post (Berger, September 12, 2018) or a middle school teacher in Florida running a white supremacist podcast (Willingham, March 6, 2018), such blatant racist events occur with sad, but predictable, frequency. Each time I read about another educator engaging in overtly racist acts, I think about their beliefs and how they bring those beliefs with them into their classroom each day. What is perhaps most troubling is that these examples are just the ones that are explicit and horrible enough to warrant national attention. Teachers with similar beliefs are surely working in classrooms across the country, albeit not making headlines with their practices.

Knowing these that these stories of White educators engaging in acts of violence against students of color have been stacking up throughout history (Douglas, 2005; Kendi, 2016), I am driven to engage in race-related work within teacher education in order to disrupt these types of actions. However, it seems that, for many White teachers, the very concept of race is too uncomfortable to engage in, which makes work pushing against racism difficult to engage in.

This research study was prompted, in part, because, as a graduate student working in teacher education, I was seeing how beliefs about race, racism, and Whiteness[1] were addressed within education as I worked at both ends of the teacher preparation continuum simultaneously across the 2016-17 year. At one end, I was teaching a required course for prospective teachers (a course I call EDU 101), who were typically in their first or second year of undergraduate studies. In the course, we examine how socially constructed categories (such as gender, class, sexuality, or race) are used to privilege some individuals and groups and marginalize others. A major focus in the course is an explicit examination of race, racism, and Whiteness. On the other end of the continuum, I was supervising elementary student teachers in their yearlong placements, where race seemed to be something that was, at best, an afterthought of lesson planning. Ideas of their

[1] There is contention about whether to capitalize the term White or not. I choose to capitalize the term "White" to indicate this is not a simple descriptive term of a person's skin tone, but rather a racial label with complex meanings and implications for the person and group being described (Vaught, 2011). I choose to capitalize all racial descriptors (e.g. Black, Brown, Asian, etc.) as a reminder to myself and to readers that, though socially constructed, race involves ideas of power and oppression, not just physical differences in appearance (Marx, 2006). Though no group can be seen as homogenous, the way we use words to describe and group people has real world consequences for those grouping and those being grouped. My capitalization of White stands as a reminder that this group, however the definition has shifted over the years, oppresses other groups. Since capitalization of words makes them "stick out" I see my choice as way to remind readers that Whiteness is not invisible or that those who identify as White are somehow un-raced, but that this term is a discrete categorization of people. However, not all authors agree on this. Some, like Mahoney (1992) view capitalization of White to be a reproduction of social norms. More recently, Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, and Galindo (2014) in their work strategically chose to capitalize Black and Brown to "give credence to the racialized experience of people of color as a proper" (p. 302) and keep "white" in lowercase as a way to push against linguistic White supremacy. While my choice to capitalize White is also done strategically, I also respect and honor the choices made by authors who have come before me in how they have approached this issue. In this sense, while I capitalize White in my own work, when using direct quotes, I use the author's preferred style.

own racial identity—their Whiteness—was not something these student teachers considered as they were teaching.

For many White undergraduates, "diversity" courses like EDU 101 may be the first time they have be asked to examine their beliefs regarding issues such as gender, class, sexuality, ability, or race. For some, the experience is uncomfortable, and the literature is rich with examples of the ways many White preservice teachers push back against learning about their role in perpetuating White supremacy. For others, the course offers a welcome chance to engage these discussions, their final papers and projects are often about how systems are structured in our society to privilege some and oppress many others. At the end of the semester, I would think to myself that these are the beliefs we want teachers to have about students, families, and communities. But working with student teachers, who are often three or four years removed from taking this course, I was not seeing these ideas taken up.

The White student teachers I worked with were far-removed from this course. Working in their fifth year, these novice teachers shared how they were often overwhelmed with planning lessons and managing classrooms. Issues of race were not something woven into their instruction or planning. Instead, they and were seen as a sort of "extra" layer the teachers might consider if they had time. Seeing this disconnect between the ways undergraduate pre-service teachers (PSTs) and student teachers examined and talked about their beliefs about race that year, I wanted to further explore the beliefs about race a student teacher brought into their yearlong placement. What did they believe about race? How were these beliefs formed?

In this study, the question guiding the research was: *How do a White teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching experience?* Using Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as an analytical framing, the findings from the study demonstrate how a White student

teacher makes sense of a complex topic like race in her teaching—through her own personal experiences, through her professional experiences, and in discussing her pedagogical choices. In this article, I examine how a White, female elementary student teacher's beliefs about race emerge through her personal experiences, professional experiences, and in discussing her pedagogical choices. While I argue that Ms. B's beliefs about race are problematic, this article is really a story of missed opportunities. Despite the best of intentions on all of our parts, I will show how each of us—Ms. B, her teacher preparation program, and me as a researcher—had and missed chances to do better when it came to her racial beliefs.

In order to tell this story, I first give a contextual overview of Whiteness within teaching in the United States. Since ideas and understandings of race and racism are central to this study, I define those terms in the next section. I then explain my choice of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as a theoretical framework and spell out how it informs this study. Next, I review pertinent literature on teacher beliefs to show how my study can both build upon and help fill a gap within that literature. I explain my methodology, including potential limitations and delimitations of this study. I then share my findings, connecting the student teacher's beliefs to various tenets of CWS. I conclude by arguing that opportunities to potentially influence their beliefs about race in positive ways were missed at various points by the teacher, their teacher preparation program, and me. I also offer potential implications this study may have for teacher education and research.

National Context of White Teachers

Though student demographics have been steadily changing over the past 20 years in the United States (Nieto & Bode, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Michikyan, 2016), our teaching force does not reflect this change. 2013-14 was the first time that Black and Brown students in public

schools outnumbered White students (Hussar & Bailey, 2014). However, most teachers in U.S. public schools continue to be White (Banks, Marcelo, & Ben-Peretz, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A majority are also female, mono-lingual English speakers who do not look like the students they teach (e.g. Emdin, 2016; Sleeter, 2017)

This can be problematic beyond just a lack of understanding between teacher and students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Studies have shown that teacher expectations are higher for White and Asian American students and lower for Latinx and Black students (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007), and that teachers tend to perceive Black students as "less than" their White classmates (Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002). There has been much written about such perceptions and how teachers or teacher educators might address them (see, for example Emdin, 2016; Ford, 2011; Howard, 2006; Howard, 2010).

Besides the problems with the racial mismatch between teachers and students, research shows that nearly half of the schools in the country do not have any Black or Brown teachers on staff (Picower, 2009), which is especially problematic given the shifting student demographics. Though the percentages have increased over time, the most recent statistics show that only 18% of public school teachers and only 20% of public school administrators identified as African American, Latinx or Asian (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This is disconcerting, as school in the United States is a bastion of Whiteness at the front of the classroom. White teachers are often themselves the products of such classrooms led by their own White teachers in schools led by White administrators, who lived in predominately White neighborhoods, and who attended White teacher preparation programs at predominately White institutions (Nieto, 1996). The cycle of Whiteness is regurgitated with each new generation of teachers.

Even though de jure segregation was "outlawed" after *Brown v. Board* in 1954, de facto segregation continues this isolation and "virtually assures that most future White teachers will continue to come from racially isolated White schools and communities" (Howard, 2006, p. 4). This, in turn, replicates the cycle of White isolation and racial mismatch, and eventually racial or ethnic misunderstanding within classrooms. What can result are situations where White student teachers work with White mentor teachers, both of whom were most likely socialized in predominantly White spaces, teaching and socializing students who may or may not be White about things they may not have a good understanding of. As Fasching-Varner (2013) writes,

> White people, too, are learning from their primarily White teachers important messages about what it means to be White within the current school system. White educators teach White children much about the experience of being White, furthering cycles of privilege and marginalization. (p. 38)

Without some sort of disruption, this cycle will continue.

Teacher education programs, like the one in which I work, try to provide coursework and field placements to, in part, help White pre-service teachers first see their Whiteness—which is often invisible to them—in order to help them have a more nuanced understanding of race and culture when they get into the classroom (Aveling, 2006; Berry, 2015; Helms, 1993; Leonardo, 2002). These courses and experiences are designed to help these future teachers develop multicultural competence and overcome deficit narratives of students, families, and communities (Bloom, Peters, Margolin, & Fragnoli, 2015). However, many White pre-service teachers in these courses actively resist ideas about their own racial identity, ideas of systemic oppression, and other socialized myths, like the myth of meritocracy (Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Conklin & Hughes, 2016; Greenman & Kimmel, 1995). Despite decades of research showing this is problematic, oftentimes this work is focused on a single "diversity" course students take well

ahead of their student teaching placement—which may or may not include an explicit focus on race (King & Butler, 2015; Milner, 2015; Sleeter, 2017)

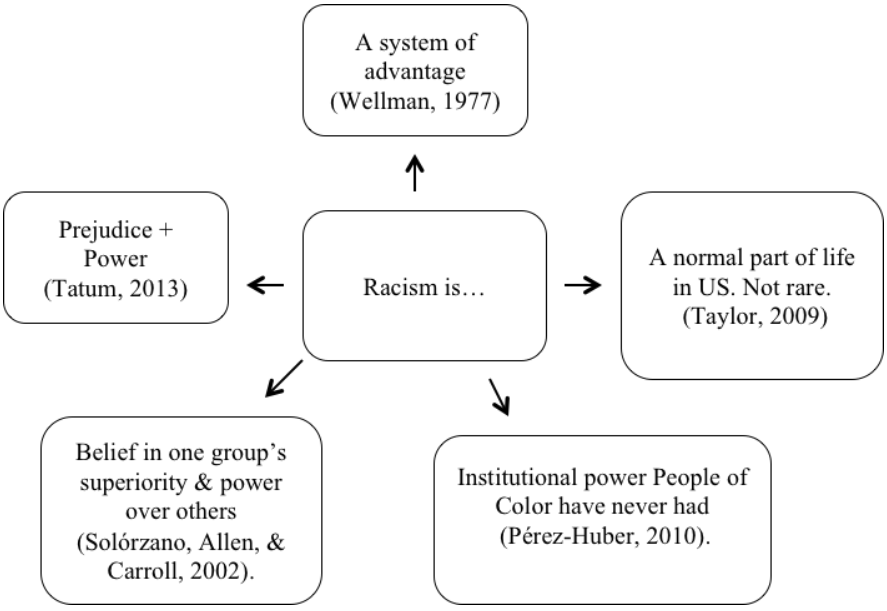
This is one reason why the "diversity" course I teach and our conversations about race, and Whiteness in particular, are so necessary. Without some sort of disruption within teacher education—a popping of this White bubble if you will—these cycles of Whiteness operating within Whiteness will surely perpetuate the system we have now. White teachers will continue to know only Whiteness (whether or not they acknowledge it or not) and not have tools to disrupt this violent epistemology. However, though such courses are necessary to disrupt future teachers' beliefs about race and Whiteness, they may not be sufficient, especially if they only happen 3 or 4 years before being placed in a classroom and are not sustained throughout the program. This is what I seek to understand in this study: How do a White teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching experience, after completing four years of a teacher preparation program?

Defining Race and Racism

Because this study centers on ideas of race, it is important to provide a working definition of both race and racism. Race is a socially constructed idea of difference and a means of classification of individuals based on phenotypical traits, not biology (Howard, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Weber, 2010). It is critical to note that these differences are not fixed in biology (Mahoney, 1992; Witzig, 1996), but have been constructed as a means for certain groups to maintain power (Pérez-Huber, 2010). Historically speaking, this fairly "new" idea, related to European imperialism (Alexander, 2012) is more than just a neutral categorization, but rather an act that is done by people unto others with serious implications. The active "racing" of people (Jones, 1997) is an active exercise of power, domination, and control through ideas of Whiteness.

By never having to examine the ways in which *all* people have been "raced" (including Whites) and the consequences of those categorizations, we who are White can live our lives believing in ideas of hard work and meritocracy without seeing broader impacts this sorting brings (Laughter, 2013). Though much of this foundational work was done over 25 years ago, the sentiments remain the same today. As Matias and Newlove (2017) assert, "whiteness is often only visible when challenged" (p. 318). However, it is also important to remember that not all people who identify (or are identified by others) as White experience Whiteness in the same ways. As Tanner (2016) reminds us, "Whiteness—like all identifying labels, racial or not—is not a monolith" (p. 432). While this is true—that there is no single story of what it means to be White—the concepts of race and Whiteness and who has been allowed to be labeled as White (Painter, 2010) are the bedrock of the United States, which has a long history rooted in racism (Kendi, 2016).

Figure 1: Selected scholarly definitions of racism.



Racism happens when people utilize these socially constructed differences to create and reinforce oppression in society (see Figure 1). Racism has been defined as "a system of

advantage based on race" (Wellman, 1977, p. 4). While many conflate prejudice and racism, I believe, as Tatum (2013) does, there is a marked difference between the two that needs to be explicitly explained. Her simplified definition to help clear up this potential misunderstanding is to view racism as "prejudice plus power" (p. 66). That is, people of all races may have certain beliefs about other races (i.e. prejudices), but racism can only exist when these prejudices are combined with social power. This connects back to Wellman's (1977) definition of racism as systemic advantage, not just individual actions.

Racism should be seen as a belief in a group's superiority combined with the power to oppress in racist ways, which then impact a variety of racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002). In a U.S. context, the group with this power to oppress through courts, legislatures, and other governmental bureaucracies are White (Anderson, 2017). Under this definition of racism, there cannot be "reverse racism" because social power is *not* fluid, but rests squarely with Whites and our historical and contemporary enactment of supremacy over other groups (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Racism, then, is an ever-present system designed to preserve and maintain this White supremacy while subordinating Black and Brown individuals and communities (Pérez-Huber, 2010; Taylor, 2009). Simply put, racism is "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde, 1984, p. 115), where Whites are the only ones who possess this "inherent superiority" in the United States. Racism hinges on this idea of superiority and power stemming from Whites toward other groups in this country.

Many who are White equate ideas of racism or supremacy with overt exemplars, such as the Ku Klux Klan or Nazism (Fasching-Varner, 2012), and see issues of race as just a problem for those who identify as Black or Brown. However, as Matias (2013) writes, "Race is a two-

sided coin; one that represents the plight of People of Color and the other that represents how normalized exertions of Whiteness interconnects with the pain of racism" (p. 70). She explains that we who are White need to understand how we *became* White (Roediger, 1993, 2005), but also be able to move beyond this understanding in order to be anti-racist in our lives.

However, as Marx (2004) writes, "fair or unfair, like it or not, Whites benefit from their/our whiteness" (p. 32)—even Whites who see themselves as anti-racists operate within this system. As Allen (2004) writes, "all whites gain power, status, and privilege from this system, even if we are actively anti-racist. The best a white person can be is a white anti-racist racist" (p. 130). Allen's argument posits that being White in a system where possessing Whiteness grants systemic privileges, even the best-intentioned Whites with anti-racist talk and action still benefit from these privileges. This is something I struggle with myself and that brings with me into this study—that as a White researcher who benefits immensely from a system that has oppressed (and continues to oppress) Black and Brown communities in this country for hundreds of years, even though I strive to be anti-racist in my scholarship and teaching, the best I can hope to be is an "anti-racist racist."

Theoretical Framework: Critical Whiteness Studies

White teachers (and myself as a White researcher) often come to our professions in what research has shown to be a very White-washed way—many grow up in homogenously White communities with White teachers and little personal exposure to those Black and Brown communities beyond problematic representations through news and media. Even without this geographic isolation, being White in the United States is the "normal" and anything else is not. This "normative" belief of Whiteness within the context of education needs to be critically

examined and disrupted. The theory that grounds this study and forces this examination to lead to disruption, then, is Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS).

CWS is an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and allows for a more specific focus and critique on Whiteness specifically, rather than a broader examination of race. CRT grew out of critical legal studies in the 1980s and was used initially by activists and scholars to examine and transform relationships of race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT gives researchers a framework to investigate multiple forms of oppression in the daily lives of those who are Black and Brown (Pérez-Huber, 2010). Made up of five tenets, CRT is grounded in the belief that race and racism are matters of everyday life for Black and Brown communities (Ledesma & Solórzano, 2013). This theory was initially advanced in education by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) in an attempt to "uncover or decipher the social-structural and cultural significance of race in education" (p. 50). The development of CRT and its use in a variety of fields, including education, has led to other extensions which each allow for deeper examinations of specific communities including LatCrit, TribalCrit, AsianCrit, and Critical Whiteness Studies.

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), in building upon the foundations of CRT, allows for a deeper examination and ultimately disruption of the "normality of hegemonic" Whiteness and how Whites "deflect, ignore, or dismiss their role, racialization, and privilege in race dynamics" (Matias et al., 2014, p. 291). Though there are no tenets of CWS like in CRT, I summarize key points I have identified within and across this framework that I use in my analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key points of Critical Whiteness Studies

Key Points	**Author(s)**
Whiteness is internalized by all.	Matias & Mackey (2016)
Whites have limited understanding of their role in oppressing others.	Gillborn (2005)
Whiteness affects all people.	Kennedy, Middleton, & Ratcliffe (2005)

Table 1 (cont'd)

Whiteness is viewed as "normal."	Matias (2013)
Whiteness should be the center of critique and transformation.	Leonardo (2013)
Whiteness perpetuates a racist system.	Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo (2014)

Drawing from Roediger's (1993) historical analysis of how Whiteness was used as racial currency for immigrant workers during the Industrial Revolution and Ignatiev's (1995) work on how and why Irish workers in the U.S. "became" White, CWS allows scholars to push against such normative and static views of what it means to be White in this society to disrupt this normativity and investigate how it is perpetuated (Matias & Mackey, 2016). This is exactly why this theoretical framework is necessary to ground this study—to help investigate a student teacher's beliefs as she moves from university to a K-12 classroom but uncovering and examining the normative ways Whiteness is perpetuated within a student teacher's experience.

CWS is also important because White researchers like myself have struggled with their role in engaging in CRT, as it may been seen as another way of colonization into a field developed by and for People of Color (Bergerson, 2003). I see two benefits of White scholars using CRT. First, such it allows me to center race in my life and work to both see and attempt to reject the privileges I have in both spaces. It also adds another voice to the combined choir of work before me, which might further legitimize CRT as a method and lens to study race and racism—this is not through my use of it as a *White* scholar, but by adding another straw to the existing stack of work pushing against institutional views that CRT is somehow not legitimate—so that our combined voices can prove otherwise. However, Bergerson (2003) also cautions against Whites using CRT to "understand" experiences of People of Color and argues that CRT might actually be appropriated by those who identify as White.

There is a potential hazard in using a CWS framework in this study—it may be seen as a re-centering of Whiteness and the experience of Whites over Black and Brown experiences. Leonardo (2013) discusses this tension and how this re-centering is not to push Black and Brown communities and their experiences to the margins, but instead to force Whiteness to be the center of critique and transformation. I see this as a necessary centering since, in our society, Whiteness is nearly always centered, but not always critiqued. A danger of Whiteness is that many Whites are unaware of the concept of Whiteness as a construct and unaware of their complacency and complicity in perpetuating the inequities of Whiteness (Gillborn, 2005). CWS offers a way to analyze the power of Whiteness (Matias & Mackey, 2016) as a teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching placement.

Literature Review

My experience teaching EDU 101 and encountering students who resist the ideas I teach is not unique. Research shows us that White PSTs often enter university courses with problematic beliefs about race that are constructed in and reinforced by their White-bubbled lives. This means that coursework that asks them to consider deeply held beliefs about issues such as race can be difficult for them to process. Below, I review literature critical for this study, including work around general teacher beliefs, beliefs of PSTs, and teacher beliefs in relation to concepts such as race. My study is important because it adds to the literature in chronicling how a student teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching experience, a noticeable gap in the field.

Examining Teacher Beliefs

Teacher beliefs direct teachers' perceptions of the world and influence outcomes of learning within a classroom (Abelson, 1986; Alexander & Dochy, 1995; Amos, 2011). The

beliefs that teachers develop *before* they begin their practice have significant influence over how they plan and implement lessons once they enter a classroom (Hachfeld et al., 2011). These beliefs define the learning environment and respond to particular materials and approaches a teacher uses while teaching (Alexander & Dochy, 1995). A teacher's beliefs also determine a teacher's philosophy, and ultimately, their practice—what they believe about teaching and learning comes through in both their pedagogy and the expectations they have of students (Donnell & Gettinger, 2015; Fang, 1996; Villegas, 2007). Simply put, what a teacher believes is central to the act of teaching (Kagan, 1992). Pajares (1992) writes,

> …the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom…Understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices. (p. 307)

While research shows that teacher beliefs are linked to practices, the foundations of these beliefs are built long before teachers enter classrooms and are difficult to change. The beliefs PSTs bring into their courses impact what they take up and what they reject in their teacher preparation program and the ways the end up teaching in the classroom (Amos, 2011).

In a comprehensive review of 93 empirical studies 20 years ago, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) found PST beliefs often do *not* change, unless they are in programs with specific features. They write,

> the program features that appeared to best support beginning teachers in this challenge [of changing beliefs] were constant and significant support, working with cohort groups, and a systematic long-term message that provides some guidance and direction for personal development. (p. 161)

This is a bit depressing for those of us who teach stand-alone courses like EDU 101 focused on having PSTs (and especially White PSTs) examine their often-problematic beliefs about race and Whiteness. In fact, research shows the beliefs pre-service teachers (PSTs) bring with them into

their teacher preparation program are difficult to change without certain structures in place. That is, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) would posit that a singular course like EDU 101 is not something that is going to fundamentally change a student's beliefs about race. Their review indicates that, without specific supports and guidance through and across their program, PSTs are not likely to change their beliefs if they are problematic. So while these courses are critical to have, unless there are more systemic supports through the teacher preparation program, changing problematic beliefs in one course can be difficult.

Those of us within teacher education who focus our work on race are quite familiar with the trajectory of many White PSTs learning about race. In teacher preparation programs, PSTs often discount or actively resist information that challenges the beliefs they bring with them into the program (Dunn, Dotson, Ford, & Roberts, 2014; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Researchers have found that if ideas learned in courses do not align with their previously held beliefs, PSTs often dismiss them as being overly theoretical, impractical, or just wrong (Amos, 2011; Raths, 2001). This is especially pertinent in courses that focus on issues of social justice, where White students often resist their role in perpetuating oppressive structures (e.g. Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Chan & Treacy, 1996; Conklin & Hughes, 2016; Dunn et al., 2014). Sometimes students do not resist the ideas presented in class, but the find the concept of talking about race and racism to be uncomfortable (Cross, Bayazit, & Dunn, 2018; Matias & Liou, 2015). Buchanan (2015) found that PSTs believed that merely *talking* about race was controversial and potentially offensive and were, at best, hesitant, or, at worst, avoidant to talking about race in a university setting—before they were even in K-12 classrooms. As a White male navigating this resistance, it is important to note that even the resistance I experience in classrooms is privileged. That is, instances of resistance to such ideas in university classrooms is

more apparent for women, faculty of color, and others with marginalized identities (Luthra, 2002; Rodriguez, 2009).

There is hope, however. Some student teachers point to teacher preparation programs or courses that focus on "urban" [2] classrooms as helpful for them to consider teaching about race and culture (Castro, Hawkman, & Diaz, 2015; Martell, 2017). Teacher preparation programs that emphasize social-justice-oriented approaches to issues such as race like those studied by Whipp (2013) or Reagan, Chen, and Vernikoff (2016) have been found to shift PSTs beliefs about race and justice. For example, Whipp (2013) found that 12 first year teachers who graduated from a teacher preparation program focused on justice benefited from focused and extensive cross-culture experiences, as well as coursework and field experiences that were based on justice oriented teaching. Their beliefs shifted as a result of their teacher preparation program. However, Whipp (2013) also found that these students had also been supported by prior cross-cultural experiences, leading her to suggest such pre-PST experiences be considered for admission into teacher education programs. Similarly, Reagan et al. (2016) examined 37 teachers across two cohorts who completed an urban teacher residency program. Their results build upon Whipp's (2013) and suggest that the focused nature of the cohort program allowed residents to explore and articulate their beliefs about race and social justice throughout the program, indicating their desire to teach in socially just ways. While studies such as these are encouraging in showing how teacher preparation programs might consider thinking about issues such as race or social justice, there are limits to this work—which each study acknowledges. In both studies, students self-selected into "urban" programs that had a focus on social justice. That is, students chose to join a program with stated beliefs revolving around justice—the programs sat alongside others that

[2] I use quotation marks around "urban" to indicate that there is no real shared, overarching understanding or definition of urban—but that in its use it typically signals a focus on Students of Color (Milner, 2012).

were not "urban" nor focused on social justice. Thus, the importance of personal biography is critical for teacher preparation programs that center around issues of race or social justice (Martell & Stevens, 2017).

Another drawback of this approach of having specific "urban"-centered cohorts amidst "normal" tracks of teacher preparation is the unspoken message that exists within teacher preparation—that unless this type of social justice work is done across the teacher preparation program, comprehensive discussions about race and justice seem to be only present when a teacher education program has such an "urban" focus. Scholars like Watson (2011, 2012) position language like "urban" as euphemisms teachers employ to talk about race without using race words. This begs a question—what happens to PSTs in programs that are not focused on "urban" education? If race is only addressed in courses with an "urban" focus, it reiterates the normalcy and invisibility of race for those who identify as White as somehow "unraced." Research has shown that if PSTs *do* talk about their beliefs regarding race in "regular" teacher preparation courses, they are often not aware of the function of their own Whiteness, even if they are talking *about* Whiteness in that particular course (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002). Instead, White educators beliefs about race and racial identity in these courses often focus on their understanding of how *others* are racialized instead of their *own* racialized Whiteness (Fasching-Varner, 2013). My study adds to this important work by examining a teacher who was *not* part of an urban-focused program or cohort and how her beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching experience.

Oftentimes, when PSTs complete their teacher preparation program and enter a classroom, they are given textbooks and curricular material that are viewed as "official" forms of knowledge (Apple 1992). In this age of "accountability," teachers are held to strict mandates

about what they should teach, which limits their autonomy (Cross et al., 2018). For teachers—especially beginning teachers learning to navigate systems of power within a building or a district, it can be difficult to deviate or push against such "official" knowledges.

> Unless they have a clear sense of purpose, teachers' primary actions continue to be coverage of the curriculum and control of students, no matter how much they know about history, teaching, or the intersection of the two. Deriving from the common, and understandable, goals of fitting in and working efficiently, such practices appear to be the "default" means of teaching, and they quickly override principles based on the content of university coursework—even when teachers ostensibly understand and accept those principles. (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 258)

This "clear sense of purpose" is critical for teachers to take with them out of their university classrooms as they put their beliefs into practice in their own K-12 classrooms. Such a clear purpose requires not only the ability to frame and focus the ideas being presented, but picking and choosing the materials to design their instruction (Ball & Cohen, 1996). However, this sort of "ambitious teaching"—where the teachers know not only the content, but also their students, as well as ways to "create the necessary space" to push against problematic curricula—is often not the focus in teacher preparation programs (Grant, 2003, p. xi).

Some White PSTs who move from undergraduate coursework into student teaching enter classrooms with a belief that discussions on race *are* important in elementary classrooms, but have trouble implementing those beliefs. Teacher preparation programs can help provide opportunities for PSTs to push against and disrupt the "official knowledge" of textbooks once they enter classrooms. However, even though programs can provide coursework and experiences to this end, oftentimes this drive and ability to disrupt "official" curricula is predicated on the previous lived experiences PSTs bring into their teaching (Salinas & Castro, 2010).

It is often also the case that once in the classroom, even though student teachers might believe such discussions are important, they actively *avoid* talking about race. Teaching social

issues such as sex, religion, or race in schools has been seen to be controversial or "taboo" by teachers for years (Ayers & Ayers, 2011; Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999). Elementary teachers in particular are not comfortable teaching about race, often viewing it as something too controversial for young students (Bolgatz, 2005; Martell, 2017; Solomona et al., 2005). Some teachers see it as important, but cite a need for more support in learning how to facilitate these conversations and answer student question related to race (Epstein, 2009; Evans et al., 1999; Martell, 2017). Some teachers fear that by even discussing race, they will be labeled a racist (Denevi, 2018) or see such discussions as risking their future jobs (Evans et al., 1999). Still others have indicated that they see themselves as a protector of innocence for elementary-aged children, preferring "happy endings" to more nuanced examination of history, and race in particular (James, 2008). With all these obstacles, it is perhaps easy to see that learning how to become a teacher who centers race in their curriculum can take years to develop and flourish in a classroom setting (Martell & Stevens, 2017; Salinas & Castro, 2010).

Some White teachers, as they move from PST to student teacher to full-time teacher, may have complex understandings and beliefs of race and be wiling to push past the taboo of talking about it in their classrooms, yet *still* fall victim to the "norms" our society has about race. The implementation of their good intentions may still be damaging to students. Warren (2015) reminds us that such good intentions from teachers can be harmful because many are not prepared for the experience of teaching and that "good intentions are not a substitute for culturally accurate and appropriate perceptions of students" and that "Whiteness works covertly through White teachers' good intentions" (p. 594).

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) found what they called "equity traps" (such as deficit views of students or racial erasure by teachers or administrators) as other reasons why some

White teachers were not successfully teaching Students of Color. This was followed by McKenzie and Phillips (2016), who re-examined these equity traps with pre-service and beginning teachers. Such traps are a result of the deep-seeded nature of racism rooted in our society, with more than just a course at university to help teachers. As McKenzie and Phillips (2016) write, "it will take a rigorous programme designed to disrupt the mental models and behaviours that ensnarl us, taught by instructors that understand these traps and have the pedagogical skills and passion to free us" (p. 37).

As teacher educators, understanding the beliefs of preservice and student teachers is key if we are to consider ways to improve how we structure teacher preparation programs, especially when thinking about the importance of race in education. Without this guiding direction, teachers can easily follow the path of least resistance offered by scripted curricula and district mandated materials, which only continue the cycle of Whiteness.

Methodology

First and foremost, I reject ideas of objectivity or impartiality in my research (Stovall, 2014). I believe the process of research is not neutral (Brown & Strega, 2005). Rather, research itself is "a highly political endeavor with significant implications for the researcher as well as the individuals and contexts that serve as the focus of study" (Brown, Carducci, & Kuby, 2014, p. 1). By choosing where to research, who to research, what questions to ask, and how to conduct myself within the research, I am engaging in a distinctly political act and embrace the pieces of myself that I bring into my work. Across my scholarship and teaching, I engage with preservice and inservice teachers to confront problematic views of race with the intent to change those beliefs.

I hold tightly to the idea that working with individuals is worthwhile, even if large-scale results or replicability are not possible in those contexts. Even though this work might not result in immediate systemic change, I agree with Pearce (2012) who argues, "there is much for individual schools and teachers to do in understanding how their practices might uphold white norms, and prevent other perspectives from becoming embedded in the curriculum" (p. 470). That is, I see the need for individuals to examine how their actions relate to structures before those structures may be able to change. I believe individual change is necessary, but not sufficient, to changes larger systems of power and opportunity.

Though there is no "blueprint" for qualitative research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2015, p. 219), such research is typically defined as a way to either explore or understand how individuals or groups make meaning in the messy social settings of the world (Cohen et al., 2015; Creswell, 2014). I use a case study approach. Case study allows for a deep look at a particular topic in a natural context (Stake, 2005). The case under exploration here is that of one White teacher's beliefs about race that emerge during her student teaching.

Researcher Positionality

I enter this study as a White, cisgender, heterosexual male former elementary teacher, and current teacher educator and researcher of race and Whiteness. Those identities grant me many privileges in society that I did not earn. As an undergraduate pre-service teacher, I encountered a course much like EDU 101 and demonstrated the same types of resistance discussed in the literature above. Through life experiences of working domestically and abroad with populations who have been marginalized, I have to come to better understand the systemic ways in which this marginalization has happened, and my complacency in the process. My beliefs about race have shifted considerably in the last 20 years. My goal as an educational researcher is to use my

Whiteness to help other Whites first see and confront these things (which I myself resisted) in order to eventually teach in ways that are anti-racist. I enter this work knowing, as Allen and Rossatto (2009) wrote, that putting such anti-racist ideas are into practice are "easier said than done" (p. 169). However, as I alluded to at the onset of this piece, and will explain in further detail later, despite my growth and understanding, I still struggled to push against my own Whiteness to fully enact my own beliefs about race as a researcher during this study.

The Teacher and the School

Ms. B was selected for this study using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). I wanted to work with someone who had graduated from MU, taken EDU 101, but had not been a part of an urban-focused cohort. Because we would be talking about topics like race and Whiteness that are typically considered taboo, I wanted to work with someone with whom I had an existing relationship with, yet had not directly taught. Ms. B had worked in my partner's classroom during her senior year, and she had expressed interest in my research. When I approached her about the study, she was willing, though a bit apprehensive, to talk about race with me during her student teaching.

Ms. B identifies as a White, cisgender, heterosexual, native English speaker. She falls into the category of most teachers in this country—White, female, and monolingual. Ms. B was completing her yearlong student teaching at Pleasantville Elementary School during the 2016-17 school year when this study occurred. According to school data from that year, 42% of students at Pleasantville identified as African American, 30% White, 11% Asian, 9% Hispanic, and 8% who identified as two or more races. 71% of the students were identified as "economically disadvantaged" (which is determined by eligibility for free or reduced lunch, live in households receiving food or cash assistance, or are homeless, migrants, or in foster care). Furthermore, 23%

of the students in the school were identified as English Language Learners. Of the 36 teachers working in the school, 33 identify as White and 3 identify as African American. The school lies on the outskirts of a mid-sized majority White city in the Midwest (see Table 2).

Table 2*:* 2016-17 Racial demographics of Pleasantville Elementary taken from state data

	White	**Hispanic/Latino**	**African American**	**Two or more races**	**Asian**	**American Indian or Alaska Native**
Students (n=370)	110 (30%)	33 (9%)	156 (42%)	30 (8%)	40 (11%)	1 (<1%)
Teachers (n=36)	33 (92%)	0	3 (8%)	0	0	0

Data Sources

I was able to collect a number of different types of data (Cohen et al., 2015) across the study. First, I conducted a semi-structured interview at the beginning of the Fall 2016 semester to gauge Ms. B's understanding of race and Whiteness before beginning her teaching placement (Appendix A). I also held a post-semester interview via Facetime in January 2017 (Appendix B).

Additionally, I also engaged Ms. B in four bi-weekly reflection response questions over the course of two months, shared via email. This type of check-in every other week was created to help me better understand her thoughts and beliefs without encroaching too heavily on the daily demands of a student teacher. My bi-weekly check-ins became very iterative and interactive—that is, I crafted each set of questions based on previous responses or current events (Appendix C). Instead of just "collecting" the responses she gave, this also allowed me to engage in a "digital dialog" with Ms. B where I found myself giving resources, answering questions, or pushing her thinking after each response through our emails back and forth to each other. Ms. B and I also engaged in two unstructured interviews during the semester, where we talked about the study in the teachers' lounge during her break (See Appendix D for data analysis table).

Throughout the study, I memoed after conversations, interviews, and check-ins and in order to record my own reflections on the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The memos were especially helpful as I thought about questions and ideas for the bi-weekly responses. I used those memos to help craft the bi-weekly questions and to think about how I would answer her responses, as well as bring up topics to discuss during our mid-semester interviews.

Data Analysis

To explore the ways Ms. B's beliefs about race emerged during her student teaching experience, I applied multiple layers of coding to the data we had generated together using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) To begin my analysis, I re-read the transcripts from the multiple data sources (the semi-structured pre- and post-interviews, the two unstructured interviews, the four bi-weekly digital dialog responses, and my memos) numerous times. In these initial reads, I used open coding techniques (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and drew from Saldaña (2016) as I broke the data into discrete parts to examine and compare. Patton (2002) describes this type of inductive approach as an "immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships" (p. 41). In immersing myself in the details to discover patterns in these initial reads, I was specifically focused on the ways Ms. B's beliefs about race were emerging, and the initial codes reflected this focus (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this approach, I was able to develop 23 unique initial codes. Using axial coding techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I was able to find similarities and patterns across the codes that I then collapsed into six broader topics during a second round of coding. Revisiting the data for a third round of coding, I further refined those six topics into three overarching themes. I found that Ms. B's beliefs about race were shaped by (1) her experiences as an individual, (2) her experiences as a

professional, and (3) her pedagogical choices as a student teacher. (See Appendix E for codes, topics, and themes.)

Potential Limitations and Delimitations

Since this is a case study, I will not be attempting to make broad generalizations, but rather will focus on a specific teacher within a specific context (Maxwell, 2005). Also, because race is such a contentious topic in U.S. society, and because Ms. B knows my interest in race and Whiteness, her responses may reflect social desirability bias. However, because I spent an entire semester with Ms. B and collected data in various ways, the length of the study coupled with multiple data sources will help minimize this potential bias. In addition, even though I am not centering gender in my analysis, I recognize that gender may be a limiting factor in our conversations, given my positionality as a male researcher working with Ms. B, a female student teacher. That gender difference may have influenced how Ms. B (either consciously or not) responded to my questions.

There is also a potential limitation in my theoretical framing. Since I center beliefs about race in my study, I do not interrogate beliefs about other multiple, intersecting identities, such as class and gender, in my study. While this might be a criticism of using CWS as a framework, I do this intentionally, so that Whiteness itself can be the center of my critique (Leonardo, 2013). This is not to limit or push to the side how other positionalities might be further investigated, but to allow for a more laser-like focus on beliefs related to race and Whiteness by this particular teacher.

Findings and Discussion

This study was focused on a single research question: *How do a White teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching experience?* Findings illustrated that her beliefs

emerged in three different ways: when she talked about her own personal experiences; when she talked about her professional experiences; when talking about the pedagogical choices she made as a student teacher. When examined through the lens of CWS, it is clear that, however they emerged, Ms. B's beliefs about race are problematic.

Ms. B's Beliefs on Race Emerging Through Personal Experiences

> *"I was like, 'oh my gosh, I am so sheltered coming from this town where there's all these white people and all these Christians that believe the same thing"*
> —Ms. B on learning about identity in a course at MU

Ms. B identifies as White and seemed to realize the limits of growing up in a predominately White small town. She frequently discussed how sheltered she felt before coming to MU and how much she learned about her own identity in her courses. When I asked her about her experience in EDU 101, she also had trouble remembering specifics, since she had taken it 4 years earlier. However, the course had stuck out to her in a few ways. In our pre-semester interview, Ms. B described what she could remember about the class and how it changed her beliefs.

> *I don't remember any specific stuff. But that was probably the first time I thought about how you approach a student who is gay, lesbian, or transgender. Because, like I said, I was raised in a very Christian community. That really wasn't a thing. So I didn't read books with kids who had two moms in it or anything like that. At first I was like, "oh my gosh! I don't want to do this! This is so uncomfortable!" But I think that class just opened my eyes to this. You can't ignore if it's happening in your class.*

Though her take-away from the course content focused on her evolving beliefs regarding sexuality, Ms. B was particularly struck by the racial differences between her and her students in her service-learning placement during that course. This was her first experience working with Students of Color. During our pre-semester interview, she shared that:

> *I guess I was probably intimidated by my students. Because, here I am, a white, blonde girl coming in. Trying to teach these children who I don't know their language. I don't*

> *know anything about them. One of the teachers in that class was African American. So that was new, since I didn't have any teachers of color in the past.*

Besides being aware of her Whiteness, Ms. B was also aware of the power that is associated with being White. She believes it is the "dominant culture," leading to feelings of guilt about being White:

> *I guess sometimes I wonder what other people think of me. If I'm interacting with an African American—what they think of me. What their impression is of me. Because if they see White portrayed as powerful, what do they think my intentions are when I interact with them? Do they think I'm trying to be dominant or be right?*

In that same pre-semester interview, Ms. B referred to an incident that had happened earlier in the day to reiterate that point and demonstrate the guilt she associates with being White. She described an encounter with an African American server at a fast food restaurant where she ordered and was struck by how the worker did not make small talk with her.

> *I'm just wondering, does she think my intentions are bad? Does she think that I'm trying to be better than her or something like that?*

Ms. B was also surprised that other White students at MU did not have the same beliefs as her during her classes. For example, Ms. B described her experience with a Professor of Color who taught a literacy course that had a strong focus on race and how she felt when other students pushed back on the ideas he was presenting:

> *I heard a lot of other students talking about how they didn't think he should be talking about Black people all the time. And how, we're all White, asking, "Where's our poems?" Which shocked me; because it's like, "go open a book!" You'd think after all these classes that it'd be nailed into you that you need to be open to all these different perspectives. And then to go to a class where one perspective is focused on more than yours? I don't know.*

Ms. B shared how mad that made her and how frustrated she got with her classmates who responded in this way. I asked her if she ever confronted those classmates about these types of statements. While she did not confront them directly, Ms. B shared with me that she tried to

bring up the topic "*in a more polite way, or tried to be humorous about it. Like, 'haha, there's so many other ones written by white people."*

Besides experiences with MU peers, Ms. B also described tensions about race within her family. She told me that she often talks about race with her mother, who seems to have problematic views.

> *I feel like my mom's a racist actually. She makes a lot of comments, and I'm like, 'Mom, you really can't say that. That's not right. You can't make assumptions about people based on what they look like.' But that's again how she was raised. She's from a very small, conservative town and I think that's just how she was raised. She would never do something mean or act differently to anyone, but sometimes I hear those thoughts and I'm like, 'Mom, do you really think like that all the time?'*

MU as a place to grapple with personal experiences and beliefs. For Ms. B, it seems MU was a place where she was able to better understand and articulate her beliefs about her own multiple identities through coursework and experiences. Looking at her time and experiences at MU through a lens of CWS, she was able to identify different ways that Whiteness had been normalized in her life (Wildman, 1997). Ms. B's time at MU revealed to her the degree to which she had been sheltered from racial differences in her small town and how she believed that impacted her ideas about race. This, however, also resulted in White guilt (Steele, 1990), which was seen in her interactions at the fast food restaurant and how worried she is about how she is perceived by those who do not identify as White. Such beliefs can be problematic in addressing issues of race in schools as they misdirect the conversation back to Whiteness in ways that barely seem to scratch the surface of Whiteness and can perpetuate the racist system in which we all exist (Matias et al., 2014).

While Ms. B was able to identify problematic beliefs on race from her mother and other MU classmates once she had this revelation at MU, she had difficulty pushing back against these

beliefs. For example, the way she tries to playfully confront her classmates ("*haha, there's so many other [books] written by white people")* or the excuses she makes for her mother ("*that's just the way she was raised")* seem to demonstrate how difficult it was for her to confront others about their beliefs. Ms. B's responses reflect what DiAngelo (2018) calls White Fragility, when people who are White lack the stamina to engage in racial stress, and instead strive for self-comfort. These types of responses also echo Boler's (1999) concept of "passive empathy" that "produces no action towards justice but situates the powerful Western eye/I as the judging subject, never called upon to cast her gaze at her own reflection" (p. 161). Not only could Ms. B laugh off or excuse racist comments (demonstrating White Fragility), but Ms. B judged and excused the comments of her classmates and mother without taking action towards justice. Like many Whites, though she claimed she did not subscribe to those beliefs, she shared how she did not confront these problematic beliefs.

While Gillborn (2005) asserts that many Whites have *no* awareness of Whiteness or the inequities associated with Whiteness, Ms. B seems to be an exception to this. During our time together, Ms. B was very aware of her Whiteness. In fact, the "eye opening" experiences in her courses and field placements at MU helped shape Ms. B's belief about race and her own Whiteness. Her ability to see the problematic beliefs of other Whites suggests nuanced understandings of race and personal identity. However, as we will see in the following sections, Ms. B's beliefs that emerge through her professional experiences and pedagogical choices are more problematic.

Ms. B's Beliefs on Race Emerging Through Professional Experiences

"*I'm trying to be consistent throughout the whole class. And making sure that each student is treated just like the next.*"
—Ms. B discussing how she thinks about classroom management

Throughout this study, Ms. B shared her belief that race was *not* something she needed to consider if her students were White and something she *did* need to consider if she had Students of Color in her class. When I asked her in the pre-semester interview to predict whether she thought race would impact her teaching at all this year, Ms. B responded simply:

> *Oh yeah. There are no White kids in my class.*

When I asked her to explain what that would mean for her day-to-day teaching, Ms. B shared that,

> *It's something that I'm going to have to focus on in my lessons. Make sure I'm not showing them books with all these white kids when none of these kids are white.*

When I asked her if she thought race would come up in her practice, Ms. B shared her thoughts after meeting her students and their families at the open house at the beginning of the year—but instead of race, Ms. B immediately jumped to class in her response:

> *I mean, a lot of our students are on meal programs. Like, very low-income. And it looked like last night a lot of them were single mothers coming in with their kids. I don't know if that's a race thing or not. I don't know.*

For the first response question in a written reflection, when I asked Ms. B to consider if she had seen or experienced anything related to race in her placement in the first two weeks of school, Ms. B could not connect anything that happened in school to race.

> *I'm not sure if I remember a specific incident that I connect to race.*

She also expounded on a conversation she had with her mentor teacher about the differences between the community she grew up in and the community she was now teaching in.

> *We are both from [the same small community] and we both recognize that the communities are very different. We talked about the proximity of the two cities, yet their demographics are complete opposite. My classmates and teachers from [the small town] were for the most part, white, middle to upper class. This is very different from my placement, where many of my students qualify for reduced-price meals and come from single-parent homes. I guess I'm making assumptions that there is a connection between race and income, as well as race and familial relationships.*

This close proximity and racial difference was disconcerting for Ms. B. She followed up that,

> *This makes me wonder why, if [the two communities] are so close, why do their demographics in school differ so much? As I continue my student teaching, this is something I would like to investigate further.*

In the middle of our work together, a story that was making headlines was the controversy surrounding the NFL's Colin Kaepernick kneeling in protests of recent police killings of Black men during the national anthem. I wanted to get her take on the story, and asked her about it in my second response question I sent out two weeks later. Ms. B wrote:

> *I haven't really talked with anyone about the recent events in the country. It doesn't seem like the "outside world" comes into conversation at school…one of the things I'm struggling with is deciding how much my students actually think about race. Because [the school] is so diverse, racial differences come naturally to the students and they are comfortable with these differences.*

Two weeks after this, I shared with Ms. B an exercise that I had my EDU 101 students do in class—an online implicit bias test. In her third response, Ms. B was shocked and concerned about her apparent biases and beliefs towards White students that were revealed by the test:

> *I really wasn't sure what to think of these results, as they were sort of shocking to me. In my life, I don't really see this bias, so it's shocking to me to find out that this is an unconscious bias that I might actually have.*

In her response, Ms. B again related this to having grown up in an all-White community, but was able to find a positive in her results as she thinks about the future:

> *Growing up in a place where I was not exposed to people who are not like myself, and being fed a single story about people who are unlike me probably caused me to build up some biases that I was not even aware of. I can't say that I'm happy with my results, but now that I am aware of them, I can try to break them down.*

After this revelation, though, Ms. B shared how important it is for her to be fair and equal to all her students. She shared that:

> *I want to make sure I'm being fair to all my students no matter what they look like. Talking to all of them the same. Not treating the white kid any differently than I'm treating the black kid next to him. I think am treating all my students exactly the same.*

In the same emailed response, Ms. B again shared how race is not something that is important for those who are White. She wrote that:

> *Seeing as most of my students are not white, this bias [that I have} really could impact my students.*

By the end of the semester, though, Ms. B shared how she did *not* think race played much of a factor in her teaching because she believes she does not see race when she teaches. She told me in our post-interview that:

> *I don't know if race played a huge role in my planning or implementing of the lesson [over the course of the semester]. It was more like, these are who my students are and I need to meet their needs by doing XYZ. Because when I look at my kids I don't try to see black and white or whatever skin color they are.*

When I asked her if she thought her Whiteness had impacted her relationship with her students, she replied,

> *I don't think so. I personally don't think so. I give one of my kids a hug in the morning. I say I'm so excited that you're here. Let's have a wonderful day together. I don't look at my kids as think 'I'm going to give this black student a hug to make me feel good because I'm white.' I give them a hug because I enjoy them being at school that day.*

I had struggled with my role as a "passive" researcher throughout this research—especially since I was teaching EDU 101 at the time Ms. B and I were working together. While I was interested in learning about her beliefs, I also wanted to help her examine those beliefs. After the response above, I asked Ms. B to consider how Students of Colors' racial identities might impact them differently than White students. I shared how I believe racial identities do impact students and gave an example from my own teaching when a Black man in my own course that semester shared his life experiences about how differently he is perceived by police than his White peers. Ms. B was open to thinking differently about her beliefs:

> *Right! Like that makes him who he is. It's part of who he is today I guess…I understand what you're saying, My kids are all different races and that's made who they are. I think what you're saying makes sense…But I feel like I am developing myself professionally by having these conversations [with you].*

Being "color-evasive." Ms. B shared statements during our time together that showed how tightly she held on to her beliefs of not acknowledging racial difference. That is, she claimed a number of different times in a variety of ways that she did not see race when she looked at her classrooms. Comments such as these demonstrate problematic beliefs of race, ignore the lived reality of People of Color, perpetuate racism in this country, and are harmful to Students of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Modica, 2015). Such purposeful "color-evasive" moves (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017) resulted in Ms. B avoiding having to talk about race. Such moves are not passive, but rather active choices which perpetuate the status quo. Through these types of beliefs and rhetoric, it was not as if Ms. B were dismissing the *idea* of race, but similar to what Segall and Garrett (2013) found in their study, her beliefs dismissed the *significance* of race in her placement. Such beliefs lead to limited views of how Whiteness impacts students. For example, in her discussion about hugging her students no matter if they were Black or White, Ms. B shows a very limited view of how she was able to conceptualize Whiteness and its power within schools in her beliefs. That is, in her eyes, hugging all of her students, no matter the race, was something to strive for—without considering that some students might not want a hug from their White teacher. This seems to be an enactment of Gillborn's (2005) assertion that Whites are limited in their understanding of how they oppress others.

Relating to her engaging in color-evasive talk, Ms. B shared how she believed race was something only relevant in "diverse" spaces. She was adamant that race was not something she thought about in her hometown, which was majority White. This type of thinking showcases a limited understanding of the concept of race and a normalization of Whiteness found in CWS

(Matias, 2013, 2016; Matias & Newlove, 2017; Pearce, 2012). That is, Ms. B seemed to believe that since her hometown was predominantly White (i.e. "normal), race was not an issue. Race, instead, is viewed as a sort of aberration that exists only in the *absence* of Whiteness.

Juxtaposed with this is the way Ms. B described her students; this was not in overtly racial terms, but terms couched in economics, which minimizes ideas of race and racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Watson, 2011, 2012). So while she was adamant that she did not see race, she was quick to discuss class and family makeup through a lens steeped in race. Though she claimed not to see color, Ms. B ended up essentializing her students into a stereotype that at once allows her to remove race from her beliefs, yet is predicated on her beliefs about race (James, 2012).

Ms. B also made comments that pushed the responsibility of talking or thinking about race onto others. For example, Colin Kaepernick's decision to not stand for the National Anthem to protest police brutality and show solidarity with oppressed People of Color was not relegated just to *SportsCenter,* but was major news in our country for a number of weeks. Ms. B was aware of the event, yet did not think it was relevant in her students' lives. Ms. B's comment that *It doesn't seem like the "outside world" comes into conversation at school* seems to demonstrate a sort of "passing the buck" as if someone else was responsible to talk about race in school settings (Buchanan, 2015). However, as one of the teachers in the front of the room, she is one of the conversation gatekeepers, choosing what and how to teach (Ball & Cohen, 1996). She has trouble seeing that she has the ability to create space for such conversations (Grant, 2003). Again, the findings demonstrate that Ms. B was engaging in ideology that is dismissive of the importance of race, which we know from research is problematic (Jayakumar, 2015; Modica, 2015).

Ms. B's Beliefs on Race Emerging Through Talking about her Pedagogical Choices

"While I'm teaching, I need to remember that there are factors that are happening outside of school that are affecting students in my classroom, and I need to be aware of those things."

-Ms. B in her post-interview

Before the semester began, Ms. B expressed what seemed to be very clear beliefs about her teaching. She talked extensively with me about the ways she wanted all of her students to be acknowledged in her classroom. One way she pictured that happening was in the books she was going to use in class. She had a very specific example in mind of what she thought in our pre-semester interview:

> *If I was reading a book and I have two moms and I'm constantly reading books about a mom and a dad, then…where's my other mom in my book? It makes me feel like I'm the odd one out…I just think that kids need to see themselves reflected in the books that they read. And everywhere else in the classroom as well.*

In this example, Ms. B talked about sexuality. I followed up the answer to ask if she thought race would come into play in her practice this year as well. She linked it back to the idea of books again when she told me:

> *It's something that I'm going to have to focus on in my lessons. Make sure I'm not showing them books with all these white kids when none of these kids are white.*

Ms. B also stressed in this interview the importance of using what she called "authentic" texts with her students. She described the new reading program her mentor teacher had shown her, and the difference between the new and the old programs in terms of how the books accounted for race:

> *[In] the books they were using before, all the black kids had afros and dreads. It was just so stereotypical of what you're going to find in a book. The new one is totally authentic. It has great pictures, great stories.*

When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by "authentic," Ms. B replied that,

> *The other ones they were using were white people writing those math problems or writing stories about black people, then just giving them Afros because they were black.*

During our second mid-semester interview a few weeks later, the topic of books came up again. Ms. B described to me the books she was reading with her students in small groups. Up to that point she and the class had read *How to Eat Fried Worms* and *Ramona Quimby*. Both books were written by White writers featuring predominantly White characters. As we were talking, I reminded Ms. B of her initial interview statement that her students ought to be represented in books. Why had she chosen to read books with mostly White characters when most of her students were Black? Ms. B responded:

> *I guess it was just more of [her mentor teacher's] influence. These were books kids really enjoy. And I've had experience with them in the past. I guess I didn't really think about choosing them based on any certain thing about my students.*

Ms. B linked the process of choosing books to her mentor teacher, with whom she had not originally planned on working. There had been some tension between the pair throughout the semester, in part because the mentor had not expected to be working with a student teacher this year. I asked Ms. B if she thought that her mentor would be open to her choosing a different book for this small group reading time, relating to her beliefs about books she had shared earlier. Ms. B responded:

> *I feel like she's [the mentor teacher] one that doesn't like things that are different than what is normally done. So I sort of feel like I'm kind of just on this narrow path of doing things the way that they're normally done and then if I want to do something else, it will be approached in a way that, 'ok, you could try it. I don't know how well it will work.'*

I pointed out that this time away from the more rigid and structured reading program they were being required to implement might be the perfect place for her to pick books that might better represent her students. Ms. B responded:

I guess that's something I haven't thought about. But once we're finished with [Ramona Quimby] maybe I will search, or look more into picking a book that better reflects my kids.

Whereas Ms. B shared in our first mid-semester interview that race "*just hasn't really come up I guess*" when she talked with other teachers at her school, the situation changed a bit at the end of the semester when we talked for the last time. When I asked her if she talked about race with her mentor teacher at that point in the semester, Ms. B told me,

I feel like since she found out I was doing the study with you she's been more open to talking about it. Or I guess we've both been more open to talking about it…I don't just say, 'hey, do you want to talk about race right now?'...but if it comes up in conversation that we're having, I wouldn't say it's an uncomfortable topic for us to talk about.

My part in developing and implementing this study with her seemed to be a central point for Ms. B as she considered issues of race within her classroom.

I feel like she [the mentor teacher] knows that I'm comfortable talking it more now than I was before I started with you. This conversation [about race] probably would have been pretty awkward had I not had this kind of experience…you have probably opened my mind to some things I probably wasn't thinking about before…I feel like I am developing myself professionally by having these conversations.

In her final interview, I asked Ms. B if she thought race would play a bigger or smaller amount into her teaching next year when she got a job. Ms. B shared,

I feel like it would play a smaller amount, because in my school I feel like it's not talked about. [Pleasantville] is so diverse that it's what they know. But if I was in a school with all white kids, then if a black kid came in, I feel like that would draw a lot of attention to that one student. I don't know if race would be talked about as much if the majority of people or kids at the school were one race versus another.

Why is this so hard? Ms. B talked about having difficulty with teaching in her role as student teacher, compounded by a complex relationship with her mentor teacher. Being asked to consider the issue of race, which is a difficult task in and of itself for White people, proved to be too much for her. Teaching for her was an emotional journey. Ms. B talked about our time together as a sort of therapy session, and I comforted her multiple times as she teared up talking

about her relationship with her mentor teacher. Without an internalized, nuanced understanding of race, the task of planning for or considering the impact of race in her teaching seemed to be an "extra" burden for Ms. B, and was often neglected, or at best, tokenized. For Ms. B, it was easier to "go with the flow" and not trouble curricula or lessons given to her by her mentor teacher. Though Ms. B had shared her beliefs about how she planned to address race in her teaching at the beginning of the semester, this was not a core purpose of her teaching (Barton & Levstik, 2004), and issues of race often fell by the wayside as she navigated her relationship with her mentor. This relates to Pearce's (2012) findings that teachers often have difficulty challenging a normative White-centered curriculum.

When asked about race at the beginning of the semester, Ms. B shared how she believed it was something she needed to think about because of the racial makeup of her students. This again reiterates the idea that for many White teachers race is something to only consider when People are Color are present (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This was made clear when Ms. B talked about her belief of the importance of using "authentic" texts dealing with race in her classroom during our first pre-semester interview. However, when she talked about having the chance to *actually* choose books for her African American students, she shared how she did not actively choose racially representative books, but instead implemented the books her mentor teacher had chosen—both of which have White protagonists and written by White authors. Again, this reflects going with the flow perhaps to not make waves in her placement, despite her stated beliefs to the contrary (Buchanan, 2015).

This demonstrates how difficult it may be for Ms. B to push against the established (White) norms of a school in order to "disrupt Whiteness on a daily basis" (Matias & Grosland, 2016, p. 16). Ms. B was trying to negotiate her place as a teacher in a classroom where the

mentor did things a certain way and really did not seem to want her there. However, she shared how she believed that it was important to include books that were representative of her students, but chose to appease her mentor teacher instead of disrupting the curriculum (Salinas & Castro, 2010). While this reiterates how important cooperating mentor teachers are in forming the teaching practices of student teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 1998), it is also a reflection of the ease with which White teachers can enact the (White centered) status quo within education. Such a choice does not require the courage, commitment, or energy needed to push against Whiteness. Continuing the normalcy of reading *Ramona Quimby* was easier for Ms. B and required no skin in the game than had she chosen books more representative of her students. This was perhaps the biggest missed opportunity for Ms. B in our time together—a chance to put into practice the beliefs she claims to have.

Conclusion and Implications

Findings from this study illustrate that Ms. B, like many White teachers across the country, has beliefs steeped and centered in Whiteness. The ways her beliefs about race emerged through her personal experiences, professional experiences, and how she talks about her pedagogical decisions were all informed by a Whiteness that pervades our schools and society. While she was at times aware of Whiteness, her subscription to a color-evasive ideology and her inability to push against hegemonic norms within her personal life and her teaching are worthy of scrutiny, since her beliefs impact her actions in a classroom (Donnell & Gettinger, 2015; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Villegas, 2007). Examining Ms. B's beliefs through a lens of CWS shows us how tied up in Whiteness she is.

As I described at the beginning of the piece, this story is one of missed opportunities. Throughout our time together, Ms. B missed a number of opportunities to make good on her

stated beliefs to engage in humanizing and anti-racist pedagogy. Perhaps the biggest missed opportunity for Ms. B was her choice to teach books like *How to Eat Fried Worms* and *Ramona Quimby* instead of actively choosing texts more representative of her students.

However, the irony of this critique was made clear as I wrote up these findings and shared them with my dissertation chair. I was unaware of the ways I, too, was engaging in Whiteness through my research. For example, I engaged in the same "passive empathy" I was attempting to call out in Ms. B—a missed opportunity on my part during our time together. Just as Ms. B had difficulty confronting her mother and her classmates as they shared problematic beliefs, I kept quiet for most of the study and nodded instead of questioning and prodding and pushing her to consider the things she was sharing, passing judgment while not taking any action. Boler's (1999) use of metaphor to point out the hypocrisy of not gazing at one's own reflection is apt for me as well. In this case, it seems I was all too willing to use CWS as a lens to look at Ms. B's practice, but was unable to use it as a mirror to see the problematic things I was engaging in as well. It was not until our last interview that I really pushed Ms. B to consider what it might mean for Students of Color if she does not acknowledge the importance of their racial identity Her willingness to engage and consider my point shows how big of a missed opportunity this was for me. I am left to wonder what might have happened had I intervened more throughout our time together when she took problematic stances.

It was also made clear to me in my first drafts of this piece the ways I was engaging in my own enactment of DiAngelo's (2018) White Fragility. In writing my first drafts of this piece, I was finding it easier to critique nameless and faceless White educators in the literature I was reading, while making excuses for Ms. B—a White teacher I had developed a professional relationship with over the course of our nearly three years working together. The stress of calling

out Ms. B on her problematic beliefs led me to make excuses for her and push blame onto others. Only after this was pointed out to me was I able to move past my desire to keep things "polite" and "nice" to offer a more complete critique of our time together.

A final missed opportunity can be seen in Ms. B's teacher education program. Research is clear that many White PSTs actively resist or dismiss ideas presented in "diversity" courses. However, Ms. B shared (and demonstrated) that she was open to thinking about and changing her beliefs regarding race. Ms. B. was not a student who resisted the ideas presented in this course. In fact, she pointed to that course as something that influenced her beliefs about equity within teaching. However, it is clear in this study that not resisting these concepts is not enough—Ms. B claimed she did not resist the ideas presented in EDU 101, but neither was she able to share about engaging in meaningful race-related work. The missed opportunity from the teacher preparation program comes in that they had a student who expressed a desire to "*build a connection all the way through*" her program, but did not have that support. Though we cannot say what might have happened with Ms. B if the program was structured in this way, we do know from research that this type of through-line is helpful in developing more socially just educators (Martell, 2017; Reagan et al., 2016; Whipp, 2013).

I want to carefully consider my hope for transformation moving forward. I do not want to engage in the sort of "hokey hope" discussed by Duncan-Andrade (2009) that ignores lived inequities of People of Color. As he describes it, this type of hope is "false hope informed by privilege and rooted in the optimism of the spectator who needs not suffer—a 'let them eat cake' utterance that reveals a fundamental incomprehension of suffering" (p. 183). Likewise, Leonardo (2013) cautions Whites from engaging in a type of abstract hope that requires no action. As he writes, "[Whites] feel good without necessarily having to make good. For all the optimism they

express towards racial progress, they lack hope in its actional sense" (p. 165). For me to remain hopeful (and I must have some semblance of hope—this work is too difficult to not have hope), I and other White scholars and educators need to engage in the audacious hope described by Duncan-Andrade (2009). He writes, "Audacious hope stares down the painful path; and despite the overwhelming odds against us making it down that path to change, we make the journey again and again. There is no other choice" (p. 191).

It seems that the pipeline of teachers implicated in Whiteness will continue into the future. In order to help these teachers confront the hegemonic normalcy of Whiteness within our nation's public school classrooms, teacher educators and researchers like myself need to prepare teachers for how to take a stand in order to teach in anti-racist ways. I see my role as a White scholar and educator to learn from the missed opportunities of this study as I continue to push against Whiteness. My hope is that this continued work will lead to transformation. My hope is that this study is a chance for other teachers, researchers, and teacher preparation programs to learn from the missed opportunities we encountered, as we continue to collectively work to prepare teachers to teach in anti-racist ways in a system that is, by design, centered on Whiteness.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Beginning of Semester Interview Questions

1. Where did you grow up?
2. Can you describe the town you lived in?
3. What was your school experience like?
4. Did you have any Teachers or Students of Color at your school? How did you or others interact with them?
5. Tell me about your TE EDU 101 course.
    a. What were some things you remember about it?
    b. Where did you go for your service learning?
        i. What were your takeaways from service learning?
        ii. How did you see or understand race in your service learning?
    c. Can you tell me about what you remember learning about race?
6. Where are other places at MU you learned about race (either explicitly, like in class, or through experiences)?
7. What does the idea of race mean to you?
    a. How have you witnessed or experienced race in your own life?
    b. How would you describe how race impacted your schooling?
8. Can you tell me about Whiteness?
    a. Do you identify as White? Why or why not?
    b. What does it mean to you that you (do/don't) identify as White?
    c. For others?
    d. How did you see race play out in EDU 101?
9. Did you study abroad?
    a. Where did you go?

b. Can you tell me about that experience?

c. So you think that experience helped you think about race or Whiteness? Why or why not?

10. Did you have any Professors of Color at MU?

    a. Tell me about that experience.

        i. What did you think about them before class?

        ii. What are some things you heard others say about them?

    b. How was the course?

11. What are you most excited about for your internship this year?

12. What are you most worried about?

13. Do you think race might come into play this year? Why or why not? How so?

14. How do you think Whiteness might come into play this year?

    a. In your classroom?

    b. With your mentor teacher?

    c. With your students?

    d. With your students' families?

    e. With your colleagues?

15. What are some of the biases you have you might need to be aware of?

16. Is there anything else you want to share about what you believe about race or Whiteness?

17. Is there anything you thought I'd ask but didn't?

APPENDIX B: End of Semester Questions

1. How has this semester gone for you?
2. What are some of the best memories you have of this semester?
3. What are some of the most difficult memories you have of this semester?
4. What are you excited about for next semester?
5. Overall, how big a factor was race in your practice this semester? Why?
6. How do you think Whiteness impacted your relationship with:
    a. Your students?
    b. Your students' Families?
    c. Your Mentor?
    d. Your Colleagues?
7. What are some of the connections you made to the concepts you learned in this program this semester? Why?
8. What are some things from EDU 101 that you did *not* see in your classroom this semester? Why do you think that is?
9. Have any current events impacted your teaching this semester?
    a. Which ones?
    b. Why?
10. How have you heard or seen your others (students, families, or mentor teachers) talk about or enact their own beliefs about race this semester?
11. Do you think you were able to confront your biases you described at the beginning of the semester? Why or why not?
12. How big of an issue do you think race has been so far this year? Why?

Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't yet discussed?

APPENDIX C: Bi-Weekly response questions

First question
September 10, 2016 (emailed to Ms. B)

Happy Saturday! I hope you both had a great first week with your students. I'm sure you're both tired and perhaps a bit overwhelmed after your first 800 level class this week as well. Enjoy the weekend as you get ready for next week!

I don't want to add to your load, but I also would like to ask you to think about ideas of race you may have encountered during the first few days of being in your classrooms.

If you have time this weekend, could you look at the question below? If it's easiest to type a response, that's fine—but I was thinking it might be easiest to record yourselves answering the questions (using voice recorder on your phone) and sending them to me via email or text. Doing it that way shouldn't take more than a minute or two of actual talking. But whatever works best for you is fine with me.

Thanks again for joining this with me! My plan is to send a similar request every other week (so I'll email again in two weeks) for you to reflect on something and record/email something back.

Here is the question and sub-questions:
1. What are some of the things that happened last week that you connect to race? (Conversations you had or overheard, experiences you had or saw, things you noticed in your school or classroom, etc.)

a. Why do you think race played a part of this?
b. What did you do?
c. After thinking about it more, what might you do differently if this happened again? Why?

Again, I really appreciate your help with this. I also enjoyed listening to our interviews from before—you both had some really great insights and I wanted to thank you again for your help with that!

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns. You can email the recordings or written responses here or text them to me XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Have a great weekend!!

-[Author]

Second Question
September 25, 2016 (emailed to interns)

Good morning!

I hope you both have had a great few weeks! I know you're both very busy with school and

[university] stuff, but I really appreciate you helping me with my research! Thank you again!!

I've been thinking a lot about reflection questions this weekend and how to make them a bit more explicit and direct for you. It seems the first reflection may have been a bit vague and difficult to answer. Here is what I have come up with for this week:

With the recent current events around Colin Kaepernick's protest stance, as well as police killings of Black men in Oklahoma and North Carolina this week, I wonder if you could consider 2 questions for me:

1. How have you made sense of these (or other) current events that are centered on race? For example, in what ways have you thought about (or not thought about) what has been going on in the country this week? Have you talked about these events with anyone? Why or why not?

2. How have these issues (or other current event issues centered on race) been discussed at school (if at all)? Have you explicitly brought these issues up to your students? Why or why not? If you did, how did that discussion go? How have you talked to other teachers about these issues (if at all)? If you did, how did those discussions go?

You can email me your responses or if it's easier, take a voice memo and just record yourself answering the questions and email or text it to me (XXX-XXX-XXXX). I'm not sure which is easier for you.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Again, thank you for your help! I really appreciate you both!

-[Author]

Third Question
October 7, 2016 (emailed to student teacher)

Happy Friday!

I know things are probably **really**, **really** busy right now for you as you begin to think about transitioning to guided lead teaching. I don't want to add to your stress, but I appreciate the ways you both have been able to really consider the questions I pose and I enjoy reading/listening to your responses. **You are so thoughtful—thank you again** for doing this for and with me!

As I considered check-in questions, I've been thinking a bit about *biases* and had my interns do this exercise last week and thought this would be perfect for you as well.

If you have time, I'd like you to do **one** (or more if you'd like) of these things that helps us make sense of the idea of implicit bias and how that might connect to your teaching.

1. There is a recent article from NPR that I read that you might skim (or listen to—it's only **4 minutes**) about implicit biases.
http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/09/28/495488716/bias-isnt-just-a-police-problem-its-a-preschool-problem

2. Or, you could go this website to watch this quick video from Tim Wise about racial bias: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDFNfjzq37Q (i**t's only1:16 long**).

3. There is also a different video about implicit bias with Alan Alda: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RSVz6VEybk (it's about **8 min** long)

Could you please choose **one** (or more if you'd like!) of these--read the article, listen to the report, or watch the video.

Then, I thought it would be interesting for you to be able to take a test about implicit bias about race yourself. You can go to this website: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html and take the "Race IAT" (though you can take another test on your own afterwards if you like). I took it and it's very interesting!

With all this in mind, my questions I have for you to reflect on are:

1. How do you make sense of this idea of implicit bias?
2. How do you see these biases (or lack of them) in your teaching context?
3. You don't have to share the results of your IAT, but how might the results of your test help you personally as you go into your classroom next week? How might your implicit biases impact your students?

You don't have to answer all of these questions, but I wanted to pose some to you as you think about this idea of implicit biases.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns or if you'd like to talk more about this (or anything else—it could be something not related to this project if you need someone to bounce ideas off of), I'd be **more** than willing to chat (or if you wanted to talk to my wife about anything)

Again, thank you **so** much! I hope this is helpful and not a drag on you!!

Enjoy your weekend!

-[Author]

Fourth Question
November 13, 2017 (emailed to student teacher)

Sorry this email didn't come sooner in the weekend. Honestly, I've been reeling since the election and then I was at a conference over the weekend. It's been a wild few days and I apologize for not checking in earlier.

I guess with everything that happened in the last week, I'm curious about 2 things:

1. How has the election been discussed at school (by teachers, students, families, or even with each other)?

2. What are some thoughts you have moving forward about what the results of this election might mean (if anything) for you, your students, or their families?

I really appreciate your help with all of this. Take some time and think about your response if you need—maybe it's something to think about this whole week and then get back to me next weekend.

Thank you so much!

-Scott

APPENDIX D: Data Analysis Table

Type of Data collected	Amount of data collected
Pre-semester Interviews	One 90-minute, semi-structured interview at the beginning of the semester
Bi-weekly questions	4 questions emailed bi-weekly and collected via email
First mid-semester interview	1 45-minute to 1 hour unstructured interview
Second mid-semester interview	1 45-minute to 1 hour unstructured interview
Post-semester interview	1 90 minute, semi-structured interview at the end of the semester

APPENDIX E: Coding schema

Research Question: How do a White student teacher's beliefs about race emerge during her student teaching?

Initial codes	Bucketed topics	Emerging themes
1. Realizing own whiteness 2. Belief about racial immunity 3. Guilt from Whiteness 4. Participated in Whiteness 5. Family racial beliefs	1. Experiences related to racial beliefs 2. Experiences related to beliefs about Whiteness	1. Personal Experiences
6. Race only for non-whites 7. Importance of diversity 8. Colorblindness 9. Not noticing race 10. Comfortable with diversity 11. Racial bias awareness 12. Accepting of others 13. Culture differences 14. Race doesn't come up 15. Treat equally	3. "Diversity" 4. Personal beliefs on race	2. Professional experiences
16. Can't think about race 17. Things they want to incorporate 18. Building relationships 19. MT as restrictive 20. Packaged "curricula" 21. MU instructors 22. Busy-ness 23. Parent backlash	5. Beliefs about content 6. Beliefs about working with people	3. Pedagogical choices

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CHAPTER TWO—"*THERE WAS JUST ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT CAME UP": EXAMINING RACE-BASED PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF A WHITE, FIRST-YEAR ELEMENTARY TEACHER

Introduction

I usually do not answer the phone if I do not recognize the number on my caller ID. For some reason though, I absentmindedly answered, not quite ready for who was on the other line. I was in the first stages of my data collection for my dissertation—a project that had been in the works at that point for over a year. I had developed a close working relationship with a first year elementary teacher, gone through the IRB processes, and defended my proposed work to my committee. In fact, when I answered the phone, I had just walked in the door, having returned home from my first classroom observation. I was quite excited to begin the final stage of my doctoral work. The White[3] elementary teacher I had observed worked with me the year before, during her yearlong student teaching placement. We were partnering together again to see if and how she teaches about race in critical ways as she transitioned into her first year of teaching.

When I heard the voice on the phone, it took me a moment to place the name. I fumbled through my junk drawer as I tried to balance my phone on my neck, listening intently, and grabbed a sticky note to make sense of what I was hearing. The principal of the school I was working in was quick to the point. I attempted to squeeze in what she was telling me on bright

[3] There is disagreement within the literature base as to whether we should capitalize the term "White" or not. Some, such as Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, and Galindo (2014) choose to keep "white" in lowercase as a way to push against linguistic supremacy. Others, such as Hess (2017) choose to capitalize "White" as a way to draw attention to the term being a social construct. I choose to capitalize the term as way to remind readers that those who identify as White are raced—to push against the notion that one who identifies as White are somehow "normal," unraced, or removed from racial description. This subtle capitalization makes the term stick out in hopes to remind readers (and myself) of this concept. While my choice to capitalize White is done strategically, I also respect and honor the choices made by authors who have come before me in how they approach this issue. In this sense, while I capitalize "White" in my own work, when using direct quotes, I use the author's preferred style.

pink 2-inch notepad I had scooped up, but her words flowed fast and fierce. We had only met and corresponded over email before this call—she had not been at the school earlier in the day during my observation, so I had dropped off a letter I wished to send to families in the classroom I was observing with a secretary for the principal to look over. The letter had struck a nerve. The principal and other administrators in the school district were uncomfortable with my using the word "race" to describe my research, and insisted I use another term—or else find another district to do my work in.

In this paper, I share the story of my work with Mrs. B[4]—a White elementary teacher working in her first job after graduating from her teacher preparation program from Midwestern University (MU). The story has two central strands. The first revolves around the ways Mrs. B attempts to teach about race in critical ways, but falls short. The second involves the barriers she perceives that prevented her for teaching about race in critical ways. The phone call from the principal was the first in a number of barriers Mrs. B encountered during our time together. My argument in telling this story is twofold: First, I argue that when Mrs. B attempts to teach about race, she does it in superficial and uncritical ways. Secondly, when barriers to doing this work emerge, Mrs. B does not know how to (or is not willing to) overcome these barriers. In both cases, Whiteness is able to maintain its power in her practice. By exposing and examining how Mrs. B teaches and the barriers she perceives that arose during this work, I do not mean to provide excuses for Mrs. B as to why she was not able to engage in teaching about race in critical ways. Rather, my hope is that I and others might learn from her particular situation and be better prepared to help teachers face (and overcome) similar barriers in the future—as well as to think of ways we might address these barriers at a structural level as well.

[4]To protect identities, all names and names of places have been changed.

The story I share centers on answering two central questions. The first is, *How does a White, first year elementary teacher attempt to teach about race in critical ways?* The second question was put into motion with that phone call from the distressed principal—*What barriers do a White, first-year teacher perceive as preventing her from teaching about race in critical ways?* To answer these two questions, I first offer some context of why this type of work is important, situating the story within a broader national context of teaching, and define key terms I use in this work. Next, I lay out the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) and explain the necessity of examining this question through this particular lens. I then provide relevant literature as it applies to the challenges beginning teachers face as well as research relating to how teachers teach about race. I then explain the methodology used in this study, including the multiple positionalities I inhabit as a researcher. This is followed by my findings and discussion. Finally, I offer implications for this work as I move forward as a scholar and teacher educator.

National Context

Despite an increase in the number of Students of Color[5] and the decline in the number of White students, most teachers in U.S. public schools continue to be White (Banks, Marcelo, & Ben-Peretz, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A majority are also female, mono-

[5] I struggle with ways to describe populations in accurate and caring ways. In describing students and populations, I have wrestled with using terms such as "People of Color" or "Students of Color" as they seem to center those who are White—that is, the term "People of Color" seems to reflect that those who are White are not raced—as if color is a stand in for the idea of race—and that those who identify as "White" somehow possess no color. That is, I wonder if the term "People of Color" implies "People of Race"—which seems to limit ideas of those being raced to those who are not White. By this definition, those who are White have no "color" or no race—a sort of "neutral" starting point against which all other groups are compared. For me this seems to re-center those who identify as White as "normal"—the absence of color or race—against which other groups are compared. The irony is, however, that we constantly do make these comparisons—Students of Color in one category, and White students in another. As I use the term, I remind myself and readers of Jones' (1997) ideas that we are all "raced"—including those who identify as White. As I search for better descriptive terms, my hope is that this subtle shift of capitalizing the descriptor (e.g. "Students of Color" reflects my own beliefs about the power of words that I use as a scholar and teacher educator and my desire to be compassionate with my descriptions.

lingual English speakers who do not look like the students they teach (e.g. Emdin, 2016; Sleeter, 2017). This racial discrepancy seems to show that the White teaching force in the United States in the classroom is not ready for the students who will enter it. As Brock and Pennington (2014) write, "the cultural, linguistic, and racial differences between children in schools and their teachers matter to the extent that White, monolingual teachers are underprepared to teach children from non-dominant backgrounds" (p. 322). My own experiences in K-12 spaces reflect this, as White faces were mirrored back at me from the front of the classroom and through the curriculum year after year. This continued into my undergraduate years, when I finally took a course with a Black, tenured professor. Such segregation often limits the beliefs and understanding of Individuals and Communities of Color to deficit narratives by those of us who identify as White (Sleeter, 2017). Extending into the Eurocentric, Whitewashed curriculum confronting students at every turn, Whiteness and its grip on what is "normal" or "acceptable" continue to be found nearly everywhere in public education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner & Howard, 2013). Without some sort of disruption, this poisonous Whiteness will continue to reproduce a vicious cycle in schools across the country.

Defining Terms

I conceptualize key components of my work in specific ways, and find it important to clarify terms before moving deeper into my analysis. I begin by knowing that *race* is not biological, but a socially constructed idea of segregation in order for Whites to maintain power (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Building off this understanding, *racism* is more than just overt examples of horrible actions by individuals like Ku Klux Klan members or Nazis, but also includes more covert actions situated around systemic power. Such power is not fluid,

(which is why there is no such thing as "reverse racism"), but rather is situated with Whites, and is a central underpinning of U.S. society (Crenshaw, 1988; DiAngelo, 2018; Wellman, 1977).

Since *race* is a construct, Whiteness is not a static idea of a person's identity, but rather a "social construction that embraces white culture, ideology, racialization, expressions and experiences, epistemologies, emotions and behaviors" (Matias et al., 2014, p. 290). This construction of Whiteness is couched in history, linked to land ownership and labor control, and emerged on a predication of who got to be considered "White" in opposition to African Americans in the 19th century (Roediger, 1993, 2005). Whiteness served as a sort of wage that working class people who could be considered White could cash in on by *not* being considered Black. As DuBois (1935) writes,

> It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. (p. 703)

As such, when I use the term "White" I refer to the ways people identify racially (or are identified by others). Whiteness, though, is tied to this historical belief (that plays out in present day ways) of the ways this psychological wage is normalized and couched in structural power in our society—especially in our schools. I draw my understanding from Leonardo (2002) who writes,

> "Whiteness" is a racial discourse, whereas the category "white people" represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color...many white subjects have fought and still fight on the side of racial justice. To the extent that they perform this act, they disidentify with whiteness. By contrast, historically, the assertion of a white racial identity has had a violent career. (pp. 31–32)

It is with these understandings that I enter this work and find it so important to disrupt the Whiteness we see in public schools in the United States. By sharing the story of Mrs. B and the

ways she teaches about race in critical ways, and the barriers she perceives that prevent her from doing this during her first year on the job, we see Mrs. B missing opportunities to teach in critical ways not just because Mrs. B was *White*, but because of the ways *Whiteness* operates in public schools across the country.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is a framework that can be utilized to identify, explore, and critique such normalized beliefs in, and enactments of, Whiteness. CWS can be seen as an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which activists and scholars use to examine and transform relationships of race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Building upon CRT, CWS allows for a deeper examination and ultimately disruption of the "normality of hegemonic" Whiteness and how Whites "deflect, ignore, or dismiss their role, racialization, and privilege in race dynamics" (Matias et al., 2014, p. 291). As a framework, CWS is based on an understanding that Whiteness is viewed as "normal" (McIntosh, 1988) and that those of us who identify as White typically have a limited understanding of our role in perpetuating oppressions (Gillborn, 2005). Like CRT, CWS has a focus on disrupting and changing these systems.

CWS allows scholars a lens to investigate both the "normality" of Whiteness (Matias, 2013a), as well as the ways Whiteness perpetuates itself (Matias & Mackey, 2016; Matias et al., 2014). Scholars have argued that those who identify as White are often unable or unwilling to examine their own racial identity (Frankenberg, 1993), and CWS is a way to help make that identity visible. CWS provides me a mechanism to examine the unintentional ways those of us who identify as White engage in perpetuating racism without knowing it. This "white complicity" is often couched in good intentions, yet the White perpetrators are unaware of their

complicity in continuing hegemonic norms (Applebaum, 2004). Haviland (2008) reminds us there are numerous techniques that Whiteness employs to maintain this power—including relying on the myth of meritocracy (Laughter, 2013); maintaining a stance of being post-racial (Coble, Cobb, Deal, & Tuitt, 2013); or engaging in beliefs that do not acknowledge the importance of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006)[6]. CWS gives us ways to investigate the ways Whiteness holds onto power, with the hope of disrupting this hold.

However, CWS may be seen as a way to position White experiences as more important than those of People of Color. This re-centering of Whiteness is not to push Communities of Color and their experiences to the margins, but rather to reveal this often invisible concept of Whiteness, forcing this concept to be the center of critique and transformation (Leonardo, 2013). I also employ CWS as a framework in this piece because, as a White researcher, I have struggled with my role in engaging in CRT—it may be seen as another way of colonization of a field developed by and for people of color (Bergerson, 2003). I apply CWS not as a framework to critique White people as individuals, but rather the *idea* of Whiteness as a mechanism perpetuating a racist system and the ways educators (including myself as a White educational researcher) are complicit and complacent within this system (Allen, 2004; Applebaum, 2004; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013). CWS allows me to examine how Whiteness manifests itself during this study—specifically, how Mrs. B attempts to teach about race in critical ways, as well as the barriers she perceived that prevented her from engaging in this work.

[6] While scholars in the past have used the term "colorblind" to describe this phenomenon, there is a move to re-frame this term away from a more passive understanding of complicity, towards the term "color-evasiveness," which is more active, and helps "demonstrate the social construction of race and ability while simultaneously confronting the social and material consequences of racism and ableism" (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017, p. 154).

Literature Review

Before doing any work with teachers where there is an element of critique, I need to remind myself that teaching is complex. This is not to excuse teachers from their actions or to overlook the agency they have in the decisions they make, but rather to acknowledge that teaching is not a simple or straightforward task. As I have moved from the K-12 classroom into the academic spaces I now inhabit, I find myself with time and space to see education from a broader perspective than when I was in front of over twenty ten- and eleven-year olds for eight or more hours a day. It is easy for me as a researcher and teacher educator to forget about the daily life I lived not that long ago in a fifth grade classroom, which I can only describe as directed chaos. In my current role, I am privileged to be able to use this time and space to think deeply about broad issues that I was unable to think about with the myriad responsibilities I had as a teacher, including, but also going beyond the privilege I have now to go the bathroom whenever I want—something that I often did not have control over in my own classroom. So any critique I levy about teachers or the teaching profession is housed in a deep appreciation for the work done every day in K-12 classrooms around the world. Such critique is not meant to tear down teachers, but to find ways to build them and our education system as a whole up—so that teachers can best serve students, families, and communities.

Teaching is Complex

To be a teacher is to not only know the subject matter being taught, but to also be savvy in a variety of ways to convey that material to 20-30 students who may or may not want to be in school at that particular moment (Cohen, 2011). Teaching itself has been described as an unnatural and intricate process (Ball & Forzani, 2009), and "a practice of human improvement" (Cohen, 1988, p. 38). Lampert (2010) describes this work as inherently relational—both between

teacher and student, as well as teacher and subject matter. For those who have been or are currently in a classroom as a teacher, we know that teaching can feel like an intricate act of juggling multiple flaming objects while being told by administrators the new dance steps we should be performing. Those multiple flaming objects are found both inside and outside the classroom. Ball and Forzani (2009) describe the various pieces found within this tension:

> During class, [teachers] must keep track of 25 or more learners as they move through the content, keep their eye on the learning goals, attend to the integrity of the subject matter, manage individual student behavior and maintain a productive learning environment, pose strategically targeted questions, interpret students' work, craft responses, assess, and steer all of this toward each student's growth. Teachers do all of this in environments that involve parents, administrators, state objectives and tests, policies, and community priorities. (p. 501)

Kennedy (2006) explains the ideal of meeting all of these needs as something that is "inherently contradictory," and made even more complex by the necessity of these decisions happening in real time (p. 206). For recent graduates of teacher preparation programs, those challenges are exponentially more difficult as these new teachers are asked to meet all these demands in their own classrooms, often with limited support (Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

Challenges for New Teachers

While teachers face the challenges outlined above throughout the careers—the juggling of appeasing multiple stakeholders—it is especially challenging in the first five years of the profession (Lavigne, 2014). Teaching has been referred to as "the profession that eats its young" (Halford, 1998, p. 33), and for good reason. New teachers are expected to jump into their new classroom and seamlessly perform the duties of their veteran colleagues (Worthy, 2005). While teaching in and of itself is difficult, the chaos of learning the intricacies of teaching on the fly during the first year is considered the hardest of a teacher's career (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). During the first year of teaching, beginning teachers are often trying to merely survive—the

metaphor of being thrown into the profession with little supports as if it were a body of water, with a "sink or swim" mentality (Maciejewski, 2007). In fact, many teachers make the decision to leave the profession after a few years (Grossman & Thompson, 2008; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016; Lew & Nelson, 2016; Scherff, 2008)—with teachers leaving at the highest rate during their first two years of entering the profession (Glazer, 2018).

The current state of education in this neoliberal era is weighed heavily on high stakes testing where student test scores reflect teacher "effectiveness" (Au, 2007, 2015). This leads beginning teachers to feel that they need to be independent experts from their first day of teaching, which compounds the stress of teaching. As Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, and Pressley (2008) write,

> In the current climate of the US that focuses on teachers' responsibility for students' achievement, beginning teachers must become 'effective' quickly. With the pressure to have their students excel, while managing the high demands of classroom teaching, beginning teachers may be doubly stressed. (p. 684)

While many teachers are pushed out due to the enactment of such neoliberal policies (Dunn, 2015; Dunn, Deroo, & VanDerHeide, 2017), some are able to use their resignation as a form of teacher activism protesting against these policies (Dunn, Farver, Guenther, & Wexler, 2017). Either way, many new teachers find the challenges of juggling the myriad expectations to be overwhelming (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002) and seek out colleagues for guidance (who are themselves stressed), which results in an increase in stress and anxiety for the new teacher (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Time is especially hard for new teachers to manage—both time spent planning for lesson and units, but also balancing the personal and professional lives (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009).

In addition, research has shown that it is a number of years before the effectiveness of new teachers can promote student motivation and achievement (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017;

Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Worthy, 2005). This is especially troubling, because research has shown us that capable teachers have the largest impact on the achievement of students (Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b; Rockoff, 2004). So it stands to reason that we want to keep capable teachers in the classroom and help them through the first difficult years. Mentorship programs—where experienced teachers work with novice teachers—have been seen as both helpful and inefficient. For example, in one study, mentors were have been shown to help increase retention during teachers' initial years in the profession (Bressman, Winter, & Efron, 2018). But another study shows that even robust mentorship programs have no effect on their decision to stay or leave the profession—particularly in urban contexts (LoCascio, Smeaton, & Waters, 2016). While there is no consensus on *how* to keep "good" teachers in the classroom, there is agreement that it is important.

One of the biggest challenges new teachers face—besides managing a classroom—is in *what* to teach (Lavigne, 2014). Figuring out grade level curriculum is consistently seen as one of the biggest challenges for new teachers to figure out, and many teachers receive little or no direction in regards to curriculum (Kaufman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). This is difficult even with the growing reliance on prescribed curricular materials provided by districts (including pacing guides), which shape what and how teachers teach (Grossman & Thompson, 2008). That is, for new teachers who are struggling to survive in the sink or swim waters of their first year of teaching, they are likely going to grasp at any materials they encounter and use them—without perhaps giving critical thought to the content they are presenting. Though complicated enough with all the hats teachers are asked to wear, teaching is made *more* complex when ideas of race and culture are brought to the fore—topics that are typically not presented in

comprehensive and critical ways in prescribed materials mandated by districts. As Yosso (2002) writes,

> As they stand, traditional curricular structures, processes, and discourses reveal a hidden (and not-so-hidden) curriculum that marginalizes Chicana/o, Latina/o students (and other students of color) while they cater to white middle/upper class students. (p. 94)

Pushing against these traditional structures is difficult for veteran teachers to do, let alone teachers in their first year in the classroom.

Teaching About Race is Complex

Knowing that teaching is in and of itself a complicated endeavor, the concept of focusing on helping students understand race in critical ways within a classroom adds another layer of complexity. Concepts of race and the ubiquity of structural racism within the United States are key to our shared history—including central ideas of who can and cannot be considered a citizen in this country. Banks and Nguyen (2008) write

> Race is used to both define and divide Americans ... Racialization has worked through U.S. institutions and policies— including citizenship formation—in powerful ways and has significantly influenced who can become a citizen and has defined the rights and protections designated to each racial group. (p. 139)

This is important to consider as we are reminded of a central reason for the formation of public schools in the United States—understanding the role of citizenship (Labaree, 1997). However, teachers are often hesitant to center issues of race or racism in their teaching in critical or meaningful ways. Merely talking about race in public school classrooms can often be uncomfortable or even viewed as offensive for educators (Cross, Tosmur-Bayazit, & Dunn, 2018; Matias & Liou, 2015). Both preservice teachers and teacher educators often view the topic with a mixture of discomfort or even disinterest (Jennings, 2007).

Some classroom teachers avoid talking about race because it is considered a “taboo” topic to bring into classrooms (Ayers & Ayers, 2011; Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999). Others

find the concepts of race and racism too controversial—especially for young elementary students (Husband, 2012; Martell, 2017; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Some educators feel that they don't have skills to facilitate conversations on race (Epstein, 2009; Evans et al., 1999). Buchanan (2015) reminds us that even teachers who attempt to facilitate such conversations often are unable to engage in truly critical ways and that "conversations about race fall short of the potentially rich and problem-posing potential that teacher educators have in mind" (p. 5). Other teachers are wary because they feel—as was in my experience working in both K-12 and teacher preparation circles—that they might be labeled a racist just for bringing up the subject of race (Denevi, 2018).

Other teachers actively maneuver away from the topic because they see it as their role to protect a "perceived innocence" of children (James, 2008, p. 188). For example, James (2008) shared the ways pre-service teachers struggled with the ways to present Christopher Columbus, wanting to both present both sides of the story, but not wanting to show their future elementary students pictures of Columbus' men cutting off Taino hands. One preservice teacher reasoned she would make this decision to protect students from developmentally or morally inappropriate subject matter, because, "My kids see enough violence on TV. They don't need to hear about it in the classroom" (p. 188). However, children can and do understand issues of discrimination and racism by the time they reach elementary school (Tatum, 2017). Teachers, instead of shying away from this or attempting to protect children from an innocence they perceive, but that does not exist, need to help children navigate this complex topic in real and meaningful ways. As Martell (2017) writes, "It is crucial that elementary teachers help students understand both the individual prejudice and the systemic discrimination that occurs in society" (p. 75).

A few years ago, a reigning political discourse was that the United States had become

post-racial society, pointing to the election and re-election of President Barack Obama as proof that we are somehow past race (Carter Andrews & Tuitt, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Now, with the election of the 45th president, we see a return to explicit racism found in days past (Goldstein & Hall, 2017). When teachers buy into the myth that we somehow have moved past race in our society, it allows them to continue to take and perpetuate such race-neutral stances (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Stoll, 2014). By neglecting, dodging, or evading talking about race with elementary student, teachers perpetuate this myth that we live and convince them through our omission that issues of race and racism are not concerns in our society (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006).

The complexity of teaching—and specifically of teaching and taking a critical stance towards the issue of race—can be compounded if teachers (specifically White teachers) either do not have experiences provided by teacher educator programs (see, for example, Conklin & Hughes, 2016) and/or if they have a limited understanding or problematic beliefs of Communities of Color (Emdin, 2016; Howard, 2006). The idea of White pre-service teachers considering race and Whiteness within teacher education is critical, as White teachers need to examine, confront, and disrupt problematic beliefs of race and its relation to privilege and power in their future classroom (Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Irvine, 2003). Teachers need to understand both themselves and their students as racialized being who exist within a racialized society (Utt & Tochluk, 2016). Since race is a part of our daily, lived experience, it cannot be disassociated from schools and schooling, and elementary teachers and students need to engage in meaningful conversations in classrooms. This paper adds to our understanding by examining the ways Mrs. B attempts to take up the concept of teaching about race in her first year as an elementary classroom teacher.

Methodology

Qualitative research offers a way to either explore or understand how individuals or groups make meaning in the messy social settings of the world (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2015; Creswell, 2014). Taking a qualitative approach to this study allows me to explore and make meaning of the messy social setting of the world (Cohen et al., 2015)—specifically, I use case study (Stake, 2005) to examine the barriers a White, first-year teacher encounters that prevent her from teaching about race in critical ways. Such an approach allows for a deep look at a particular topic in its natural context.

The Teacher and School

This study is an extension of the first study in this dissertation, when I worked with Mrs. B to examine the ways her beliefs about race emerged during her yearlong student teaching experience. For that study, Mrs. B was selected using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). When I asked if she would be interested in continuing our work across her first year of teaching, she agreed.

Mrs. B identifies as a White, cisgender, heterosexual, native English speaker. During the summer before the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, Mrs. B got married (she was "Ms. B" in the first study). This is an important part of the study, as Mrs. B talks about her limited time during the school year, referencing the difficulty of balancing both her first year of teaching and her first year of marriage.

Mrs. B accepted a job in the same district that she completed her student teaching in (which is near her home town) at a different school (which I call Shady View Elementary) for the 2017-18 school year. According to school data, 39% of students at Shady View Elementary identify as White, 13% as Hispanic/Latinx, 27% African American, 11% as Two or more races,

and 10% Asian. One student identified as Native American. 44% of the students were identified as "economically disadvantaged" (which is determined by eligibility for free or reduced lunch, live in households receiving food or cash assistance, or are homeless, migrants, or in foster care). Furthermore, 19% of the students in the school were identified as English Language Learners. Of the 36 teachers working in the school, 30 identify as White, one teacher identifies as Hispanic/Latinx, and five teachers identify as African American. Mrs. B was one of four 5th grade teachers—One teacher on the team identified as African American while Mrs. B and two other 5th grade teachers identified as White. The school lies on the outskirts of a mid-sized majority White city in the Midwest (see Table 3). Though the school does not have a racial majority of students, the demographics do align with what is found in literature—that over 80% of the teachers in the school identify as White.

Table 3: 2017-18 Racial demographics of Shady View Elementary taken from state data

	White	**Hispanic/Latinx**	**African American**	**Two or more races**	**Asian**	**American Indian or Alaska Native**
Students (n=535)	209 (39%)	70 (13%)	142 (27%)	57 (11%)	56 (10%)	1 <1%
Teachers (n=36)	30 (83%)	1 (3%)	5 (14%)	0	0	0

Researcher Positionality

While I am many things, at the center of my multiple, intersecting identities is that I am White. Specifically, I identify as a White, cisgender, heterosexual, male who does not have a disability. I am a former elementary teacher, so I understand the multiple, competing pressures of working in a classroom. Being aware of over twenty, ten- and eleven-year-old bodies while trying to meet the individual learning needs of each student and working within the preferred structures of district and state mandates is difficult. Having been away from the classroom for

seven years now, I am fortunate to share my life with a partner who lives this chaotic life as a second grade teacher. It is often easy for me as a researcher to make recommendations as to what teachers should do, but my partner helps me remember the daily demands of teaching that I might have forgotten—things that seem mundane for me as an educational researcher (like going to the restroom when I want to) are stresses I had lived and forgotten about in my time teaching 5th grade.

Data Sources

Across this study, I collected and analyzed a number of different data sources working with Mrs. B. First, I conducted an open-ended interview in October of 2017. I did this to better understand how she wanted to work together across the year. I then conducted three semi-structured interviews—one in January of 2018, another in March of 2018, and a final, post study interview in August of 2018 (See Appendices C, D, & E respectively for the interview protocols). I conducted all of the interviews—which I audio recorded and transcribed—via Facetime. I conducted seven classroom observations between January and May of 2018 because Mrs. B did not want me to observe in her first semester of teaching. The data from these observations were helpful in some cases (as I describe below when Mrs. B was having her students present on African American heroes), but most of the time, they served as an entry point to conversations Mrs. B and I would have *after* the observation—when her students went to specials, during lunch, or after school. I would record observation data, but I used that data to start conversations during those debrief times. For example, on January 16, I focused my observation on the types of questions Mrs. B asked the students, which students answered, and how they were called on. During our debrief we talked about which students got to talk during a

lesson and which ones did not, but we also segued into talking about how to best group students, as well as how Mrs. B goes about planning a lesson with all students in mind.

I struggled with whether or not to record these debrief conversations. On one hand, I wanted to capture everything that was said during these times after an observation, as they were rich with content. But on the other hand, I knew from our past work together that Mrs. B was sometimes uncomfortable having herself recorded. So before our first debrief, I asked Mrs. B about it. She was uncomfortable with the idea and was afraid the recording would make her feel nervous to talk. Because both Mrs. B and I wanted these debriefs to be feel natural and unforced, we agreed it would probably be best to not to record those conversations. Instead, I would need to take detailed notes about the conversations immediately afterwards in my own journal—which then became a source of data for this study. Though I lost the ability to capture everything we shared during these debriefs, I believe it was worth it for the continued building and maintaining of our relationship. I wrote in my journal what this might mean for the data we generated:

> We talked about recording [our debriefs]. We don't want to have this relationship where [Mrs. B] feels on edge all the time, or that she has to be "on" when we talk and sees the phone recording, so we decided that I shouldn't record anything we said during those conversations. The cost, though, is that if she says some really interesting things, I have to now figure out how to capture what she said the best that I can.

To answer this question, I attempted to capture the essence (and sometimes the particulars) by writing in my journal immediately after a debrief for 10-15 minutes. I also used the journal to record thoughts, observations, questions, or concerns I had at any point related to the study between August 2017 and August 2018. I would use the journal to consider questions to ask Mrs. B, ideas that I wanted to run by my cadre of critical friends, or descriptions of conversations with my dissertation committee members. Across the year, there were 23 separate entries in my journal.

In addition, I created a shared Google Document in which Mrs. B and I collaborated. For example, before each semi-structured interview, I would share the questions and Mrs. B would answer them on the document. We would then use the document to guide our conversation during the interview; I could probe her answers or ask her to elaborate on what she had written. This idea came from Mrs. B, who had shared with me that she feels more comfortable answering in that way—where she has more time and space to think about and respond to my questions, rather than having to answer them in the moment. The shared document was also a space that I used to share my observation data or questions that came up during our informal debriefs together. Mrs. B would respond to the questions I posed on the shared document. For example, during my observation from January I described above, I created a chart where I noted the questions Mrs. B asked during a particular lesson and which students responded to them. On our collaborative document, I asked Mrs. B to share what she noticed about the data I collected. She answered and described her thinking as well as the ways she was making sense of the data I had recorded, and I in turn responded to her response (which she shared in a later interview that she would always come back to read, even if she did not respond again).

Because it was housed in Google, the collaborative document allowed me space to share links and other resources with Mrs. B as well. For example, on April 20, Mrs. B and I talked in her room after my observation about potential books she might want in her classroom that had more racially diverse characters in them. After our conversation, I shared a webpage filled with lists of books on various subjects (https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/). Mrs. B went on to use that list as a starting point to select books she wanted to order for her classroom.

Finally, I examined emails and texts Mrs. B and I sent to each other during this time period. While many of our emails involved scheduling, they also served as a space where Mrs. B

shared curricular materials with me, such as PDF files of resources she was using in her classroom. Over the course of 12 months, we sent 61 emails to each other. Most of our texts were for scheduling purposes—confirming or changing observation dates and times—but also celebrations (for example, her getting a project funded through DonorsChoose.org, or me taking in a newborn foster child) or messages of support (like when Mrs. B lost her grandmother). We texted each other 66 times over the same time period.

Data Analysis

To examine the ways Mrs. B taught about race, as well as the barriers she perceived that prevented her from doing this in critical ways, I use a constructivist grounded theory approach to the data generated during the study (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I examined the data through multiple layers of coding. First, I needed to immerse myself in all the data, so I read and re-read all of the data Mrs. B and I had generated together. While reading, I utilized open coding techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My goal was to take the massive amount of data and break it down into smaller parts that I could then examine and compare (Saldaña, 2016). In these initial reads, I was focused on pulling out both the examples of Mrs. B teaching about race, as well as the barriers that were emerging that Mrs. B perceived as preventing her from teaching about race in critical ways. 37 unique codes emerged through this process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As I examined this initial codes, I was able to break them down into 12 broader topics through Corbin and Strauss' axial coding technique (2007). Finally, I was able to further refine those broad topics into 3 organizing themes that answered the two research questions (See Appendix A to see these codes, topics, and themes).

Potential Limitations and Delimitations

As this is a case study, I do not make broad generalizations or draw conclusions that would extrapolate the experiences in this particular context with those of other teachers (Maxwell, 2013). Rather, I hope my experiences and findings can help us paint a more detailed picture of how an individual teacher fits within the larger landscape of education in the United States.

I also enter this work wondering, as readers may as well, how students and families make sense of race and talk of race within schools—and perhaps the barriers that exist for them to engage in this topic within school spaces. This is an important consideration, and one I wrestled with a lot as I planned for and implemented this study. I realize that by examining only Mrs. B's story, I am only looking at a small sliver of the whole picture of a classroom. Teachers do not make sense of their racial identities in isolation, but rather in relation to their students (Utt & Tochluk, 2016). While I do not include student and family voices in this paper, I do realize their importance—their absence does not indicate I do not see their worth. However, the barriers they perceive and experience lie outside the scope of this paper.

Also, though I address my own racialized identity, I am able to operate in research spaces—specifically ones that center race—in ways different than my Colleagues of Color are able to. That is, though I research teaching and teacher education, I do it as a White male. This has brought a number of reactions to teachers I have worked with in the past. It seems that when I talk about race, I am never positioned as an angry White man, or someone with a personal agenda. Ironically, as I do not believe in objectivity within research (Stovall, 2014), my White identity seems to allow those I talk to about race to see me as somehow objective—as if I did not have a personal stake in the work I pursue.

In addition, I utilized critical friends throughout this study to help check that I was not missing something because of my multiple privileged identities. I relied on the insights of a number of colleagues as I collected and analyzed the data Mrs. B and I generated—from both scholars of Color and White scholars. I share this because I recognize that the way I operate and am perceived in the world has been shaped by my own racial identity and socialization. I am not immune to the forces of Whiteness that permeate our society, though I have attempted to mitigate those forces as much as possible across the duration of this work.

Findings

This study focused on two research questions. When we examine the first question—*How does a White, first year elementary teacher attempt to teach about race in critical ways?* —we see that Mrs. B *does* attempt to include the issue of race into her pedagogy. Unfortunately, when examined through a lens of CWS, we see that Mrs. B engages in the topic with her students is in superficial—and ultimately—uncritical ways. Looking at the second research question—*What barriers do a White, first-year teacher perceive as preventing her from teaching about race in critical ways?*—we see a number of different types of barriers. The barriers she perceives emerged from the district and their stances towards addressing race, as well as their policies on testing. We also see the ways time (and a lack thereof) became a barrier Mrs. B perceived as she tried to balance the various competing demands of teaching with her personal life. Again, this is not to make excuses for Mrs. B—there are teachers who perceive similar barriers yet *are* able to teach about race in critical ways, *despite* the barriers—but to offer an examination of these perceived barriers and their link to Whiteness. Overall, I argue that Whiteness was able to maintain its power in a number of ways in her practice (Haviland, 2008). Specifically, Whiteness

is perpetuated in Mrs. B's practice through the uncritical ways she teaches about race and her inability to overcome the barriers she perceives as preventing her from doing this work.

Examining the Ways Mrs. B Teaches about Race

Even though we know from the literature that many first year teachers do not choose to engage in teaching about race in their elementary classrooms, Mrs. B did attempt to do this in her practice in two specific ways. First, she engaged her students in a project where they were to research and present on famous African Americans. Next, she initiated a fundraising campaign to diversify her classroom library. While these may seem like laudable acts, and go beyond what the literature suggests many first year teachers are willing to engage in, both the project and the ways she utilized the new books were ultimately superficial.

Examining the "African American Heroes" presentations. Mrs. B had her students engage in a research project and presentation revolving around famous African Americans, which she called the "African American Heroes Project." Students were to choose a famous African American and create a timeline, poster, and glossary, and then present their work to the class. Mrs. B shared that most of the information students got came from a single book called *Portraits of African American Heroes* by Tonya Bolden (2005)—a 96-page children's book that highlights twenty famous African Americans. Each hero is allocated about 4 pages, which includes a full-page illustration. Mrs. B told me,

> *I photocopied out of that book and gave them articles… I have a couple different biographies and I even had some biographies on the people that were in [Portraits of African American Heroes]…I think there's 20 in the book that I had. And so I did end up pulling a few different books from my library that involve kids who chose people that were not in that particular book.*

During my observation on March 21, 2018, I was able to watch 12 students present their research. Students shared factual points of interest presented in the articles they received from

the book (such as date of birth, where they lived, and occupation). For example, one student shared that Nelson Mandela was the first Black president of South Africa and was elected in 1994. Furthermore, each student shared four character traits that did not come from the book. For example, one student presented on W.E.B. DuBois, and besides presenting on his dates of birth and death and where he lived throughout his life, the character traits they identified for him were *kind*, *entertaining*, *cheerful*, and *nice* (see Table 4).

Table 4: Famous African American heroes and their character traits

Famous African American	Traits identified
1. Nelson Mandela	Courageous, kind, peaceful, hero
2. Joe Louis	Strong, athletic, brave, friendly
3. Frederick Douglass	Brave, courageous, fearless, daring
4. Charlayne Hunter-Gault	Peaceful, brave, kind, nice
5. Jacob Lawrence	Artistic, nice, friendly, talented
6. Ben Carson	Smart, nice, kind, writer
7. Paul Robeson	Talented, musical, athletic, kind
8. W.E.B. DuBois	Kind, entertaining, cheerful, nice
9. Ruth Simmons	Smart, wise, caring, understanding
10. Harriet Tubman	Brave, strength, courage, dedication
11. Rosa Parks	Brave, peaceful, helpful, kind
12. Judith Jameson	Beautiful, brave, athletic, strong, pretty

The presentations were filled with facts and there were no questions after any of the presentations—from either Mrs. B or her students. Each presentation lasted around 3 minutes. I

asked Mrs. B how she felt about the presentations the following week during our March 28 interview. She replied,

> *I thought [the presentations] were really cool. Like I was really interested to see what information the kids would pull out. Like what they thought was interesting. I didn't really say what they had to find. I just said that you needed to find out what made them famous. It was sort of interesting to hear what they thought made them famous.*

Here, we see Mrs. B satisfied with the ways students took up the information from their "research" and excited about the ways the heroes are presented, even though there was no critical conversation about any of the heroes by either Mrs. B or her students. Instead, the research presented was read aloud by the students, and no questions were asked that might encourage students to think deeper about the heroes or the contexts in which they lived.

Examining how Mrs. B diversified her library. One of the things Mrs. B had been striving to do throughout our two years together was to enhance her classroom library with racially diverse books. It is something she mentioned in our initial interview as a goal for her in working on this project with me. Going back to her email to me on November 7, 2017, answering what she hoped to gain out of our time together, Mrs. B replied

> By working with you, I hope to discover new ways that I can incorporate the ideas of race and diversity into my lesson plans. Up until now, I've been focused on diversifying my classroom library, which is still a priority to me. However, I want to learn how I can approach race in other areas as well.

Mrs. B shared that while she had been thinking about expanding her library for a while, the need was really made visible when her students were completing the African American heroes project described above. Many students were upset that they could not find the information they needed from the photocopied book excerpts Mrs. B had given them. Mrs. B shared during our interview on March 28:

> *I know some of my kids are frustrated because they were working on this African American biography project and were like, "I don't know anything about this person and*

> *I can't find anything on the Internet." So I know the kids were frustrated and I had a hard time finding texts for them.*

However, Mrs. B went on to share that while she really wanted to get more diverse books for her students—and especially more African American biographies—she really was unsure about which books she might need and how to go about getting those books. During our interview on March 28, 2018, Mrs. B shared that

> *I didn't even know where to start [in choosing books for my library]. I just started Googling 'diverse books for 5th graders' and I clicked on one and it would say, 'If you liked this book, maybe you'd like this one' and kind of just went from there.*

After getting the books a few weeks later by starting a fundraiser through DonorsChoose.org (where teachers describe their needs to potential donors), Mrs. B talked about how excited the students were to see those books in her library, describing various reactions students had to seeing some of the books.

> *Yeah, I just remember the kids just being so excited to read those books and [I] had one student—one of my male students. He is Black and he was excited to read this book about 10 famous African-American women. And he had it for like a week and he would come up to me every day and be like, 'Oh my gosh, do you know about this person because I didn't?!' And so it was really cool to see his reaction in particular to this stuff.*

After she had shared some of the reactions, I asked Mrs. B what seeing her students react in those ways meant to her as a teacher. She shared,

> *I wanted to have my students see themselves reflected in literature, and I'm not sure that if I gave that particular student a book on 10 famous white women, he would have had the same excitement or reaction to that. [The student] was just so excited…and I feel like that's the reaction that I really wanted to see.*

When I asked Mrs. B how she was going to use the books in her classroom, she was unsure of what she might do, if anything. She commented,

> *I think it's good to include more of those books in my library. At least have them in my library…I've thought about doing book talks. I know some other teachers will have a couple books on display each week they're kind of featuring. But again, this is something*

> *I struggle with, because I haven't read all these books yet…But I could definitely see myself pulling three or four books a week and saying 'This one is about this African-American character, who does this.' Or something like that.*

Here we see Mrs. B striving to get more racially diverse books for her classroom library and finding a way to get them through DonorsChoose.org. For Mrs. B, having these books is exciting, as she wants her students to be able to see themselves in the books they read. However, we also see that Mrs. B is unsure what to do with the books once they are in her classroom besides merely making them available to her students.

Examining the ways Mrs. B teaches using the book *Bud, Not Buddy.* Mrs. B and her 5th grade teaching colleagues had their students read the Newberry Medal novel *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis. The story revolves around Bud, a Black ten-year-old orphan living in Flint, Michigan in 1936 and his journey to find his father. Though much of the book focuses on how race impacts Bud and his journey, Mrs. B did not explore the topic of race with her students using this book and offered a few reasons why. The first was the students' age. Mrs. B shared how perhaps if they were older they might have engaged with the topic of race. She remarked,

> *I think that maybe if they had been reading it in middle school or even little bit later. Maybe they would have caught on a little bit more or maybe raised some questions or maybe felt comfortable raising questions [about race].*

Another reason Mrs. B gave for not using the book to talk about race was the way the conversations were structured—most of the class was spent with students meeting in small groups and talking about the book. Mrs. B thought that perhaps reading the book as a whole class could have been different.

> *I think that if I had read* Bud, Not Buddy *out loud, we would have had amazing class discussions…Where I was sort of sharing my thoughts about it or posing questions or having a rich class discussion rather than kids reading a chapter by chapter and maybe not being—I don't know if mature is the right word. Or old? I don't know—old enough to have those rich discussions that we wanted them to have.*

While Mrs. B did not specifically ask her students to talk about race in their discussion of the book, Mrs. B was intrigued to imagine what that might have looked like when I asked her about it later. After teaching the book, I asked Mrs. B if and how she might have had her students use this book as a medium through with to talk about race. She shared,

> *I would have been curious to listen and if there had been a—like if today's skill was, I don't know, but involved race—and they were talking about their answers [in small groups]. I would have been curious to sit in on their discussion to see what their thoughts would have been.*

I asked Mrs. B where she got her resources for teaching *Bud, Not Buddy*, since it was not part of the district curriculum. She shared that she got a teaching packet from her colleagues, who had bought it from a website called Teachers Pay Teachers, and that she really was just following the guide she was given.

> *[My colleagues} just share resources like that with me. They wouldn't necessarily tell me how to use them. But just say these are things like have use them or lose them kind of deal…they are easy and ready to use.*

Here we see Mrs. B using a book that has a heavy focus on race, but using a purchased guide that did not engage her students in conversations about race or racism. For Mrs. B, though the book has a focus on race, not only does she feel the students might not have been old enough to have those sorts of conversations, the guide that she was given did not provide opportunities for such "rich" conversations to occur.

Barriers Emerging from Mrs. B's School District

In the introduction to this paper, I began to share about the disconcerting phone call I got from the principal regarding the wording of a letter I wrote the inform Mrs. B's 5th grade families. This was the first of two incidents from district personnel that rattled Mrs. B and prevented her from wanting to talk about race in her classroom in critical ways. Other barriers were how Mrs. B's principal approached Black History Month and the requirements for district

standardized testing. I share these two situations in particular as they illustrate specific instances where the perceived barrier of district policies impacted her instruction.

The district's stance towards "race" in my IRB letter as a barrier. District officials took umbrage to the letter I drafted to send home to families explaining my research. This was the first barrier that emerged that prevented Mrs. B from engaging in critical conversations about race in her teaching. The letter I wrote was short—just over 150 words. But one of those words had stuck out to district administrators and was deemed unacceptable to use in a letter being sent to families in their district. *Race*. That word was in the letter three times. I wrote that I would be examining how Mrs. B teaches about race throughout the year. Using the word "race" in my letter to families—in the principal's words—"*stands out. Is something going on? Is something wrong?*" It was alarming to her and other district officials. She let me know that a district administrator would follow up shortly to discuss the issue more with me, but encouraged me to think about how I might make my study sound less "*harsh*" as I described my work to families. "*Maybe you could change the word 'race' to 'diversity' or 'culture' or something less controversial,*" she suggested.

The follow up call I got from the administrator (an assistant superintendent) shortly after was even more blunt. I needed to change the wording in my letter. I did not have to change my research, but I had to change how I framed it to families in the classroom. I was not to tell these families that I was studying the issue of "race." I could use some more "*acceptable*" words to describe what I was doing—"*diversity*" and "*culture*" were again suggested. If I chose not to make this change in my verbiage, I would not be able to continue working with this teacher in the district.

The incident rattled Mrs. B. We had talked about what was going on and the district administrator had called her during the school day to talk to her about our work together. During our debrief after my observation on January 30, 2018, Mrs. B shared her concerns:

> *I don't want kids to go home and be like, 'we talked about race today' and the parents not really understanding what we talked about.*

When I asked her why this worried her, she told me that she was afraid of the possibility of being fired.

> *I don't want to say something that I have to defend my job over.*

This thought was reiterated in our March 28, 2018 interview when I asked her about the issue again. Mrs. B shared,

> *I feel like [race] is such a touchy subject. You don't know what other people think about it. Or maybe the person you're talking to is a closet racist and maybe you're going to say something that—I don't know. I just feel like it's a topic that people keep to themselves.*

She then reiterated her worry about keeping her job. Half joking and half serious, Mrs. B said,

> *You better let me keep my job at the end of this!*

The principal's unease during Black history month as a barrier. Another incident occurred in February 2018 that made Mrs. B pause as she considered the ways she would address race in her classroom. A committee at school had been formed to come up with school-wide ideas for Black History Month. One of the actions they wanted to take was for Mrs. B's 5th graders to share vignettes about famous African Americans with the whole school during morning announcements. The passages were very short and came from the website www.Readworks.org (which requires a login to access, but is free to sign up for). Each passage chosen has a lexile level between Kindergarten and 3rd grade and gives details about a variety of African Americans. On Monday, February 5, Mrs. B's students read the passage about Jackie Robinson over the intercom:

> Jackie Robinson was a baseball player. He was African American. He lived long ago.
>
> As he grew up, some people were mean to him. They did not like Jackie because they did not like the color of his skin. They treated him unfairly. Some Americans thought it was okay to treat a person unfairly if you didn't like the way he or she looked. That made Jackie angry.
>
> He decided to show he was as good as anyone else. He worked hard to become a good baseball player. He became a great baseball player. He played for a major-league team. He was the first African American to do that. Because of his hard work, Jackie was a hero to many people.

During our lunch conversation after my observation a few days later, on February 7, Mrs. B shared how the principal reacted to her students reading that particular passage out loud:

> *She just kind of stormed into the room and told me I couldn't have my students read those passages anymore. She said they were too heavy for other students to hear and she didn't want them to hear them over the intercom.*

I asked Mrs. B how that made her feel.

> *A little scared to have her come in like that. But also confused. [The principal] was cc'd on the email [from the committee]—she knew what was happening. It wasn't even me that was doing this—it was the committee and they decided this was what they wanted to do for the school wide celebration of Black History Month.*

Mrs. B then described how the principal made a unilateral decision—instead of 5th graders reading the passages that the committee chose from the website, the principal would be choosing quotations to share on her own without the committee's input. The principal never shared with Mrs. B what had made her so upset or why she had decided the passage about Jackie Robinson was too "heavy" for students to hear.

District testing requirements as a barrier. A final barrier that emerged during Mrs. B's first year of teaching was the focus on testing and what that meant for Mrs. B's practice. Mrs. B was constantly talking about the number and types of tests she needed to administer and how important those scores were for both her and the school. During our debrief after my observation

on March 13, 2018, I wrote the following in my dissertation journal from our conversation during lunch.

> We talked about how stressed she is feeling about the standardized testing that will be starting in 4 weeks…Even though her students' results don't impact her this year, she's still worried. She shared that as a first year teacher, she really wants to do well—and that everyone is going to be able to see the rankings, and she doesn't want to embarrass herself.

When I asked Mrs. B about this again in our March 28 interview, she shared how unfair she thought the tests her students had to take were—especially for students who may have an off day. She described how she talks about the tests with her 5th grade-teaching colleagues:

> *We talk about [evaluations] all the time. And just how it's not fair to evaluate us so heavily on a single day. You know, if I had a kid whose parents were going through a divorce and his scores went down from the beginning to the end of the year, I mean that totally makes sense why his mind's in a different place, but then it reflects on me that the student actually went down. Like I didn't teach him anything all year because his scores on this one test went down.*

We talked further about those tests and what that could mean for her professionally. While Mrs. B shared that her students' scores would not factor into her evaluation her first year, they would in the years after. But for Mrs. B, it was not just about the relationship between her students' scores on tests such as I-Ready and her evaluation, but rather the perception of her teaching reflected through those scores:

> *I don't want [other teachers]to see low I-Ready scores for 5th grade and see all these students were in my classroom. [sarcastically] "She really knows what she's doing"*

She further connected this feeling of pressure to the statewide tests her students took in April, 2018—the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP).

> *Or when my M-STEP scores come back and we all look at them as a building in the fall. We've had high M-STEP scores for quite a few years now. And that's a lot of pressure to make sure my kids are performing well. It's an unspoken pressure, though. And it doesn't affect my evaluation. It doesn't affect my job at this point. But I don't know. I take people's opinions—I take things to heart. I just don't want that opinion about me.*

I asked her to talk more about what this pressure means to her teaching and how she teaches with all this in mind: I-Ready and M-STEP tests that students need to take and what those scores mean for her as a teacher. She responded,

> *I feel terrible because I'm teaching to the test. I guess that's a little frustrating to me that I don't want to base my teaching off of that. But that's where it's going to go.*

Here we see how the district's stance on testing made Mrs. B feel like she needed to focus on getting her students prepared for those tests. Because Mrs. B focused so much of her teaching on testing, she felt that race was something that didn't warrant her time.

Time as a Barrier

The final barrier that Mrs. B said prevented her from teaching about race in critical ways was the issue of time—or more specifically, the lack of time. The issue of time was something that came up when talking about her practice in general, but also as she talked about what would be necessary to really focus on race in her practice in critical ways.

Teaching takes a lot of time. From the very beginning of the study, Mrs. B was very aware of the amount of time it was going to take during her first year of teaching. It was something she mentioned in our October 12, 2017 interview. When I asked her about how things were going at that point—a month and a half into her first year of teaching—she gave an audible sigh as she responded,

> *It's been crazy so far! I knew I was going to be busy [as a first year teacher], but I can't believe how much time it takes.*

When I asked her to elaborate on what was taking so much time, she simply replied,

> *Everything. Just everything. I'm just so busy.*

The issue of time was something we continued to talk about throughout the study. I noted in my journal after my observation on March 21, 2018 how the issue of time seemed to dominate a lot of our conversations:

> We talked at lunch about how busy Mrs. B is as a teacher. One thing that came up was how many things she has to do as a teacher—she shared that yesterday she had a 2-hour grade level meeting until 8pm to look at scheduling things for the rest of the semester. This morning, her schedule had to change because she got her students' scores [from a test] and they needed to be stapled to go [home] to the students.

I followed up on this thread of time in our collaborative document in a question I posed to Mrs. B on April 11, 2018. I wondered what if she could think about the things that take her time as a teacher—what are the things she finds herself thinking about before or during a typical day, week, and month? For those of us who have spent time in K-12 classrooms, Mrs. B's list of things she needs to consider will look familiar (see Appendix G). For example, Mrs. B shared a number of things she considers, including thinking about the time needed to use the restroom before school, considering her pacing of lessons during the school day, or meeting with colleagues or the principal after school.

She shared how frustrating it was for her to have so much on her plate, because she was spending so much time each day getting ready for the next day of teaching. In our final interview on August 2, 2018, Mrs. B shared,

> *It felt like there wasn't enough time for anything I wanted to do…I would maybe go in [to school] a little later [than during my student teaching], but then I would also stay later. I was one of the last ones in the building most nights.*

This frustration boiled over into her personal life, as well. Mrs. B described how her life outside of the classroom was stretched because of a lack of time. Later in that final interview, Mrs. B shared,

> *Like even in my personal life. I felt like I gave up a lot that first year. We just got married. We bought a new house. I felt like I didn't personally have a lot of time for*

> *myself…Even things like working out. I had been pretty religious about working out, even during my student teaching. I was able to go pretty much every day after school and that totally fell off the wagon this year and I don't feel great about that.*

One of the most difficult things that Mrs. B experienced in her personal life during the school year was her grandmother getting sick, moving into hospice, and passing away. Mrs. B was extremely close to her grandmother and missed over a week of school in late February and early March as she took time to be with her family and shared in our final interview how taking that much time off school had impacted her relationship with her students.

> *My grandma had been sick all year last year. And I knew she was going to pass and I felt, after she passed away [in March], I felt like I lost the kids because I was gone so long. And I remember coming back after I was gone for that week, I just felt like I lost them.*

Time spent learning a new curriculum. While the daily allotment of time for teaching was a central point for Mrs. B during her first year, finding time to learn and prepare for a curriculum for a new grade level was also something she discussed at length. Mrs. B commented in our January 15, 2018 interview:

> *The hardest thing for me was I'd get a unit under my belt like for guided reading. We'd be studying characters or something for a couple of weeks and then I would get to like the third week and be like, 'oh crap! What are we doing next?' Panic would set in…I'm trying to just learn the fifth grade standards. Let alone teach them, learn how to teach them and learn this new curriculum and then thinking about disrupting whiteness on top of all that? It's like just—it's a lot of work.*

Mrs. B talked about the time needed to learn this new curriculum and about the stress she was feeling throughout the year as she tried to stay a step ahead of the students she was teaching.

> *I was already learning a whole new grade level curriculum, which was tough for me because I had always been in 2nd or 3rd grade. Those curriculums are pretty similar. And moving to 5th grade is completely different—a completely different way of thinking, so I knew I'd be learning the curriculum along with the kids most of the time.*

Mrs. B described being constantly stuck in thinking short term rather than long term. In our final interview on August 2, 2018, Mrs. B shared,

> *I watched YouTube videos the night before to make sure I was fully aware of whatever I was teaching and could teach it best. I don't think I ever was like thinking about how I could teach decimals back when I was like teaching geometry.*

She elaborated on why this was difficult for her, as she really had no clue about the things that were coming in the curriculum.

> *It makes it hard for me to understand where I'm even going with the unit if I don't know what's happening next week. How do I get there?*

No time to focus on race. On January 4, 2018, I shared my interview questions with Mrs. B in our collaborative document. I asked Mrs. B if there were times that she saw the need to teach about race in the curriculum. Mrs. B wrote back:

> Honestly no...And I think it's been due to time and experience…I guess I just haven't had the time to sit down and think about how I can incorporate race in my daily teachings.

But there were instances where Mrs. B was able to talk with her students about race; they were not as often as she would have liked. I asked Mrs. B for some examples of when she talked explicitly about race during her first year of teaching.

> *I mean we had like Martin Luther King Day. We talked a lot about [race] then. That doesn't sound great like that being the only time. I guess I'm still trying to learn how to approach it and make it a not just like "hey, let's talk about race today" kind of conversation, but make it flow more into the teaching. And so that's something I've thought about being more intentional with books I pick or things that I do for my lessons that maybe could make that conversation a little bit more accessible for both me and my students.*

Mrs. B also worried about the ways she might approach those conversations. Specifically, Mrs. B shared about how important it was for her to make sure she says the right thing if she were to engage her students in a discussion about race.

> *I don't want to say something wrong, and I don't want to be like the white teacher that's...I don't know. I don't have that same experience as my students. And so I don't want to act like a know-it-all either.*

Mrs. B described one instance where students were interested in talking about race, but she was both unprepared and uncomfortable talking about it. She had been given a movie to watch from her colleagues for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and in it, a character uses the word "negro." As Mrs. B shared with me during our January 15, 2018 interview,

> *Well, they use the word 'Negro' and my students were like, [Mrs. B gasps] 'Oh my gosh!' So like even a word that is in textbooks and movies. 'Negro' is a word that I'm like, 'Oh my gosh! Are we allowed to say that kind of word?'*

I asked her in the interview what she did after this came up in the video—did she talk about it with her students? Mrs. B explained,

> *Well, it was a whole movie we didn't get a chance to talk about it because the day was up. It was a half-day. But that's definitely something I feel like I would want to come back to.*

However, Mrs. B also shared her hesitancy in doing so:

> *I feel like I would be nervous as a first year teacher having a conversation about what words are. I don't know what is appropriate or acceptable.*

In our collaborative document, I asked her a few weeks later on January 30, 2018 about that incident in particular, and if she came back to it and discussed it with her students. Mrs. B wrote in the document,

> I did not follow up with the discussion. If I am being honest, I forgot about bringing up the discussion. Thinking back, I probably would have been hesitant to have the discussion. Because I would have been worried about backlash...students going home and telling parents, etc., just am not sure if this is a conversation I feel comfortable facilitating yet.

In our final interview on August 2, 2018, Mrs. B shared about her discomfort with engaging in such conversations with her students. She described how she might approach the issue with her students the following year.

> *I don't know if I'm comfortable or there yet. So maybe I'll start with showing the [DonorsChoose]books and go from there. Personally I don't know if I'm ready to just*

> *jump right in and talk about it…the other teachers don't really do it, so I'm not sure what it might look like.*

I asked her if there was anything that could help her engage in these types of conversations with students as she moved forward in her teaching.

> *I feel like honestly, it's just experience. As I get more comfortable as a fifth grade teacher, maybe I'll get more comfortable navigating those topics. Like it might come more naturally to me.*

Across the three examples above, we see the struggles Mrs. B encountered as she tried to balance the time needed to do everything required of her as a teacher with teaching about race. She perceived time as a barrier to talking about race in her practice, because to her, talking about race was merely another layer of her teaching, rather than a central component of it.

Discussion

Through the choice of *not* confronting race in critical ways, teachers like Mrs. B maintain current power structures (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), which, in turn, perpetuate Whiteness in U.S. schools (Matias et al., 2014). Findings from this study illustrate how Mrs. B allowed Whiteness to maintain its power in a number of ways through her teaching choices and the perceived barriers she was unable to overcome (Haviland, 2008). This was accomplished through the ways Mrs. B was able to be "colormute" (Pollock, 2004) in her teaching and as each barrier arose—making the choice to *not* confront race in critical ways in her teaching, and allowing barriers such as district stances and time to prevent her from engaging her students in critical ways, rather than pushing against it.

Though Mrs. B seems to include race in her teaching, the examples presented above demonstrate that her practices were superficial or uncritical. When we examine her teaching through a lens of CWS, we see problems with the materials Mrs. B used in her teaching without much critical examination on her part. Michael (2015) reminds us that the choices we make on a

daily basis helps to maintain racial categorizations. In Mrs. B's case, those choices include how she (uncritically) implements the resources given to her by her colleagues—such as during the African American heroes project, where students were allowed to present superficial interpretations of historic figures. Without examining the materials she uses to teach, Mrs. B perpetuates the racist system of schooling (Matias et al., 2014). In this case, Whiteness is perpetuated in Mrs. B's classroom through her failure to critically interrogate the resources she has available to her. Mills (1997) connects this type of reframing or superficial presentation of history (such as a student describing DuBois as being "*kind, entertaining, cheerful, and nice*") as White normativity. Such retellings of history—especially of African Americans and their stories throughout history—sterilizes the past and prevents deeper, more critical conversations from occurring (Brown & Brown, 2012). As Buchanan (2016) writes, the reliance on these types of watered-down narratives are harmful, as they "perpetuate a pervasive, linear history void of alternative viewpoints and historical information" (p. 138). Such sterilization is inherently dangerous, as Matias (2013b) reminds us that "by not learning counter-narratives complete with raced history, Whites cultivate a modus operandi of not seeing race; and, since race is out of mind, it becomes also out of sight" (p. 295).

Connected to this is Mrs. B's push to include racially diverse books into her classroom library. In this case, Mrs. B saw the procurement of materials as the endpoint of engaging her students in conversations about race, rather than the beginning. That is, for Mrs. B, having the books and getting the students excited about them was the mark of success. However, we know this is not enough. As Cross (2003) reminds us, merely having racially diverse texts in a classroom may be good, but it is not enough—and in fact, might be a mechanism to absolve teachers of further responsibility for teaching about inequity. That is, teachers (such as Mrs. B)

may be able to point to the possession of such books as a way to prove they "did" diversity without a deeper dive into the texts. Dong (2005) argues that teachers like Mrs. B cannot stop with just getting materials, but must change their pedagogy as well. This change "involves teachers transforming their attitudes and orientations, as well as their methods of exploring the issues of culture, race, and diverse voices… and moving these issues and voices to the center of discussions and reflections" (p. 368).

Furthermore, we see from the administrative stances that the very *concept* of race was something to be avoided in many instances (Evans et al., 1999). Such stances demonstrates the "political power of Whiteness" (Matias & Mackey, 2016, p. 35)—that is, district administrators were able to enact their power over controlling the conversation—and over Mrs. B and her practice, removing from the conversation instances that do not conform to what they determine is acceptable (Solomona et al., 2005).

This links to Castagno (2008) claims about how schools districts like Mrs. B's can wield power that reproduce Whiteness in the name of doing business as usual. In describing a situation similar to what Mrs. B and I encountered in Shady View elementary, where the district stance revolved around controlling conversations about race, Castagno (2008) writes,

> …One of the ways Whiteness operates is by concealing the power, privilege, and oppression that it perpetuates. Thus, by perpetuating racist beliefs through seemingly nonracist, neutral, and "common sense" language, Whiteness is engaged and reproduced…racially coded language is, therefore, one important way in which Whiteness is both operationalized and legitimated. (p. 322)

Likewise, the administrative stances towards testing were barriers for Mrs. B, as well. High-stakes tests like I-Ready and M-STEP legitimize the knowledge that such tests require, which research has shown to have negative effects in schools (Au, 2009; Lipman, 2015; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Those tests direct and control the knowledge that is taught. If race is broached

on tests or in textbooks, it is done in limited ways. As Bolgatz (2005a) writes, "Textbooks, state standards and guidelines, and standardized test neatly package and limit the treatment of race into confined areas (p. 260). Au (2007) has shown that if a subject is not covered on a high-stakes test, that subject tends to not be included in the curriculum, and subsequently, not taught.

By "*teaching to the test*," Mrs. B was making decisions about what material to include and what to not include. If deeper understandings of race are not validated by test questions or principal evaluations, teachers have difficulty seeing why such material is relevant for them or their students. Such teaching can lead to a sort of "subtractive schooling" where knowledge not deemed relevant for tests are removed from the curriculum (Valenzuela, 1999). As Au (2015) writes,

> Since multicultural, anti-racist perspectives and content are not deemed legitimate by the tests, the end result is that within the high-stake testing environment, multicultural, diverse, and non-White perspectives and content are being increasingly excluded from the classroom, thus acting as a tool for the maintenance of White supremacy. (p. 31)

Such reliance on preparing students for tests aligns with what Grossman and Thompson (2008) found—that beginning teachers like Mrs. B, "because of their immediate needs…may latch on to curriculum materials uncritically" (p. 2025). Likewise, looking at the school's celebration of MLK Jr. Day and the African American heroes project that Mrs. B engaged her students in, we see a move towards what Modica (2015) terms "uncritical multiculturalism" (p. 140). This problematic approach limits the extent to which students see equity tied to structures and presents us living in some sort of (fictionalized) post-racial society—"by failing to examine systemic inequity curriculum steeped in uncritical multiculturalism implies that race is no longer a stratifying societal force" (p. 141). When teachers like Mrs. B do not move past such "uncritical multiculturalism," they maintain Whiteness as a normative presence (Matias, 2013a).

Finally, in describing her lack of time for teaching, we can empathize with Mrs. B and the struggles of being a first year elementary teacher. However, by not disrupting the Whiteness found within the curriculum, Whiteness is further reinforced and perpetuated with each lesson and discussion (Matias & Grosland, 2016; Salinas & Castro, 2010). Mrs. B's description of race being an extra layer to her teaching responsibilities means that the topic is something that can be shed. She is able to look the other way and make choices because as a White woman, she does not have to talk about race (DiAngelo, 2018; Tatum, 2017). This avoidance is part of her everyday experience as a White body moving in this world. Mrs. B's insistence that her ability to talk about race with her students is something that will come with time is naïve at best. But pushing against Whiteness is not easy—it requires courage, commitment, and energy (Boucher, 2016; Katsarou, Picower, & Stovall, 2010). Learning how to talk about race in critical ways also requires lots of time, energy and practice (Blaisdell, 2018). By not talking about race in critical way with her students, Mrs. B *was* teaching about race, just that it is not important. As Bolgatz (2005b) writes,

> Teachers' willingness to talk about race is the funnel through which any curriculum that addresses issues of race or racism either flows or is thwarted. When race is ignored, the hidden curriculum teaches a powerful message that race and racism are not worthy of students' attention. (p. 34)

The powerful message Mrs. B sent to her students was that race was not something to be looked at in critical ways in her classroom.

Implications and Conclusion

My sharing of the findings represents a small sliver of Mrs. B's practice. While I worked closely with Mrs. B across two years, I was not in her classroom for most of her teaching. I did not sit in on planning meetings with her colleagues or debriefs with her principal. I was not there for many of the highs and lows that Mrs. B experienced during her first year as a classroom

teacher. But I did get a sense of her teaching across our extended time together. As I wrote earlier, teaching is a complex endeavor—and the complexity was something I noticed in my dissertation journal towards the end of our time together. I wrote in my journal on May 9 after my final observation the following:

> Something that stuck out to me as I consider our work together has been how complex the "case" of Mrs. B really is. I think I went into this study thinking that it was going to be easy to isolate things and just focus on her and her practice, but I'm seeing first-hand how complex her world is. That is, I can't look at her without also looking at the administration. Or the students. Or the families. Or her husband for that matter. I guess that is why it is important to bound the study and be explicit in what this is a case of. But, even so, just because this is a case of one teacher and her classroom doesn't mean that these other, outside factors don't have a lot of influence over her and her practice.

This is another story of missed opportunities for Mrs. B. However, this does not absolve Mrs. B from the responsibility of engaging her students in deeper discussion about race. We cannot give teachers like Mrs. B a "pass" just because teaching—and teaching about race—is complex. Rather, it demonstrates how important it is that teacher educators like myself prepare and support teachers for confronting these types of barriers when they emerge.

By looking at Mrs. B's experiences, I see the need to help prepare teachers like her to work within current structures while also pushing to change them. I need to support future teachers like Mrs. B in building up the courage and commitment to do the work that is required to push past the barriers that emerge through the manifestation of Whiteness. I need to help prepare and support these teachers to disrupt the current ways of "doing" school—perhaps even after graduation and student teaching, as they continue to learn about what it means to teach. San Pedro (2018) argues this might happen through the use of Culturally Disruptive Pedagogy—that such an unsettling needs to occur in the ways we help students think teaching in order to push past the hegemonic like Whiteness that are perpetuated in classrooms like Mrs. B's across the country. While we cannot expect individual teachers like Mrs. B to change a hegemonic system

such as Whiteness on her own, we need to also hold them accountable to make changes within their individual spheres of influence.

I offer several implications moving forward. First, I need to help point teachers to specific curricular resources they might use to supplement their practice, such as Teaching Tolerance or Rethinking Schools. I need to also provide more experiences for future teachers adapting current scripted curricula in ways to incorporate more critical discussions on race. Second, teacher educators like myself need to consider preparing teachers to work within districts dominated by Whiteness, while also trying to change the system. Since Whiteness maintains its power in many ways, future teachers need to better understand how to become creatively insubordinate—pushing back in ways that are meaningful, but where they can also keep their jobs and best serve students and communities. Finally, I see the need for teacher educators like myself to give future teachers as many opportunities as possible to facilitate discussions about race in order to make them more comfortable talking about it with their students—and to help them see that talking about race is not a layer that can be shed—but rather something that needs to be a central tenet of every teachers practice. While I may not be able to stop the barriers that emerge and prevent teachers to talk about race in critical ways, I see it as our job as researchers and teacher educators to prepare them for those barriers so they do not see them as insurmountable.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Coding Schema

Research Questions:

1. *How does a White, first year elementary teacher attempt to teach about race in critical ways?*
2. *What barriers do a White, first-year teacher perceive as preventing her from teaching about race in critical ways?*

Initial Codes	Broad Topics	Emerging Themes
1. Diverse books 2. Donors Choose 3. TpT 4. Teachers pay teachers 5. Collaborative document 6. MLK materials 7. Other teachers 8. Finding books 9. Money/funding 10. Uncertainty of start point 11. Material cost 12. Learning new materials 13. Concrete ideas 14. Cost	1. Using materials from other teachers 2. Projects 3. Library & books	**Ways Mrs. B teaches**
1. Observations 2. Testing 3. Flexibility/lack of 4. Relationships with teachers 5. PD 6. Approval for our work 7. Respect (students; colleagues; admin) 8. Parents/families 9. Money/pay 10. Fear (related to evaluations, testing, etc.) 11. Curriculum	1. Evaluations 2. Curriculum 3. Policies	**District as barrier**
1. Grandma passing 2. Planning 3. Emotions (stress, grief, sadness, etc.) 4. Apologizing 5. Weather	1. Personal life 2. School functions 3. Talking about race	**Time as barrier**

6. iReady testing 7. Descriptions of time 8. Field trips 9. SRI testing 10. Race conversations 11. Learning standards 12. Testing 13. Personal life/frustrations		

APPENDIX B: Data Analysis Table

Type of data collected	Amount of data collected
Interviews	• One 30 minute, open ended interview (October, 2017) • One 60 minute, semi-structured interview (January, 2018) • One 60 minute, semi-structured interviews (March, 2018) • One 60 minute, semi-structured interview (August, 2018)
Observations & Debriefs	Seven classroom observations & debriefs
Curricular Materials and Student Work	Ongoing throughout the semester
Collaborative Journal	Ongoing throughout the semester
Dissertation Journal/Memos	Ongoing throughout the semester
Communication	61 Emails 66 Texts

APPENDIX C: October 2017 Interview Questions

18. Can you tell me a bit about your last semester of student teaching?
    a. What are some things that stuck out to you?
    b. Did you think about our study at all last semester? Why or why not?
19. Did our work together last year change anything in the ways you thought about or believed about race or Whiteness? If yes, can you explain? If not, why not?
20. Why did you decide to work in this school?
21. Can you tell me a little bit about your first few weeks being a full time teacher at this school?
    a. Is there anything different about being a teacher vs. being a student teacher?
    b. Did you know any of the students who were going to be in your class?
    c. Have you thought about race or Whiteness at all during these first few weeks? Why or why not?
22. How do you think about some of these things in relation to school:
    a. Race
    b. Racism
    c. Whiteness
    d. Neutrality
    e. Colorblindness
    f. White privilege
23. How does it feel being a white teacher at this school? Why do you think that?
24. In what ways do you think race might come into play this year in your classroom?
25. Looking back at your student teaching, were there any places where you wished you would have done something different in regards to how you thought about or taught about race?
    a. In your lessons?

b. In your curriculum?

26. What does it mean to you that we will work together to disrupt Whiteness together?

    a. Were there any times you thought you might want to "disrupt" Whiteness that you saw in your curriculum? If so, please explain. If not, why not?

27. What are some ways you think we might be able to collaborate this year?

28. Is there anything else you want to share about what you believe about race or Whiteness?

29. What are you excited about working on this with me this year?

30. What are you nervous about working on this with me this year?

31. What advice do you have for me moving forward as a researcher?

32. Is there anything you thought I'd ask but didn't?

APPENDIX D: January, 2018 Interview Questions

1. How is the year going for you so far?
2. What are a few of the things that have gone really well for you this year?
3. What are a few things that have not gone so well for you this year?
4. What are some things that are working well in our partnership so far this year?
5. What are some things you might want to change about how we work together?
6. What are some of the ways you have been thinking about race and Whiteness this year?
7. What has been hardest for you thinking about race and disrupting Whiteness with me this year?
8. How do you think your own Whiteness impacted your relationship with:
    a. Your students?
    b. Your students' Families?
    c. Your Principal?
    d. Your Colleagues?
9. How big of an issue do you think race and/or Whiteness have been so far this year?
10. What advice do you have for me moving forward as a researcher?
11. Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't yet discussed?

APPENDIX E: August, 2018 Interview Questions

1. How would you describe this school year?
2. What are the most memorable things you're taking away from this year?
3. What are some things that we did together that were helpful to you in your practice this year?
4. What are some things we did together that were not helpful to you in your practice?
5. Thinking about the year, how would you describe the ways you have thought about race and disrupting Whiteness as to opposed to before this project?
    a. Has anything changed?
    b. If so, what?
    c. If not, why not?
6. What has been hardest for you thinking about race and disrupting Whiteness with me over the course of the year?
7. How do you think about some of these things in relation to school:
    a. Race
    b. Racism
    c. Whiteness
    d. Neutrality
    e. Being colorblind
    f. White privilege
8. How do you think Whiteness impacted your relationship with:
    a. Your students?
    b. Your students' Families?
    c. Your Principal?

    d. Your Colleagues?

9. How did our collaboration impact you as a teacher, if at all?
10. Is there anything you think you will do differently next year as a result of this project? Why or why not?
11. What are some ways I can support you next year when we aren't working on a project together?
12. What advice do you have for me moving forward as a researcher?
13. Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't yet discussed?

APPENDIX F: List of Books ordered by Mrs. B through her DonorsChoose.org project.

1. Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History by Vashti Harrison

2. Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina Young Readers Edition by Misty Copeland

3. Streetcar to Justice by Amy Hill Hearth

4. Chasing Space Young Readers Edition by Leland Melvin

5. Voice of Freedom: A Story about Frederick Douglass by Maryann N. Weidt

6. Mary McLeod Bethune: Education and Equality by Heather E Schwartz

7. She Persisted: Chelsea Clinton

8. The Life of Bessie Coleman: First African-American Woman Pilot by Connie Plantz

9. The Story of Matthew Henson: Arctic Explorer by Jeri Ferris

10. Mo'ne Davis: Remember My Name: My Story from First Pitch to Game Changer

11. Satchel Paige by Lesa-Cline Ransome

12. Thurgood Marshall: Young Justice (Childhood of Famous African Americans Series)

13. Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story

14. The Life of W.E.B. DuBois: Civil Rights Champion

15. The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles

16. I am Harriet Tubman by Brad Meltzer

17. Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race by Margot Lee Shetterly

18. Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman by Kathleen Krull

APPENDIX G: Answers about Time in Collaborative Document

Thinking about a typical **day**, what are the things you are thinking about before/during/ or after school? (*it can be a list of things, a chronology of time during a day, or however you picture/think about/conceptualize the day)*

- Before school I usually am thinking about preparing for kids to come in the room. This includes:
    - Passing out morning work (Mondays only)
    - Putting morning work slide up on front screen
    - Put out lunch sticks for lunch count
    - Go to the bathroom!!
    - If I have a special I can get materials ready for the rest of the day. If not,
        - I need to have all materials copied and laid out for myself and students
- During school
    - Focused on using Gradual Release Model
        - 100% prepared for an unannounced observation or walk in
    - Behavior issues
    - Kids who get pulled throughout the day (when they get pulled, when they what will they miss, how can they make it up)
    - Time constraints as far as pacing-making sure I'm teaching content effectively but in a way where I can move at a pace that will allow me to get as much content taught as I can before testing
    - Pass back assignments, notes for home
- After school
    - Getting prepared for the next day
        - Getting copies done if needed
        - Getting materials out for lessons
        - Looking over lesson plans
        - Creating lesson plans if needed
        - Getting new materials or copies if I need to reteach content in a different way
    - Girls on the Run (M/W 4:00-5:15)
    - Meeting with teammates to debrief about lessons/day
        - This sometimes includes revising a weekly lesson outline and going a different direction with content which can lead to…
            - Gathering additional materials
            - Making additional copies
            - Creating new lesson plans
    - Return emails
    - Contact parents if needed
    - Talk with principal if needed
    - Look ahead for next week's content…
        - What materials will I need/do I have materials
        - Outline lesson plans
    - Monday/Thursday are typically later days where I get copies and lessons done for the next week-I don't like to worry about this over the weekend

    - Grade assignments/put scores in grade books

1. Thinking about a typical **week**, what are the things you consider?

- Content that will be taught-do I have all materials
- Lesson outline for week-what will each day look like/how will each day build on the last in a meaningful way
- How will I assess student understanding
- iReady data-where are kids struggling

2. Thinking about a typical **unit**/**month**/**semester** (however you think bigger than a week), what are some things you consider?

- Goals for the end of the unit-what do they need to do by the end of the unit?
    - Creating tests/end of unit projects
- Do I have any events coming up that will impact my week?
    - Field trips
        - Permission slips
        - Money
        - Chaperones
    - Absences
        - Sub plans
    - Observations
        - Lesson plan ready
    - Assemblies
    - School events (bake sale, field day, 5th grade Graduation)
- I-Ready diagnostic testing-creating small groups to differentiate instruction and meet individual student needs

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CHAPTER THREE—WHEN YOU CROSS A BECKY: A MONOLOGUE

A Prologue

As you read this final article of this dissertation, you will notice that there are no in-text citations. This purposeful decision was made to expose elements of Whiteness while telling a fictional story. Others have used CRT and CWS to share parables about race and racism, and I used those as a foundation from which to write this piece. While this is a work of fiction, it is not written as a parable such as aliens coming to take Black people from Earth (Bell, 1992), or a racially transmitted disease that spreads among White men via racist language (Montoya, Matias, Nishi, & Sarcedo, 2016). While my piece is not written as a parable, I do draw upon both of these works as I attempt to use story to capture the ways Whiteness works to maintain power (Allen, 2004)—specifically, within the context of a university.

Like the other two articles in the dissertation, this piece is grounded in Critical Whiteness Studies—specifically, in the ways the emotionality of Whiteness play out within the context of teacher education (Matias, 2016) and the ways White women can (and do) turn instances of White Fragility into manifestations of power (DiAngelo, 2018).

The literature is rife with examples of ways White women resist learning about issues of race or equity (see, for example Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Matias, 2013, 2016; Matias & Liou, 2015; Matias & Newlove, 2017). By offering a fictionalized account of the ramifications for a teacher educator after they confont a student's problematic racial views, I hope to add another layer to our understanding of the ways Whiteness operates within teacher education.

In this story, we read the thoughts of a graduate student who is asked to meet with the Dean about a particular student. Knowing that others have been pushed out of the program and department because of the ways they have confronted Whiteness, the narrator nervously tries to

convince themselves that they did the right thing by calling out a student—Becky—in a video she made that was full of cultural appropriation. Instead, we find that the tears Becky's cried about being called out on her actions are more than just reflections of sadness—they manifest into displays of power that Becky is able to wield through her Whiteness, resulting in personal and professional consequences for the professor—backed up by the institutional power wielded by the Dean—who takes the role of a "Rebecca" in the story—a "Becky" with even more power.

While I draw upon my own experiences to write the monologue, it is a work of fiction meant to demonstrate the ways "Beckys" (and "Rebeccas") have been able to wield their Whiteness to maintain current power structures. I made the decision to write this piece in a way that the reader could (and should) be able to identify with the protagonist as they struggle with the ramifications of confronting a "Becky" (and a "Rebecca") about race. In writing this piece, I chose to be ambiguous with the narrator's identities, because I did not want to appropriate other's identities or experiences. As a White male, I understand that I am implicated in both White supremacy and patriarchy (hooks, 1994; Lipsitz, 2006). It would be problematic for me to appropriate someone else's voice and write from the perspective of one who is marginalized. Nor did I feel comfortable writing the story explicitly through the gaze of a White male, as I did not want the piece to come off as an appropriation of microaggressions.

I wanted this story to both give voice to those who have experienced similar manifestations of White Fragility in teaching university courses, while also making it possible for someone who has not been in this situation to picture themselves in that role. My hope was that anyone who read this could see themselves as giving the monologue that I share.

The inspiration for this article came from a call for book chapters from Dr. Cheryl Matias, who was interested in creating an academic characterization of "Beckys," which would

also demonstrate the need for such characterizations, and describe how these characterizations might impact the hope for diversity, racial justice, and equity in the P-20 pipeline.

This piece is not meant to vilify all White women. Rather, I wish to demonstrate the ways Whiteness can be (and often is) weaponized within the space of teacher education. By exploring this idea of what it means to be a "Becky" (or a "Rebecca"), my goal is that readers will be able to see the ways Whiteness impacts people those of us committed to racial justice. I am also aware that my attempts to capture the story of what happens when one crosses a "Becky" could be seen as disingenuous, as I—as a White male—am implicated in practices similar to what Becky engages in. That is, as a White male, I am complicit in manipulating and maintaining power structures for my benefit at the expense of others. It was something I thought about deeply as I considered who was telling this story

A Monologue

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit

Why does this always happen to me in the shower?!

Every.

Damn.

Time.

A wave of regret mixed with fear mixed with nausea mingled in my stomach as the shampoo ran into my eyes.

My mind always decides to do the most racing while I'm getting ready in the morning. Most of the time, it likes to take me back to conversations where I said things I regret. Most of the time, it's something stupid that I said. Most of the time, my mind makes me think about something I said twelve years ago, and I get embarrassed all over again. Most of the time I finish, get out, dry off, and get over it, shaking my head at how ridiculous I was being.

This morning it was different though. This morning, it was more than embarrassment. I was scared. My hands were shaking as I tried to lather up. It was the email I had just read. I shouldn't have opened it. But that's what I do. I wake up. I look at my emails. I get in the shower. Usually, there's just junk in there so early in the morning. Amazon telling me about something I should buy. Someone sending a LinkedIn invitation that I ignore. Stuff like that. I usually wake up just to delete all the junk so I can start the day with a clean, empty, email inbox.

Wouldn't you know, though, the first email of the morning was from a real person. Emailing at 6:08am.

Who the hell sends email at 6:08am?!

The Dean, that's who.

As a graduate student, I have learned to fly under the radar as much as possible. I have a pretty sweet deal right now. I'm fully funded and don't want to lose that. I can't lose that. What would I do—halfway through my program and then nothing? I would…I don't know what I would do. It's not like I got into other programs. I would have to spend another year applying and waiting and then moving and starting all over again? That's if anyone would want me. I feel like no one would want me if I got kicked out.

While it would seem nice if the Dean of a respected department at a big time university would know my name, experience has shown me this is not a good thing. It seems the Dean *not* knowing your name is better. A number of friends and faculty aren't here anymore because the Dean knew their name. I can think of a few right off the top of my head. Juanita was doing fine in the program. 3 years in. Then her Op-Ed got published last year. Decrying the way the academy treats Women of Color. It didn't name names or anything, but it was too much. She is no longer in the program. No more funding. They said something like, "This isn't the environment we want to create at this institution" or something like that. Dr. Oh didn't get tenure. Apparently his views don't represent what the Department stand for—that

microaggressions happen every day on college campuses like ours. Apparently our campus is more progressive than that. Apparently his research must be flawed. Roberto had to move, too. He did CRT. We don't do CRT at Midwestern University. At least not the way Roberto did it. He was told something about how this might not be the program for him. That it was too much. Those are just the people I know about. Who knows who else left because of stuff like this? Not kicked out, but forced out. Like, you can stay, but…don't.

I had gotten a lot of emails from the Dean over the last 4 years. Almost all of them were about grants or fellowships or departmental news—forwarded messages that didn't have my name at the top. Rather, it was sent to a listserv of doctoral students and faculty.

Just passing this along to those who might be interested in this.

Or.

Thought you should see this.

This email was different. This one had my name on it. It wasn't forwarded. It was definitely just for me. My name right at the top. 6am.

The nausea hit again as I rinsed off and remembered what she wrote. Thinking of the possible implications.

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit

My stomach continued its somersaults as I tried to remember exactly what I had read as the water beat down on me.

This wasn't good.

Was I in trouble?

Of course you're in trouble! Why else would she email you like this?

This wasn't good.

But I didn't do anything.

Did I?

I must have done something. Shit!

This was definitely not good.

My breathing became shallow as my mind raced through what seemed like my entire life history in a moment. What had she written again? Snippets of the email flashed in front of me.

…Becky…

…A formal complaint…

What did that even mean?

…Becky?

…EDU 101?

Was this about Becky's video? It must be. We talked the other day. That had to be it. Her damn video. It was totally about the video.

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit

I got out of the shower and ran to my phone to read the Dean's email again, dripping on the carpet. What was happening?

From: Dr. Rebecca White 6:08am (37 minutes ago)

To: me

We need to set up a meeting and talk face to face as soon as possible. I received a disturbing email from one of your students who claims you called her a racist after class the other day. Becky Jones, from your EDU 101, contacted me and shared how she feels discriminated against in your class and that you singled her out because she is white. You know that at Midwestern University that we strive to create safe spaces for our students, and that we respect all opinions.

Because this is a formal complaint being lodged against you, we need to take action as soon as possible. Please come to my office this morning at 9am so we can discuss next steps.

Respectfully,

Rebecca White, Ph.D.
Dean, Department of Education
Midwestern University
Chair, Research Association " (DoEfA)
Treasurer, National Association of Deans
Former President of Research Academy of America (RAA)

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit!

What did Becky say to the Dean?

I had never been asked to meet with the Dean before. What was she going to say? What did that email say again?

…She feels discriminated against in your class…

My head was swirling with possible ramifications of the meeting. This was going to be Juanita all over again.

Shit!

I got dressed, my mind still racing.

I took some deep breaths. I stood up and paced around the room. My mind racing through what was happening and how it had happened.

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit

It was totally about the video. And our conversation afterwards. Why did I have to call Becky on this? I should have just let it go. Just give Becky the damn A and forget about her and her flock of friends. I could picture them sitting together—barely listening each week as I tried to talk to the class about systems of oppression. Becky was clearly the ringleader. Her eyes seemed to roll more each week. As soon as class started, Becky's phone would come out—below the desk as if

I couldn't see. As if I hadn't been teaching for 10 years. Her friends finagled their phones out, too. Becky would snicker and look at her friends, then roll her eyes as she saw me looking at her. The phone put away for a few more minutes before popping out again to repeat the whole scene. It was tiring.

Every damn week it seemed. Future flippin' teacher right there, that Becky.

I had taught the course before. I had students like Becky before. Most of the time I could get students like her to engage. They would say things like all lives matter or that we were a country that was past race. Or at least if those students disagreed with what we were learning, they wouldn't derail every conversation. I'd had a few students who just sat there, silently begrudging everything we did in class.

Becky was different though. She and her friends seemed to be able to disrupt everything just by their presence. Becky was like the cool kid in class who dictated what others should think. So not only was she disengaged, but because she was, none of the other students wanted to share anything. Like I would ask a question and everyone's feet suddenly became the most interesting thing on the planet. I thought the idea of popular kids faded with high school, but it was clear with Becky that this concept was still going strong. Becky seemed to dictate the direction of the course, and silenced everyone else. Every day, as soon as Becky walked into class—the Greek lettering on her shirt and bag and water bottle incomprehensible to me—conversations would stop and the whole feeling in the room would shift. I just wanted to get Becky and her friends to engage in the ideas and allow space for the other students to share. I should have been more careful about what I wished for. Because when Becky engaged, she really stinking engaged. Just

in really jerky ways.

I could picture the day Becky had been most animated. The day her phone went away the longest. I was talking about reasons why we should reconsider celebrating Columbus Day. How teachers contribute to dangerous interpretations of history through word searches and poems and teaching students about his "heroics." I put the question back onto the class. They were going to be teachers in a few years. What would they do in their classes as teachers? Would they celebrate the "holiday"? What would they do with *their* students?

I thought it was a softball topic. I thought it was going to be cut and dry.

Most students every other year joined me in my outrage. Why the hell were we celebrating this guy?
Most students every other year were embarrassed. Why hadn't we learned about this before?
Most students every other year talked about how they had never considered Columbus before.
Most students every other year would share what they would do. No, they wouldn't celebrate the day. They'd teach differently.

This year was different though. As soon as the topic was broached, Becky chimed in.

She always celebrated Columbus Day. She always had that day off when she was in school. It was a holiday. This was ridiculous. We can't judge the past like this. What was the big deal

about him? He discovered America. Why did I always have to make such a big deal out of everything?

The whole idea seemed like a slap in the face to her. Becky was insistent that I was blowing things out of proportion. Like I always did. Becky's family was Italian. They always celebrated Columbus Day. I was insulting them. I was making a big deal out of nothing.

While Becky had been annoyingly indifferent up to that point, after that particular class, she was indignant. Every reading was a bunch of BS to her. The eye rolling became sharper. I hadn't been able to get through to her since that day. She didn't share in whole group discussions. Or if she did, it was a snarky comment. I tried to let it go. I didn't want to make things worse than what they were. Just let her coast through, I thought. It irked me though. Every comment. Every derisive look.

Becky did the work though. Papers turned in when they were due. And. Becky was very excited about the final project. It was open. Students could do it individually. Or in groups. Becky wanted to work in a group. Becky wanted to make a video. I saw a win in that she was starting to engage.

The nausea came back and I thought about the video. It was horrible. Maybe the worst thing that I have seen as a teacher. No, definitely the worst. 10 years as a teacher, and this was the worst thing I had seen. I was still pacing around my apartment. I cringed again thinking about that damn video. It was like being in the shower all over again. This whole Dean thing is all about that video.

But wait!

Maybe the video Becky made really wasn't that bad.

Maybe it wasn't as bad as I thought.

Maybe I had crossed a line.

Maybe I could just let it go.

Maybe I would tell the Dean that I made a mistake.

Maybe tell her that everything was fine.

Maybe give Becky the A that she wanted and forget all about her.

That's what this was all about right? For sure it was. It *had* to be about that damn video and my conversation with Becky afterwards. Maybe I was blowing everything out of proportion and just needed to apologize to Becky and the Dean and everything could go back to normal and I could keep my funding and finish my PhD and get the hell out of here.

I sat back down at the table and opened my laptop. It hummed and whirred as I clicked around my desktop. Yeah. That's what I'll do. I'll watch the video and see that it was fine and everything will be fine. It's fine.

EDU101. *click*

Final Assignment. *click*

Becky_Jones. *click*

Final Video.mp4. *click*

My computer sounded like a diesel motor as the video loaded. I had only watched it once, but that had been enough. I hadn't ever wanted to watch it again. Most students had created posters. They really took up the ideas in creative ways. One had written a spoken word poem about oppression. Those were amazing. Not this, though. This had made my stomach turn. A familiar feeling this semester with Becky.

As I clicked, Becky's face filled the screen. A black hoodie covered her head. Gold chains dangled on her deck. The camera zoomed out and a large boombox sat next to her. As she pushed play, a heavy beat started thumping from my laptop speakers and Becky began nodding her head. She put on oversized sunglasses and held up a piece of paper and began reciting the lyrics to her song. It was like she was trying to incorporate every possible stereotype about rappers into one scene.

Becky looked into the camera.

We're all equal, me and you

Don't matter the color

Black, white or blue

All lives matter

That's what I'm trying to say

Why do we need to talk about race today…

She disappeared as I clicked the red X in the corner of the video player.

Nope.

Nopenope

Nopenopenopenopenope.

I couldn't watch anymore. It was too much.

I wasn't going to let this go.

It was just as bad as I remembered.

I remember the first time I had opened it. I remember that I was excited that Becky and her friends had wanted to create a video for the final project. I remember thinking that maybe I had read too much into Becky's actions in class. I remember thinking that maybe I had been too cynical about her. I remember how excited Becky had been at the idea of making a video. I remember the feeling I had when it played for the first time last week. Almost like getting the email from the Dean. Stomach dropping. Hands shaking

What.

The.

Hell!

I couldn't make it through the first 20 seconds without feeling sick. The "rap" was cultural appropriation in its worst form. And the content—we talked all semester about race and power and oppression and the importance of movements like BLM. How did she think this was ok? All lives matter? It was a slap in the face. I was glad I had called her on this. I felt redeemed. Reinvigorated. I was in the right. This was horrible.

Right?

After seeing it, I thought long and hard about how I should confront Becky about this. Should I send an email? Do it all at distance? Or should I ask her to meet me somewhere? Public? Private?

I decided I needed to do it face to face. I stopped her after class last week before she left with her friends. *I just want to talk to you real quick about your video.* I remember how big she had smiled as we walked back to my office. She seemed proud. Like I was going to compliment her on doing such a great job. Like there was a fucking Oscar in my desk drawer waiting for her.

We sat down. I talked. The video was problematic. It was full of cultural appropriation. The ideas she presented were problematic. But I wanted to give her another chance. If she could re-do the video, I would grade it again. No penalty. *Here's two articles on cultural appropriation that might help.*

She had sat silently there in my office as I talked. I could tell she was trying not to cry. But I remember a single tear working its way down her face. She huffed as she walked out the door. I naïvely thought she would go home and read the article and realize that what she had done was not ok. That she would be embarrassed at what she had done. Full of contrition. I was actually expecting an apology email from her this week. Instead, a different email. From the Dean. At 6 in the morning. That made my stomach churn at what might happen to me.

My mind flashed back to the email again.

…we strive to create safe spaces for our students, and that we respect all opinions.

Was I in trouble for making Becky feel uncomfortable? For making a white woman feel uncomfortable? It sure seemed like it. Would I be asked to leave the program? What was the Dean going to say to me? It didn't seem like she was going to back me up. What would this mean for my funding? For my research? Or for the job search next year—the Dean sure knows a lot of people. Would she not recommend me? Or worse, would another program even let me in if I got kicked out? Would she actively tell people not to hire me?

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit

I kept thinking about Juanita and Dr. Oh and Roberto. Their lives had been destroyed because of the Dean. Because they didn't toe the line.

No.

I was going to be fine. All I had to do was show the Dean this video and explain the conversation I had with Becky the other day. It was going to be fine. Maybe I could tell her that I would meet with Becky again and talk through why the video was so problematic. Surely the Dean would see that.

No problem. That video was so bad. The Dean would see my point and it would work out.

I felt better. I knew that I was doing the right thing. If Becky was going to be a teacher, I needed to intervene here. While she was a student. Before she had a classroom of 10 year olds. I was going to take a stand. I sat down and start typing my reply. To let the Dean know what really happened and why I had called Becky on her video. I was going to be fine.

To: Dr. Rebecca White 7:43 am

From: me

Dr. White
I would be glad to stop by today, though I have to rearrange my schedule to meet at 9am. I am a bit confused—is this about Becky's video that she made? I can bring it with me and show you and maybe we can talk about next steps? I hope that

My phone dinged mid-sentence. I stopped typing and glanced down. A text. A colleague at work. It was a link. To ProfessorRater.com. They told me I needed to take a look at this.

I clicked and saw my name. I had a 1 star rating. There were at least 20 comments. They were all bad.

What the hell? It had been fine last week. 5 stars.

Worst professor ever. Totally racist towards white people.

> This teacher sucks. Unless you agree with everything they say (like white people suck), they will fail you.
>
> MU needs to fire this professor. Can't believe they are actually allowed to teach a course.

My head was spinning. I stopped reading. Because my phone was dinging again. And again. And again. Twitter. It looked like my handle @MUteacher was being tagged. I'm horrible at Twitter. I had like 20 followers. Why would I be getting so many alerts? I opened the app.

> @MUteacher is totally a #racistprofessor
>
> Can't believe @MUedProgram has people like @MUteacher. #racistprofessor who shouldn't have a job. Fire now!
>
> Hey @MUedProgram. Program is a disgrace because of people like @MUteacher. #racistprofessor

I began to legitimately freak out now. *What the hell was going on?*!

First the email from the Dean. Then the website. Now Twitter? This was crazy—I could *see* who was Tweeting. It was Becky and her friends. They were launching an all out campaign against me. I needed to be fired? What the actual hell!?

Shitshitshitshitshitshitshit

I was trembling now. This had never happened before. All because of what I said about Becky's video? My mind replayed the scene in my office. The single tear running down Becky's cheek.

How was I going to stop this? I needed to meet with the Dean and tell my side of the story. This was not email material. I needed to talk to her face to face. Like now. I needed to make sure she knew what had really happened. To make this better. To work things out.

* * *

My head was spinning as I left the Dean's office. What had just happened? I remembered bits and pieces—images and words swirling together, a Dali painting of whatthehellishappening. Some things were vivid. Her safety pin on her desk. Some things were messy in my mind. Her words. What did she really say? I had tried to take notes, but couldn't concentrate. It was a blur. I had been blown away by the turn our talk had taken. It had not been a two-way conversation. She had listened—or at least appeared to listen—at first. She watched the video. Or at least the 20 seconds I shared with her. I said my piece. I thought it was going to be fine.

But.

There was no ambiguity.

I had been wrong. Snippets of what had been said rang in my ears as I tried to process the last half hour in the Dean's office as I walked aimlessly through campus trying to make sense of what she had said.

…this is a sensitive time in our country...

What is going on right now?

…Becky's claims of racism are taken seriously…

It couldn't be. This wasn't happening.

…this is not the environment we are creating here at the university…

No, everything is going to be fine. Right?

…it is clear this is not the program for you…

What just happened?!

…you'll land on your feet somewhere…

What am I going to do?!

...it's for the best. For everyone.

An Epilogue

As I shared in the prologue, this story is not true, though it is based on a number of truths I have experienced myself and heard from others in my time as a doctoral student teaching a course with a heavy focus on race. Though it is perhaps a bit inconceivable that a graduate student could get kicked out of a program by a Dean without going through some sort of prolonged removal process, there is a certain amount of plausible uncertainty that flows throughout the story. This sort of uncertainty of role and status is especially apparent for doctoral student instructors teaching a course with a focus on race (Dao, Farver, & Jackson, 2018). In writing this story, I wanted to capture this insecurity—how the narrator knew they had done the right thing in confronting Becky about her video, but how they also worried about (and suffered from) the repercussions of those actions. The confrontation triggered an avalanche of a response from Becky—her email to the Dean, the poor online ratings, and the trending hashtag calling for the instructor's removal from the university.

In the story, we see the power of Becky's tears as she is confronted about a problematic video she makes. She is unable to deal with or understand her own implication in racism, and lashes out—a textbook example of White Fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). Those of us who have taught a similar course have most likely experienced this type of reaction. There is ample academic literature detailing the ways students resist learning about issues of race in university classrooms like Becky does in this story (Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Chan & Treacy, 1996; Dunn, Dotson, Ford, & Roberts, 2014; Greenman & Kimmel, 1995; Matias, 2013; Matias & Liou, 2015; Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2016; Matias & Newlove, 2017; Rodriguez, 2009). But this story goes beyond just that resistance and shows the power of the White tears Becky cries.

.

Throughout the story, we see the various ways Becky lashes out at the narrator— each of the acts demonstrates both Becky's savviness in using systems for her benefit, but there is also a focus on retaliation in her actions. It is implied that Becky is thinking something along the lines of, "if this instructor is going to accuse me of racism, I am going to do whatever I can to make them miserable."

Becky does this by first emailing the Dean of the College. Becky seems to understand the hierarchy of the university, or at least that the Dean is a person of power. Her action is reminiscent of the barrage of White women we have seen in the past who call the police on People of Color for a variety of innocuous "offenses" including watching their child's soccer game (Fieldstadt, 2018), being part of a college tour group (Levin, 2018), or attending a barbeque in the park (Zhao, 2018)—the list seems to grow each day. We see this in this story when Becky emails the Dean directly with her complaint. We also see the way Becky continues her assault on the instructor, not just with an email to the Dean, but with her negative comments about the instructor on a website that rates professors, and by beginning a trend on social media calling for the instructor's removal from the university. Each of these acts were not just instances of White tears, but a weaponization of those tears against the instructor (Cooper, 2018; Glover, 2018; Jackson, 2018).

Added to this is ways Rebecca, the Dean, wields her power and perpetuates Whiteness in her own ways. What is frightening about Dr. White's response is not so much that she immediately sides with Becky (which is in itself frightening—she did not even want to hear the instructor's side of the story before siding with Becky), but in the email she sends. The Dean's adamancy of respecting "all opinions" and creating "safe spaces for students" is steeped in Whiteness and gives a false equivalency of ideas (Jones, 2018; Modica, 2015). It is akin to the

45th president claiming that there were "very fine people" on both sides of the white-nationalist rally and counter protest in Charlottesville, Virginia (Serwer, 2019). The safe space Rebecca is referring to is an extension of this type of false equivalency—the space she desires is one safe for Becky, not for anyone else. It is a distortion of what such a space is meant for. Especially concerning is a small detail found in the Dean's email signature line—such as her leadership role in a fictional organization's "Division of Equality for All." From her actions we see that the Dean is not interested in equity, but in maintaining the status quo of Whiteness and the reproduction of racism (Buchanan, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018).

My hope in writing and sharing this story is to spotlight the ways Whiteness maintains power through both the Becky and Rebecca characters that we see in universities across the country. I offer the monologue as a tool to see in clear and potentially terrifying ways how Whiteness can be upheld; how White Fragility can be weaponized; and how powerless one can feel if they cross a "Becky" or a "Rebecca." By showcasing how these characters operate, we see how Whiteness impacts struggles for justice and equity in education.

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