

Critically Rendered Narratives: Discourses of Whiteness, Equity Traps, and Critical
Literacy in Teacher Education

By

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For McKenzie Elizabeth Carlson

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Table of Contents

DEDICATION.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii-iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
ABSTRACT	1
I. Introduction	2
II. DISCOURSES OF WHITENESS	
“How Do You Go Against That Grain?” A Narrative Inquiry	
into the Discourses of Whiteness	33
III. EQUITY TRAPS	
“When You Carry All of Your Baggage With You ... You’re Carrying All of	
Your Baggage With You”: Identifying and Interrupting Equity Traps in Pre-	
Service Teachers’ Narratives	64
IV. CRITICAL LITERACY	
Narratives of Critical Literacy From Two White Preservice English Teachers:	
Disrupting Familiar Routines and Attuning to Social and Political Issues	95
V. Conclusion	135
References	151
Appendices	178

List of Tables

<i>Table Number</i>	<i>Page(s)</i>
1.	Participant Features: Background and Schooling11-12
2.	Description of Equity Traps17
3.	Overview of Data Collection, Analysis, and Generated Themes22-23
4.	Data Themes Generated25-27
5.	Discourses of Whiteness38-39
6.	Discourses of whiteness in white preservice secondary teachers' narratives43
7.	GLU's Four Semester Scope-and-Sequence46-47
8.	Description of Equity Traps69-70
9.	GLU's scope-and-sequence76-77
10.	Great Lakes University Scope and Sequence109-110

Abstract of Dissertation

In this dissertation, I situate discourses of whiteness, equity traps, and critical literacy as concepts relevant to the study of teacher education in predominantly white settings using methods of narrative inquiry. In Chapter Two and Chapter Three of the dissertation, I explore various discourses of whiteness present in the narratives of white preservice secondary teachers refining and revising their roles as agents in social change. In Chapter Two, I provide analyses of the rhetorical productions of the discourses of individualism, self-defense, and “Whiteness as a liability” as circulating and recirculating in the teaching and learning experiences of white preservice secondary teachers. In Chapter Three, I argue that “equity traps,” or impediments to educational equity, must be identified and interrupted as an initiative for teacher education programs. In Chapter Four, I highlight the critical literacy practices of two white preservice secondary English teachers, detailing the encouragements and constraints these teachers experienced as they used literacy to disrupt familiar routines in schools and texts and to focus on social and political issues in (or absent from) texts.

Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Background and Purpose of the Study

In my role as an instructor of courses related to literacy, diversity, and social justice in an undergraduate teacher education program, I frequently encountered white preservice teachers struggling to come to terms with a vision of schooling that deviated from their personal experience(s). By this, I mean to acknowledge that in each term, students remain “on the fence” about whether they stood for the traditional Western canon or whether they aimed to pursue “progressive,” anti-racist, multicultural, or culturally relevant teaching in their future (Banks, 1993). After all, many times, the Western canon prepared these prospective teachers for an elite education, and this is often what they see in their practica and student teaching experiences.

Britzman (2003) provides some important insight regarding the history of progressive teacher education and the struggles encountered. Britzman argues that while some assert “that teacher education can serve the interests of democratic principles and social justice precisely because teachers have the capacity to intervene in the world,” we must also be conscious of the contradictory claims held by others “that education should serve the interests of business, national defense, and social conformity because the goal of education, and hence the work of teachers, should be limited to cultural transmission and social reproduction” (p. 49). It is important to remember that the experience of teaching and the education of teachers occurs within this contradiction.

I submit the pattern of preservice teachers' struggles to approach teaching with a sociopolitical consciousness here as evidence of Zeichner's (2009) claim "that student teachers often resist the efforts of teacher educators to help them teach in more culturally responsive ways (e.g., Ahlquist, 1991)" (p. 63; see also Gomez, Walker, & Page, 2000). Zeichner (2009) further claims that teacher education programs "need to be teaching prospective teachers skills of teaching and help them accomplish purposes that are educationally and morally justifiable in a society that claims to be democratic" (p. 55).

According to Zeichner (2009), "Unless both the technical and moral aspects of teaching are a part of a teacher's education from the very beginning, the moral, ethical, and political aspects of their work will likely continue to be marginalized (Zeichner and Teitelbaum, 1982)" (p. 55). In the current neoliberal context of educational reform (i.e., data-driven, teacher-and-test-centered, "choice," and competition), approaching schooling by taking into account moral, ethical, and political aspects of teaching and learning challenges "mainstream" views on the purposes of education. Within the tensions related to acting as change agent or merely reproducing the existing social and cultural relations and hierarchies, I sought answers related to questions about where and why discomfitures emerged as preservice teachers navigated and reflected upon their introductions into the field or profession.

The purpose of this dissertation research was to study the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and developing attitudes of white preservice secondary teachers learning to teaching in racially and culturally diverse schools, settings that varied from many of their

personal schooling experiences. Using qualitative methods of narrative inquiry and document analysis, I studied the intersecting and interweaving relationships of race, class, gender, and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1991) as these concepts are embedded and narrated into the teaching and learning experiences of preservice teachers from a predominantly white research institution in the Midwest. This study contributes to Conversations (Gee, 2011a) about how one dimension of identity, in this case whiteness, and its intersections with other dimensions of identity (class, gender, ethnicity, and content area or disciplinary background) influence preservice secondary teachers' decision-making and understanding of their responsibilities as white teachers teaching in equitable and culturally relevant ways (Ladson-Billings, 1995). I sought to examine the developments, influences, philosophies, and pedagogies that contributed (or not) to preservice teachers' sense of selves as a teacher/agent for social justice in the metropolitan city of Great Lakes City¹.

Studying Whiteness

Activist and scholar Audrey Thompson (2003) urges antiracist educators to continue to work on developing critical tools that disrupt hegemony, or the predominant social and cultural practices, habits, and “common sense(s)” that generally benefit a dominant social group. While contributions have been made by white identity theorists through the frameworks and stages-of-development (Helms, 1990, 2008; Tatum, 1992; 1994; 2009; Carter, 1997; Howard, 2007, 1999), these identity frameworks also undermine innovative possibilities that we have yet to come across. When it comes to

antiracist traditions, Thompson (2003) suggests that identity theorists, critical pedagogy, and “race traitor” traditions, tend to make the assumption “that we *know* what it means to be an antiracist white person” (p. 20). The result is an investment in a “fantasy of being an exceptional white person” (Thompson, 2003, p. 24), when it seems to be more useful to remind ourselves that white teachers cannot avoid or wriggle out of the contradictions that necessarily come with a process of becoming antiracist.

White racial identities must be seen as multiple across and within contexts. These identities have been made multiple, “by the ways race, gender, class, age and other identities influence one another, and also by the quantity and quality of association with people of different racial ascriptions” (Perry, 2004, p. 191). The participants in this study provide further evidence that a confluence of shifting and evolving intersectionalities of identity influence one’s understandings and interpretations of a lifeworld. The life stories of the participants in this study represent nuanced and complicated articulations of teaching and learning to embrace, reject, or transform critical and social justice pedagogies over time.

The three data chapters in this dissertation (Chapters Two, Three, and Four) demonstrate the importance of narrative inquiry collaborations with white preservice secondary teachers in order to develop teaching practices that support social justice pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, and critical literacies (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009; 1995; Luke, 2012). As a result of listening to and researching the stories told by white preservice secondary teachers, I have been able to consider multiple

practices for equitable teaching in middle and secondary classrooms and in teacher education programs.

Isolating any single identity marker, in many respects, can be seen at best as impractical, and at worst a self-indulgent academic exercise (i.e., naval-gazing). I focus on race, specifically Whiteness, having an awareness of the dangers inherent in such reductionism and (seeming) disregard for other relevant identity constructs. Further, this study is grounded in the notion that race is a concept that has been socially constructed and historically invented (Allen, 1994). The concept has generally served the interests of a dominant group whose skin color has been described as white. Therefore, while race is not “real”, it would be an understatement and misleading to suggest that investments in the concept did not exert real consequences or structure daily interactions. While this narrow focus may seem counterproductive to the goals of education in a democratic society, it is my contention that such a focus is warranted.

In a time of significantly changing demographic shifts in U.S. public schools (Howard, 2007; Zeichner, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2000; Gay & Howard, 2000; Fine & Weis, 2008), I focus my attention on the social construct of race (and its intersections with other socially constructed identity markers, specifically social class, gender, and ethnicity) in the context of education because of the crucial importance that this invented concept plays in perceptions of self and others, in individual interactions and pedagogy, in classrooms and curricula, and in schools and the system of schooling in a nation where social and cultural inequities are

produced and reproduced in schools.

The investment in Whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006) has been and continues to be shaped in a number of conspicuous and less-than-conspicuous ways through social, linguistic, and cultural policies, processes, and factors. Coming to a precise definition as to what Whiteness means or how it is to be identified, however, remains a complex, exhaustive, and at times (particularly for Whites), discomforting enterprise. As a starting point, I suggest that Whiteness, like any racial construction, has been socially maintained and historically perpetuated (DuBois, 1903/2005, 1935/1992; Baldwin, 1984/1998; Babb, 1998; Lopez, 2000a; Prendergast, 2003; Roediger, 1991/1999, 1994, 2005). According to Ian Haney Lopez (2000b), no single definition of Whiteness will or could suffice given its complexities and subtleties. Posits Lopez

‘White’ is: an idea; an evolving social group; an unstable identity subject to expansion and contraction; a trope for welcome immigrant groups; a mechanism for excluding those of unfamiliar origin; an artifice of social prejudice. Indeed, Whiteness can be one, all, or any combination of these, depending on the local setting in which it is used. (p. 631)

Like race itself, the concept of Whiteness can be taken to dominate individual and personal lives. The friends we choose, the neighborhoods in which we are “allowed”/are “pushed” to, the speech patterns we employ, the clothes we wear, even the food and beverages we consume, likely have been shaped by particular investments in a racial identity (Conley, 2000; Loewen, 1995; Berger, 1999; Leonardo, 2009a). The concept of

Whiteness, then, can be said to exact local observable phenomena, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. It is this observable phenomena that became the data for my analysis in these papers.

It would be a mistake to limit the dimensions of a study of Whiteness as existing in isolated individual bodies. Whiteness and performances of white identity are individual and embodied only insofar as they social and performed; that is, Whiteness must be “seen” as negotiated and reified in individual bodies as well as through hegemonic worldviews; through individual speech acts as well as through individual and collective silences; through isolated, single incidents; and through institutional patterns of dominance, though infinite variations among such practices will exist.

I see value, then, in examining the ways in which one’s own Whiteness has both afforded privileges and, if at all, constrained opportunities for white preservice secondary teachers in a society in which notions of the United States as a meritocracy are deeply engrained (McNamee & Miller, 2009). Whiteness, as Conley (2000) explains, is like language in that there exists an internal grammar complete with parts of speech, subtle idioms, and vernacular phrases. Accordingly, many native “speakers” who benefit from their Whiteness have given rare consideration to the inconspicuous advantages afforded to them vis-à-vis their skin color. The “problem of the color line” (Du Bois, 1903/2005, p. 11) has been traditionally cast as a problem for people of color, as if Whiteness itself is colorless. A tremendous amount of power is embedded in such an outlook.

While over 40% of our nation’s schools enroll students deemed “minority” (i.e.,

Asian American, African American, Latino/a), the teaching force remains overwhelmingly White (85%-90%) (NCES, 2009; Howard, 2007; Sleeter, 1998; Zeichner, 2009; Cochran-Smith, 2004). A significant percentage of these white teachers are female, monolingual, and middle class, many of whom have relatively little experience with racially and culturally diverse students or students who speak a language other than/in addition to English (White, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2009). As a result of such conditions, English Language Learners and students of color continue to experience inequities related to infractions such as continued low-expectations, lingucism, and a Euro-centric curriculum that celebrates a fabricated history of Whites (and mostly white men) at the expense of ignoring, disenfranchising, or trivializing groups who have been historically marginalized (i.e., immigrant groups, LGBTQ students, working class) (Lee, 2005; Blackburn & McCready, 2009).

I sought to learn from the life stories of secondary white preservice teachers who were beginning to view themselves (or already saw themselves) as committed to engaging in the moral, political, and ethical aspects of social justice pedagogy (Nieto & Bode, 2008) and critical literacy for social justice (Luke, 2012; Scherff, 2012; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004b). A fair amount of scholarship and research has contributed to whites' growing understandings of white skin privilege and benefits from these unearned privileges (McIntosh, 2005/1988; Frankenberg, 1993; McIntyre, 1997; Perry, 2004; Landsman, 2005). However, the meaning of Whiteness and its impact on teaching and learning as understood from the perspective of white preservice secondary

teachers has remained under studied. As noted, public schools are experiencing a time of increasingly changing student demographics and mismatches and inconsistencies between teachers and students related to language, culture, and other potential barriers occur at frequent intervals in schools. We see teachers who contribute to a profession that could be considered an exclusive “white club” (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996; Leonardo, 2009 a; Sleeter, 2005), in stark contrast to an increasingly diverse student body (e.g., immigrant populations, English Language Learners, students with special needs) (NCES, 2009). In an effort to contribute to the growing body of research that contributes to the study of Whiteness in teacher education and as a way to seek further understanding of what lessons might be learned through a critical examination of the privileges imbued upon one’s Whiteness as told through life stories, I sought to answer to a number of research questions.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this study is: (How) do white secondary preservice talk about their Whiteness in relation to their past, present, and future schooling, teaching, and learning? The following sub-questions also provide structure to this research study:

- What are the experiences and influences, beliefs and values, attitudes and philosophies, articulations and actions of white preservice secondary teachers who aspire to teach for social justice?
- In what ways do the lessons and reflections of white preservice secondary

teachers reflect issues (and intersections) of race, class, gender, and teaching for social justice?

Participants and Research Setting

In this study, I collected life history narratives from 11 white preservice teachers in a secondary education program at a public university in the Midwest, Great Lakes University (GLU). The participants were in their final three (of four total) semesters in GLU's teacher education program at the time of this research study. When I first met the participants, I was in the role of instructor in a course, "Teaching Diverse Learners," during the spring semester of 2010. The course was focused on issues of diversity, multicultural education, and teaching for social justice. All of the participants for this study were enrolled in this course. Of the 11 secondary education participants in this study, I was a university supervisor over the course of the final two semesters (2010-2011 school year) to the five secondary English majors whose stories are elaborated upon in this project (see Table 1 for participant overview).

Table 1.
Participant Features: Background and Schooling

Names (pseudonyms)	Age	Field	Parents/Parents' Occupations	K-12 Schooling Features
Elaine M.	23	English	Divorced (M) Business Analyst (F) Medical Director	K-12 public schooling in mostly white, semi- rural/suburban district (population <

				10,000)
Lizzie O.	21	English	Divorced (M) FACE teacher (F) Retired state employee	K-12 public schooling in mostly white, middle-class district (population < 45,000)
Anna K.	23	English	Married (M) Journalist (F) Communicatio ns director	K-6 in private school in predominantly white suburb (< 75,000) 6-12 private secondary school in urban setting (> 500,000)
Kent A.	23	English	Married (M) Teacher's assistant (F) Adjunct chemistry faculty	K-12 public schooling in large, mostly white, working-class and middle- class district (< 75,000)
David J.	22	English	Married (M) Domestic (F) Independent Contractor	K-12 public schooling in predominantly white, upper- class suburb (< 50,000)
Abigail K.	21	Social Studies	Married (M) Pharmacy Tech (F) Firefighter	K-6 private Catholic school; 7-12 public schooling in predominantly white, rural district (<

				5,000)
Judd L.	23	Social Studies	Married (M) Teacher (F) Teacher	K-12 public schooling in predominantly white middle-class suburb (< 50,000)
Miranda H.	24	Math	Married (M) Health Care Consultant (F) Insurance	K-6 private school; 7-12 public schooling in predominantly white middle-class district (< 35,000)
Eric V.	24	Math	Married (M) Secretary (F) Public Works; Volunteer Fire	K-6 private school in rural town (< 5,000); 7-12 in mostly white, middle-class district (<75,000)
Griffin O.	22	Math	Married (M) Secretary (F) Programmer	K-12 public schooling in increasingly diverse urban district (<250,000)

Note: M=Mother; F=Father; Population(s) based on U. S. Census Bureau (2010) figures

According to the U.S. Census (2010), over 230,000 people populate the city of Great Lakes. Nearly 80 % of the city identifies as White, while Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino/as each account for 7 % each toward the town's racial diversity. The demographics for the state in which this research was conducted, 86% white and 6% Black and Hispanic (a term used in the Census as opposed to Latino/a), are for the most

part reflected in the city of Great Lakes. However, the school district demographics paint a different picture of diversity, as 50% of the district's 25,000 students are white, 24% are African American, and 15 % are Latino/a (District Website).

Like many large school districts, the district has historically struggled to meet the needs of *all* learners. This was most clearly evidenced in a controversy that flared over a proposal by the "Metro Alliance of Great Lakes" for a public charter school aimed at meeting the needs of African American, Latino/a, and low-income students. The district had been confronted with the fact that only 48% of the district's Black males and 57% of the Latino students were graduating ("Metro Alliance of Great Lakes" website).

Additionally, African American, Latino/a, and American Indian students were accounted for disproportionately in categories such as special education, Learning Disabled, or Emotional/Behavior Disorder (EBD). Students of color were four times more likely than white students to be labeled with such categories (personal communication, A. Bal, 2011). The district's English Language Learners were also overrepresented in similar categories in many of the district's schools. While the charter proposal turmoil occurred after data collection, the unrest provides some context for situating the school and community in which many of the participants did their individual and group tutoring along with their student teaching progression.

Theoretical Frameworks

A number of conceptual frameworks for viewing Whiteness in teacher education inform this study. For this project, I crafted three articles from the data. I drew upon

theoretical insights from various disciplines and traditions, aligning with Apple's (2010) call for Nancy Fraser's (1997) "politics of redistribution" and the "politics of recognition" (Apple, 2010, p. 17). This required employing and simultaneously criticizing a range of theoretical and political traditions throughout the project(s). In this way, a variety of perspectives work together to inform, extend, and "supportively criticize" current and future projects of social justice. In order to examine discourses of Whiteness, I draw on Critical Whiteness Studies and draw on the concept of equity traps to situate specific and commonplace observable discourses. Additionally, critical literacy, which is rooted in critical and liberatory pedagogies (Freire, 1970; Luke, 2012) serves as an important framework for documenting preservice secondary English teachers practices and philosophies.

Critical Whiteness Theories

Scholarship in the tradition of Whiteness studies must be seen as an attempt to examine the ways in which power in society is produced and reproduced (Twine & Gallagher, 2008; Omi & Winant, 2005; Lopez, 2000 a and b; Roediger, 1991/1999, 1994, and 2005). Accordingly, scholars in Whiteness studies begin with the premise that relations of power in society are neither fixed nor stable, but rather the result of a variety of ideological productions that are susceptible to fluctuation and change (Lipsitz, 2005 and 2006; Leonardo, 2004; Chennault, 1998; Mahoney, 1997; Morrison, 1992; Allen, 1994; Martinez, 2000; Nakayama & Martin, 1999). Exposing the evolving production(s) of Whiteness through discursive forms, discourses of whiteness, and other aspects of its

enterprise offer potentials for interrupting it (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

As many in the field of Whiteness studies have noted, only by rendering Whiteness visible do we stand a chance of transforming or disrupting it (Flax, 1998; Dyer, 2005; DiAngelo, 2004). Of course, naming Whiteness alone “does not dislodge deeply embedded power positions [though it] is a preliminary part of the [interruption] process” (DiAngelo, 2004, p. 13). Importantly for this study, it is the process of and need for interruption that is central to this inquiry project. That is, it is not my intention to re-center Whiteness (Leonardo, 2009a; Apple, 1998). Instead, I seek to contribute to efforts aimed at tabling Whiteness as “a viable subject for examination” (Solomon et. al, 2005, p. 148).

Equity Traps

In their important work on equitable schooling, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) describe four common “equity traps” held by educators working with diverse populations and students of color. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) define equity traps as “conscious and unconscious thinking patterns and behaviors that trap teachers, administrators, and others” or “ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners” (pp. 601-602). These traps result in lowered expectations and negative views toward students’ home language and culture, and foil the possibilities for equity in schooling.

Described as occurring individually and collectively, equity traps are “often reinforced ... through formal and informal communication, assumptions, and beliefs”

(McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 603). Equity traps lead to what King (1991) has coined as “dysconscious racism” or an “uncritical habit of mind” that gives justification to inequity. Identifying and interrupting equity traps holds considerable potential for helping educators “rethink assumptions that uncritically privilege Whiteness” (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007, p. 234).

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) identify four constructs and provide strategies to help school leaders first understand, and then implement strategies to eliminate the habitual traps. Table 2 (below) situates each of the four traps and provides a brief description of each trap. Importantly, each trap is not a stand-alone category and frequently there is overlap between the traps. Equity traps provided an analytical lens for identifying a variety of subtle but powerful discourses in need of interruption.

Table 2.
Description of Equity Traps

Equity Trap	Brief Description of Equity Trap
<i>Deficit View</i>	A way of identifying students’ language, culture, and behavior as a liability and not a resource for schooling.
<i>Racial Erasure</i>	Refusing to “see color,” taking a “colorblind” stance, and switching the conversation away from race to socioeconomics.
<i>Avoidance and Employment of the Gaze</i>	Avoiding the surveillance of White middle class parents and pressuring other White teachers to “fit in” with the norms established in a school.
<i>Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors</i>	Shifting responsibility for one’s own inappropriate behavior by blaming students.

Critical Literacy

For this study, critical literacy means exploring underlying worldviews and ideologies in texts and exploring the moral commitments and ethical stances required in order to work toward social justice (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010; Chapman, Hobbel, Alvarado, 2011; Christiansen, 2000). In general, overarching aims of critical literacy have related to achieving equity, raising the academic achievement of all students, and closely examining and critiquing relations of power in society (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004 b; Comber, 2001 b; Rogers, 2002; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010; Boatright, 2010; Luke 2000). However, no single definition of critical literacy exists and attempts to define critical literacy can be seen as in conflict with the overarching goals of the philosophy, which retains its possibilities only by challenging, and not becoming, the central focus or status quo approach to literacy education.

Scholars (Luke, 2000; Shor, 1999) provide accounts of critical literacy while emphasizing the changing nature and practices associated with the philosophy. Importantly, critical literacy is not a static body of techniques or strategies, but rather, a philosophical and political approach to schooling (in-and-out of school) that advocates “reading between the lines and the pages” (Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 229). Like any curriculum or approach to teaching and learning, critical literacy is unable to claim political neutrality in its approach to teaching and learning (Shor, 1992; Stevens & Bean, 2007). A critical literacy approach to language and power must be seen as an “ideological” model of literacy, and not an “autonomous” model of literacy (Street, 1995;

Irvine & Larsen, 2001). In an ideological model of literacy, students are viewed as “subjects” of meaning making in a sociopolitical context rather than being conceived as “objects” of a scripted literacy program replete with discrete sub-skills in an apolitical setting (Irvine & Larsen, 2001).

Based on their synthesized review of 30 years of research, Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys (2002) proposed a four dimensions model of critical literacy that requires text viewers to do the following: (1) disrupt the familiar and commonplace routines in text, (2) interrogate texts from a stance that seeks to understand multiple perspectives, (3) focus on the sociopolitical issues in texts (or absent from them), and (4) take action to promote social justice (p. 382). Other models for conceptually framing critical literacy relate to Luke and Freebody’s (1997, 1999) four resources model, McLaughlin and DeVogd’s (2004b) four principles of critical literacy, and Janks’ (2000) interdependent orientations in critical literacy focused on Domination, Access, Diversity, and Design.

The dimensions and orientations of the various models of critical literacy are not meant to be stand-alone categories but must instead be seen as interrelated, and at times, overlapping in their packaging and their intent. Further, the dimensions should not be construed as a lock-and-step progression or prescription or a hierarchy of genres or scripts to be implemented with corresponding results. In other words, practices of critical literacy vary by teacher, by classroom, by school, and by “imposed” disciplinary boundaries (i.e., English, Social Studies, Science) (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004b). In this inquiry project, I utilized the four dimensions of critical literacy (Lewison et al.,

2002) as relevant categories to guide my analyses of the practices of preservice teachers who saw themselves as embracing tenets of critical literacy due to the model's emphasis on philosophy and action and for the depth, breadth, and accessibility of the model for interpreting the data.

Research Methodology

This study is conceptualized as a qualitative narrative inquiry study. Literacy researchers have been utilizing a range of narrative approaches (e.g., autobiography, life histories, biographies, and autoethnographies) to study literacy in changing and evolving contexts (Alvermann, 2000a). The turn to narrative inquiry (beginning in the mid-1970s), however, has been met with a range of criticisms related to researcher subjectivity and “the twin crises of legitimation (truth claims) and representation” (Alvermann, 2000a, p. 125). Unlike traditional “scientific” research tools, narrative inquiry calls into question the notion that researchers objectively “strive to maintain a distance between the knower (narrator) and the known (narrated)” (Alvermann, 2000a, p. 124). Additionally, narrative inquiry blurs the boundaries and hierarchies dissociating science from/and art, complicating established boundaries on what counts (or does not count) as Truth.

I drew on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to explore how participants viewed teaching critical literacy for social justice throughout their experiences (in their own schooling, in a teacher education program, and in their student teaching placements) for several reasons. I found methods of narrative inquiry suitable to my research aims

because, as Chubbuck (2004) notes, “teaching is best understood when contextualized in the identity of the teacher in the context of the larger life story rather than being reduced to specific classroom behaviors” (p. 312). Narrative research offers uniquely valuable insights into a research participant’s ideas about events that have helped shape her life up to this point, and it allows participants to express her or his understandings of events in their own words (Goodson, 1980). I found narrative inquiry as particularly useful in providing for a depth of complexity and nuance necessary to work in service to disrupt social and cultural inequities, an important aim of critical literacy.

While a mode of inquiry that values individuals’ oral and written accounts of events that have impacted their lives and lived experiences (Casey, 1993), it is also important to acknowledge that “[k]nowledge grounded in stories is suspect in some people’s minds” (Alvermann, 2000a, p. 129). That is, scholars within empiricist and positivist traditions “have demonstrated little patience with narrative approaches” (Alvermann, 2000a, p. 129; Plummer, 1983). For this study, in line with Sfard and Prusak (2005), stories narrated by individuals (and their textual representations) are conceived as “reasonably accessible and investigable” (p. 17) performances of identity.

Chronologically, this study begins with the participants’ enrollment (Spring 2010) in a required undergraduate interdisciplinary course focused on topics related to multicultural education, sociocultural theories of language and literacy, and teaching for social justice. I was the instructor of the course and originally conceived this project to gain insights into white preservice teachers’ commitments to justice-oriented pedagogies

and philosophies. I informed students at the beginning of the 15-week semester of my plans to continue conversations begun in class and officially recruited participants for the study at the end of the semester, when a colleague distributed and collected consent forms. After grade submission, I learned of the participants and began the first phase of data collection by retroactively gathering course assignments and scheduling interviews. Beginning in the spring/summer of 2010 and through the summer of 2011, I interviewed 11 preservice teachers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds on three occasions at a location of their choosing. Also, during the 2010-2011 school year (fall 2010 and spring 2011), I served as the university supervisor to five of the secondary English participants in the study, formally observing each teacher on three occasions each semester, for a total of 6 observations per student teacher (see Table 3 for overview).

Table 3.

Overview of Data Collection, Analysis, and Generated Themes

Time	Data Collected	Data Analyses
Spring 2010 (Jan.-May)	Course syllabus, lesson plans, instructor field notes	
Summer 2010 (June-August)	Course assignments (Reading response papers, Teaching story, Action research project) retroactively collected Initial interviews conducted with 11 participants from various disciplinary backgrounds (Math, Social Studies, and English) (focus: Personal	Initial coding of course assignments

	background)	
Fall 2010 (Sept. – Dec.)	3 observations of secondary English teachers (collection of lesson plans, reflections, observation field notes)	Initial coding of first interviews Initial coding of lesson plans, reflections, and observation field notes
Spring 2011 (Jan- May)	2 nd round of interviews conducted with each participant (focus: K-12 schooling and college) 3 observations of secondary English teachers (collection of lesson plans, reflections, observation field notes) 2-hour focus group meeting with 7 participants	Initial coding of second interviews Continued coding of lesson plans, lesson reflections, and field notes from observations Initial coding of focus group transcript
Summer 2011	3 rd round of interviews conducted with each participant (focus: Teacher education program and student teaching)	Initial coding of third round of interviews

Data Generation and Collection

For this project, I gathered data from multiple sources. In line with Creswell (2007), I collected “four basic types of information” (p. 43): documents, interviews, observations, audiovisual materials (e.g., audio-recordings). I began by retroactively collecting course assignments from the participants. In terms of the three scheduled one-

on-one interviews, I utilized a semi-structured interview protocol, allowing room in the protocol to pursue individual story threads (see Appendix A). The protocol encouraged participants to narrate their schooling experiences including enrollment in a teacher education program that espoused a core philosophy in promotion of social justice through multicultural teaching (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) and critical reflection (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

In addition to individual interviews, seven participants took part in a two-hour focus group interview to reflect on issues related to race and class and its intersections with teaching and learning near the end of the data collection (May 2011). As the university supervisor to the secondary English student teachers in this study, I also collected lesson plans and reflections on lessons created by the participants during their student teaching. I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews. After transcribing all interviews, I emailed participants a copy of the transcript and invited them to make observations, to edit, or to clarify.

Data Analyses

The first step of the data analysis process required me to reduce the data through inductive, rather than deductive, methods of reasoning (Seidman, 2006). In order to pare down the corpus, I read through course assignments, field notes, researcher's log, and interview transcripts to mark passages that were interesting and seemed applicable to the study. The close reading and marking of a variety of texts allowed me to "internaliz[e] the interviewing material" (Seidman, 2006, p. 118) and set in motion a process of

prioritizing “meaningful ‘chunks’” (Marshall, 1981, in Seidman, 2006) of the documents and transcripts. In this initial process of winnowing the data, themes emerged from the text(s) (and my marking of the text) rather than categories being imposed onto the text(s) (see Table 4).

Table 4.
Data Themes Generated

Time	Data Collected	Themes Generated
Spring 2010 (Jan.-May)	Course syllabus, lesson plans, instructor field notes	“Critical” moments in class Relationships among students Initial impressions of individual participants
Summer 2010 (June-August)	Course assignments (Reading response papers, Teaching story, Action research project) retroactively collected Initial interviews conducted with 11 participants from various disciplinary backgrounds (Math, Social Studies, and English) (focus: Personal background)	Positionalities in terms of race, class, and gender (Dis)agreement(s) with readings Biographical details Characteristics of home community/ies Academic accomplishments and academic literacies “Eye-opening” experiences Realizations of race and social class Definitions of (individual) racism Influential models for thinking about race, class, and gender

Fall 2010 (Sept. – Dec.)	3 observations of secondary English teachers (collection of lesson plans, reflections, observation field notes)	Student teaching placement context Lesson reflection themes Patterns of classroom discourse Teacher and student roles in classroom
Spring 2011 (Jan- May)	2 nd round of interviews conducted with each participant (focus: K-12 schooling and college) 3 observations of secondary English teachers (collection of lesson plans, reflections, observation field notes) 2-hour focus group meeting with 7 participants	Comfort/discomfort in race dialogue Identities as a student Signature moves as a teacher Family politics “Forced” conversations on diversity Critical literacy in lessons Ideological and autonomous models of literacy Ways of reading Disrupting the Western Canon Discourses of Whiteness (e.g., individualism, meritocratic thinking, colorblindness) Equity traps (e.g., racial erasure, deficit view)
Summer 2011	3 rd round of interviews conducted with each participant (focus: Teacher education program and student teaching)	Struggles with learning to teach for social justice Observations on social injustices in schools (e.g., disproportionality and

		overrepresentation of students of color in special education) “Saying” versus “Doing” social justice work “Critical” teaching and learning incidents Benefits/Constraints of Whiteness Multicultural issues (e.g., multicultural awareness, growing multiculturally) Decision(s) to become a teacher
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In the next phase, I began the transition from reducing the data to “shap[ing] the material into a form in which it can be shared or displayed (Miles & Huberman, 1984)” (in Seidman, 2006). I gave shape to the analyses of preservice teacher narratives by crafting a combination of participant profiles (Seidman, 2006) or “interim texts” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The purpose of the profile or the interim text was to create “a vignette of a participant’s experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 119). The interim profile texts became amalgamated sites of different genres (interview transcripts, field notes, course assignments) on one canvass and generally focused on one participant per interim text, though some interim texts included data from multiple participants.

The interim profile text was the result of a transformation of a variety of genres into a story (Mishler, 1986). As Seidman (2006) argues, “The story is both the participant’s and the interviewer’s. It is in the participant’s words, but it is crafted by the

interviewer from what the participant has said” (p. 120). The process for creating the interim profile text can be described as sequential and recursive, additive and subtractive; laboriously ongoing and seemingly unending. I continuously sifted through interview material and analyzed documents, keeping in tact the words of participants (Seidman, 2006, p. 121) while also adding my own words to clarify and transition.

In addition to inductive methods of reasoning, I utilized deductive layers of layers of analyses. One stratum of deductive analysis employed critical social theories on discourses of whiteness. In the first paper (Chapter Two), I connected themes from the professional literature related to discourses of Whiteness within stories narrated by the preservice teachers (Garner, 2007; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; DiAngelo, 2004). Themes related to discourses of Whiteness (e.g., color or powerblindness, Whiteness as disadvantage, deficit views) and students’ negotiations with the importance (or lack of importance) of race in their teaching and learning experiences revealed corresponding and divergent stories about whiteness. In the second paper (Chapter Three), I looked at the data through a lens that allowed me to identify and interrupt equity traps in participant narratives (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). In the third and final paper (Chapter Four), I spotlight the critical literacy practices of two secondary English participants in the study, highlighting various affordances and constraints of their developing pedagogies.

Researcher’s Positions and Reflexivity

My own subjectivities as a researcher play into the conclusions drawn and limitations of this study. As an instructor/supervisor to the participants, my role as the

researcher was not as one in traditionally or clinically defined terms. It is difficult for me to claim objectivity as the researcher in this case because of my relationship with the preservice teachers who agreed to inform this study as their instructor and/or supervisor. In addition to my status as an instructor, which I do believe impacted and/or tempered the stories narrated by participants, other aspects of my identity and socialization as a white, middle-class (with working-class origins) male may have limited, altered, and/or constrained the interpretations I make.

Also, I realize that I am limited in terms of the “conclusions” that I can draw about white preservice secondary teachers and how they narrate their dual-identities as both (1) students learning about teaching as a social and political struggle, and (2) student teachers creating their own understandings of teaching critically in social and political contexts. It becomes very difficult to make the case that a few individual cases is representative of a whole segment of a population, so I must be clear on this issue that my findings and conclusions are based on the experiences and narratives of the participants (as constructed by me) in this study. Their experiences (and my arrangement of them) do not account for all of those enrolled in the program under study, nor are the findings representative of all white teachers improvising critical literacy teaching.

In terms of participant selection, each of the participants in this study was enrolled as a student in the secondary teacher education program at GLU. The stories they tell may be constrained in some ways by their perceptions of who the audience(s) for this project might have been. The stories told by preservice teachers in a teacher education

program may differ from the stories told by other groups of teachers in manifold ways. In a different setting, where no relationships, grades, degrees, or certifications were at stake, I would expect to hear textually different stories. At the same time, the power dynamics would not disappear altogether. Instead, they would simply be transformed in a new setting. It is likely that the participants were more selective in the stories they chose to share with me as a way to avoid jeopardizing their standing in the program or their eventual certification as state-licensed teachers.

Overview of Chapters

Up to this point, I have provided background relevant to this investigation into white preservice teachers' (ongoing) understandings of their whiteness as they simultaneously learn to embrace (or not) social justice pedagogies in their teaching and learning. I have identified the participants in this study as white preservice secondary teachers from a variety of content areas (Math, English, and Social Studies) enrolled in a secondary teacher education program at Great Lakes University (GLU), a predominantly white institution in the Midwest. In addition to details related to narrative inquiry as a research methodology, I highlighted several frameworks providing structure to this investigation, including Critical White Studies and Critical Literacy. Lastly, I have called attention to my own positionalities in this investigation as a former teacher to the participants in the study, as a university supervisor to the secondary English participants, and as a white, middle class male attempting to disrupt the very structures of power I inhabit and embody (whiteness, maleness).

In the second chapter, I examine a variety of discourses of Whiteness present in the life history narratives of one white preservice secondary mathematics teacher from a predominantly white institution in a Midwestern state. I begin by laying out a theoretical lens for looking at discourses of Whiteness using literature from Critical White Studies. I then provide analyses of the discursive productions of individualism, self-defense, and “Whiteness as a liability” as circulating and recirculating in the teaching and learning experiences of Griffin O’Connor. Lastly, I explore implications for identifying, interpreting, and interrupting discourses of Whiteness as an ongoing project for teacher educators.

In the third chapter, I identify common equity traps in the narrative accounts of white preservice teachers at Great Lakes University (GLU). In this chapter, I outline common “equity traps,” or patterns of thinking, that serve to impede the achievement of equity in schooling. In addition to situating two specific equity traps within the narrative accounts of white preservice secondary teachers, I outline possibilities for interrupting these traps. As a way to respond to inequitable schooling conditions, I argue it is necessary to identify recurrent problematic perceptions held by preservice teachers and to root these beliefs institutionally as uncritical assumptions that privilege whiteness. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the tasks for teachers and teacher educators in predominantly white institutions who struggle to advance understandings about power, privilege, and prestige while destabilizing and eliminating equity traps.

In the fourth chapter, I examine how critical literacy tenets informed the decision

making of two white female preservice teachers from a predominantly white institution in the Midwest. First, I provide an overview of the four dimensions of critical literacy that guide my analysis before examining two tenets amplified through the participants' stories. Narratives from two study participants are highlighted to demonstrate the complex understandings and critical literacy practices enacted and reflected upon by white preservice secondary English teachers. Lastly, I provide implications for literacy educators on the process of secondary English pre-service teachers' development of a "critical stance" toward their literacy pedagogy.

In the concluding chapter, I review many of the key arguments presented in the middle three chapters of this dissertation. I begin by providing an overview of this study's central aims of documenting a variety of discourses of whiteness and equity traps circulating and re-circulating in white preservice teachers' life history narratives. I also highlight the intended aims of my investigation into white preservice secondary English teachers' enactions and reflections upon critical literacy practices throughout their student teaching and learning experiences at GLU. In addition to identifying a few of the conceptual and methodological insights that emerged in reflection of the study, I outline several limitations related to this study and present a plan for conducting future investigations into the concepts of discursive productions of whiteness and critical literacy practices of preservice teachers.

Chapter Two

Discourses of Whiteness

“How Do You Go Against That Grain?” A Narrative

Inquiry into the Discourses of Whiteness

Over the past three decades, ample scholarship has contributed to the growing understanding of what it means to be White and to benefit systematically from the unearned power and privileges associated with Whiteness in the United States (McIntosh, 2005/1988; Frankenberg, 1993; McIntyre, 1997; Perry, 2004; Landsman, 2005). The “unpacking” of White Privileges in middle, secondary, and university settings has become an established rite of passage for many Whites on their journeys of learning about systems of privilege, power, and prestige (Andersen & Collins, 2010). The academic exercise of completing a privilege or racial inventory has become a popular and widely accepted way for Whites to check “confronting race and racism” off a “path to antiracism” to-do list.

On the affordance side, the inventory of specific and identifiable ways that some social groups benefit while other groups are disadvantaged from an unequal distribution of social goods and resources lends itself to the possibility of an important outcome of anti-racist efforts: the development of a critical consciousness (Anyon, 2005; Scherff, 2012; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). In part, a critical consciousness relates to one’s ability to think differently and flexibly about the intersections of social constructs, such as race, class, and gender as they impact individual beliefs. Such a consciousness also

enables one, in theory, to see that individual beliefs are constructed within and against the very fabric of a hierarchical U.S. social structure (Andersen & Collins, 2010).

While popular, the privilege inventory exercise must be seen as offering a kind of false promise to Whites. The exercise offers the illusion that critical work into one's racial identity and understandings of racism is something that a person can move beyond, as if such work is not ongoing, lifelong, and evolving in complex and contradictory ways. Deceptively, the activity presents self-examination as offering comfort and assurance (generally in the presence of other Whites) rather than frustration, self-doubt, and uncertainty. As such, the exercise must be seen as an initial step on the path toward becoming anti-racist, and not a congratulatory end point on the (never-ending) journey to investigating and interrogating one's Whiteness (Cabrera, 2012; Leonardo, 2009 b).

Investigating White Privileges through course readings, assignments, and discussions with mostly White preservice secondary teachers became a significant starting point for developing a more critical stance in my role as a teacher educator. Recognizing my own lack of criticality in terms of thinking the ideas and effects of Whiteness, I sought to generate a more robust understanding of White identity and ideology in order to improve my teaching. At the same time, I realized that one or two two-hour class sessions dedicated to readings and exercises on White Privilege were not sufficient, and at times, counterproductive. Beyond superficial renderings of privilege (e.g., flesh-tone band aids) and isolated dialogue on the "invisible" aspects of White identity and Whiteness as embedded in the U.S. social structure and ideology, I aimed to

gain insights into the beliefs and practices of White prospective secondary teachers who were in the process of accommodating, negotiating, and resisting their status and responsibilities as White teachers engaged in equity pedagogies.

At a time of significant racial and ethnic demographic patterns and changes in the United States (Howard, 2007; Zeichner, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2000; Gay & Howard, 2000; Fine & Weis, 2008), I sought to learn from the stories of White prospective secondary teachers at a predominantly White university in a Midwestern state. In this paper, I focus on the discourses of Whiteness that emerged from their accounts. This study is related to previous examinations of preservice and inservice teachers' articulations and understandings of Whiteness and racism (White, 2011; Picower, 2009; McIntyre, 1997, 2002; Landsman, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Kailin, 1999; Sleeter, 1997, 1998; DiAngelo, 2004). Unlike other investigations, however, this study consists of multiple (individual and focal group) interviews with White preservice teachers and analyzes the nuanced discourses of Whiteness held by preservice secondary participants from varied disciplinary backgrounds.

For this study, as Lensmire (2010) advocates, I sought to portray an interpretation of Whiteness that allowed for subtleties. Rather than portraying the well-established, stock, resistant White research participant, I have been mindful of the “*deeply conflicted, ambivalent white racial self*” (Lensmire, 2010, p. 162, italics in original) as a possible discursive identity. As such, tensions and uncertainties have not been swept aside and

instead serve as starting points for this investigation into the textual and discursive productions of Whiteness. Attending to Lowenstein's (2009) challenge, this study conceptualizes White teacher candidates as "active learners" (p. 163) rather than deficient teacher candidates. Beyond a "one-dimensional picture" (Seidel & Hancock, 2011, p. 691), I pursued pedagogical responses to the discourses of Whiteness through a portrayal of participants in this study as actively ascertaining new understandings for equitable teaching.

The following questions guided this study:

- What discourses of Whiteness are present in the life history narratives of preservice secondary teachers from a large, predominantly White, land grant institution in a Midwestern state?
- How do the discourses of Whiteness enable and/or hinder the equitable distribution of access to social goods (e.g., educational opportunities, employment and income, and occupational prestige)?

Theoretical Perspective

Critical Whiteness Theories

Scholarship in the tradition of Whiteness studies must be seen as an attempt to examine the ways in which power in society is produced and reproduced (Twine & Gallagher, 2008; Omi & Winant, 2005; Lopez, 2000 a and b; Roediger, 1991/1999, 1994, and 2005). Accordingly, scholars in Whiteness studies begin with the premise that relations of power in society are neither fixed nor stable, but rather the result of a variety

of ideological productions (including Whiteness) that are susceptible to fluctuation and change (Lipsitz, 2005 and 2006; Leonardo, 2004; Chennault, 1998; Mahoney, 1997; Morrison, 1992; Allen, 1994; Martinez, 2000; Nakayama & Martin, 1999). Exposing the evolving production(s) of Whiteness through discursive forms and other aspects of its enterprise offer potentials for interrupting it (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

As many in the field of Whiteness studies have noted, only by rendering Whiteness visible do we stand a chance of transforming or disrupting it (Flax, 1998; Dyer, 2005; DiAngelo, 2004). Of course, naming Whiteness alone “does not dislodge deeply embedded power positions [though it] is a preliminary part of the [interruption] process” (DiAngelo, 2004, p. 13). Importantly for this article, it is the process of and need for interruption that is central to this inquiry project. That is, it is not my intention to recenter Whiteness (Leonardo, 2009a; Apple, 1998). Instead, I seek to contribute to efforts aimed at tabling Whiteness as “a viable subject for examination” (Solomon et. al, 2005, p. 148).

In a study of the way(s) in which Whiteness was operationalized in an interracial group dialogue of preservice teachers over time, DiAngelo (2004) used discourse analysis and a framework of Whiteness to study the ways in which White preservice teachers produced their racial positions discursively. DiAngelo’s (2004) inquiry was grounded in several goals of Whiteness scholarship:

- To interrupt stereotypes and to challenge misconceptions.
- To develop awareness of multiple social group memberships along

intersectionality.

- To encourage critical thinking and to provide opportunities for conflict and resolution skills.
- To take action for social change.

Using tenets of Critical White Studies, the production of Whiteness is illuminated by careful examination of the mechanisms that keep intact both racial and class exploitation. Whiteness, as DuBois (1935/1992) noted, has produced economic and “psychological wage[s]” for Whites. Whiteness is indeed, as Harris (1993; 1998) posited, an invaluable form of property, throughout history and into the present (Bell, 2000). In addition to the localized nature of White ideology and identity, third-wave Whiteness scholars also must seek to understand Whiteness as “global in scope” (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 9; Leonardo, 2009 a and b).

I next outline several discourses of Whiteness prevalent in Critical Whiteness studies literature (see Table 5). Specifically, I profile key characteristics related to the discourses of individualism, colorblindness (or powerblindness), denial, and victimization (or liability).

Table 5.
Discourses of Whiteness

Discourse of Whiteness	Key Characteristics
<i>Discourse of individualism</i>	Removal of self from social and historical context
<i>Colorblind or powerblind discourse</i>	Refusal to acknowledge race

<i>Discourse of denial</i>	Downplaying or concealing the existence of racism
<i>Discourse of victimization, liability or self-defense</i>	Portrayal of Whites as victims or disadvantaged

Discourse of individualism. DiAngelo (2004) argues that the discourse of individualism serves to erase a history of Whites' generational accumulation of and benefit from economic wealth. Further, the discourse seeks to avoid examination(s) of the social and cultural capital that aids in preserving White supremacy. The discourse provides Whites with a view of the self as original and unique, "outside of socialization and unaffected by the relentless racial messages in the culture" (DiAngelo, 2004, p. 187). Discursively, the ideology of individualism permits Whites to disassociate themselves from having any relation to a racial group and its actions. Individuals, unconnected to any distinguishable racial group, the ideology proceeds, do not collectively benefit from racism because "each White person is 'different' from any other white person and expects to be seen as such" (DiAngelo, 2004, p. 187).

Colorblind or powerblind discourses. The discourse of individualism is closely related to other established discourses in talk of overcoming the effects of racism: the discourse of colorblindness (Gallagher, 2010; Schofield, 2001; Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012) and powerblindness (Chubbuck, 2004). The related discourses insist that by eliminating any and all talk of color, race, and racism, we eradicate institutional racism and other race-based hierarchies. Interestingly, the discourses provide a means for

conveying one's commitment to anti-racism, as these discourses pay lip service to the elimination of racism. In their "refusal to 'see' race" (Thompson, 1999, p. 161), such discourses render talk of race and power as taboo and unproductive.

Discourse of denial. Keeping in mind that there are an infinite number of discourses at one's disposal and that discourses can both split into two and meld into one (Gee, 2011 a), another strategy related to the reproduction of dominance observed in the literature is what van Dijk (1992; 1993) refers to as the "discourse of denial" or the denial of racism in written and spoken cultural forms. As a result of the social constraints related to unabashed racism or ethnocentrism, even when racism is expressed, such discourse "routinely feature denials or at least mitigations of racism" (van Dijk, 1992, p. 89). The routine features described by van Dijk (1992) include techniques related to minimization, euphemism, or downtoning one's negative intentions or actions (e.g., "This might sound terrible, but ...").

Discourses of victimization, liability, and self-defense. The discourses of victimization, liability, and self-defense are yet another set of prominent and interrelated discourses of Whiteness observed in dialogue on the topics of race, racism, and privilege. In these discourses, as DiAngelo (2004) describes, "Whites position themselves as victimized, slammed, blamed, having their words 'strategically pulled apart,' and being used as a 'punching bag'" (p. 174). In other words, the discourse portrays Whites as victims or as a group targeted, and therefore disadvantaged, by access to resources in society. According to Garner (2007), the discursive maneuver that positions Whiteness-

as-a-liability “deflects attention from Whiteness as a privilege-holding social location, either to another geographical location or historical period” (p. 39).

In addition to outlining some of the key premises upon which Critical Whiteness scholarship exists, I have outlined four specific discourses readily identified in the reviewed literature. I next turn to a description of my methodology in order to provide relevant information related to the collection and analysis of data throughout this inquiry project.

Research Methodology

As a narrative inquiry study, I drew on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to explore how participants viewed race, including their own Whiteness, as the construct shaped their experiences as beginning teachers for several reasons. I found methods of narrative inquiry suitable to my research aims because, as Chubbuck (2004) notes, “teaching is best understood when contextualized in the identity of the teacher in the context of the larger life story rather than being reduced to specific classroom behaviors” (p. 312). Further, I found narrative inquiry as particularly useful in providing for a depth of complexity and nuance necessary to work in service to disrupt social and economic inequities.

Data Generation and Collection

I gathered data from multiple sources. To begin, I interviewed 11 prospective teachers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds on three occasions at a location of their choosing. The semi-structured interview protocol encouraged participants to narrate

their schooling experiences, including enrollment in a teacher education program advocating a philosophical and pedagogical mission of teaching for social justice through multicultural teaching (Grant & Sleeter, 2007) and critical reflection (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). In addition to individual interviews, 7 participants took part in a two-hour focus group interview. I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews.

Data Analyses

I began the analyses of preservice teacher narratives by creating “interim texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The interim texts became amalgamated sites of different genres (interview transcripts, field notes, course assignments) on one canvass. Creating the interim texts encompassed a process of crafting a portrait out of the words (spoken and written), stories, and intent of the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). One goal of the interim text was to situate the participants in the social, cultural, and personal contexts out from which their histories appeared to unfold as told (and re-told) through select stories. The interim text task enabled me to condense, abbreviate, summarize, rearrange, and reinterpret texts generated throughout the length of the study.

I utilized both inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. Inductively, I labeled recurring themes and discourses from stories that were narrated by the prospective teachers and from my observations of participants’ narratives. For instance, themes related to talking about one’s self as raced, classed, or gendered (or not), attending to diversity in teaching and learning settings (or not), and developing cultural competencies emerged as categories in initial coding. Deductively, I connected themes

from the professional literature related to discourses of Whiteness within stories narrated by the prospective teachers. For this paper, I employed the discourses of individualism, colorblindness or powerblindness, and liability or self-defense as categories for investigation (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Discourses of whiteness in white preservice secondary teachers' narratives

Discourse of Whiteness	Examples from interviews with White preservice secondary teachers
<i>Discourse of Individualism</i>	“What you get out of life is what you put into it. There aren’t really any handouts in life.”
<i>Colorblind or Powerblind Discourse</i>	“If you don’t see [race], you don’t think about it.”
<i>Discourse of Denial</i>	“I really don’t particularly enjoy talking in a K through 12 setting about discrimination and race.”
<i>Victimization, liability or self-defense</i>	“I think it was forced so much ... that instead of it being a Black History Month, it felt like it was a ‘Feel Bad for Being White Month’”

Note: The discursive examples of each discourse of Whiteness were taken from a variety of participant narratives.

In this paper, I have chosen to focus on the narratives of Griffin O’Connor, a preservice secondary mathematics teacher, because his storyline provides opportunities for examining multiple and competing discourses of Whiteness present within and across the narratives of the preservice teachers who participated in this study. As a 21-year-old White, middle-class male who grew up in the state in which Great Lakes University is

located, Griffin O'Connor shares many common traits with his cohort peers.

Context and Setting

At Great Lakes University (GLU), approximately 85 % of the student body (over 30,000 students) identifies as White, 7% identify as Asian American, 5% identify as African American, 3% identify as Latino, and about 1.5% of the total student body identify as Native American. Out of 31 students in a course I taught on diversity in the spring of 2010, 29 students self-identified as White. Such numbers are reflective of previous and current cohort demographics in GLU's elementary and secondary education programs and its faculty, instructors, and supervisors.

All participants grew up in the state where GLU is located. According to the U.S. Census (2010), nearly 90% of the state's 5 million inhabitants identify as White, less than 7% identify as African American or Black, just over 6 % of the population identifies as Latino/a, and fewer than 3 % of the population identifies as Asian. At the time of this writing, at least one secondary school in the state was the center of a "controversy" regarding an un-named White parent's objection to her 17-year-old White son's learning about White Privilege in a high school class titled "The American Dream" (Starnes, 2013).

Beginning in the fall of 2011, a relevant controversy – one that had been simmering for some time – occurred on campus that further helps to contextualize this study. The controversy centered around GLU's diversity initiatives and the university's holistic admissions approach. A conservative think-tank, Center for Equal Opportunity

(CEO), released a report that stated “severe discrimination” related to race and ethnicity was occurring in the school’s admissions. Specifically, the CEO group charged that White and Asian students were discriminated against in the admissions process while African Americans and Latino/as had a greater chance of being admitted. While this public debate occurred after the conclusion of this study, the situation underscores the racial tension that continues to permeate the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which data was collected. Also, the controversy highlights a key discourse examined here: the discourse of Whiteness-as-a-liability.

As for the 11 participants in this study, four students grew up in mostly rural contexts. Six of the participants grew up in suburban settings, and one participant, the focus of this paper, grew up in the metropolitan city of Great Lakes. Nine of the participants described their elementary upbringing as predominantly White in terms of their peers and teachers. Few participants had a teacher or school leader of color in their K-12 schooling experience. All participants described their school’s curriculum as Eurocentric, and only in high school did some participants encounter classes focused on multiple perspectives of issues of power and privilege. Seven of the participants in the study were enrolled in Talented and Gifted programs or in Advanced Placement or Honors courses during their K-12 school. Accordingly, this predicament lessened their likelihood of interacting with racial, cultural and linguistic “Others” in their school. I began collecting data for this study in the spring of 2010 and continued data collection through the summer, 2011. The participants all were 21-24-years-old, born between

1986-1990. All were at the same stage of GLU’s two-year teacher education program through the duration of this study. I followed the participants through their second (spring 2010), third (fall 2010), and fourth/final (spring 2011) semester of GLU’s secondary teacher education program. Students complete their Liberal Studies and minor requirements before applying to GLU’s secondary teacher education program and they progress sequentially through the program in consecutive semesters within one of two cohorts (n≈25-30). In Table 3, I show the scope and sequence of the program for the purpose of showcasing students’ multiple encounters with GLU’s programmatic values of inclusion, diversity, and teaching for social justice.

Table 7.
GLU’s Four Semester Scope-and-Sequence

Term	Semester One	Semester Two	Semester Three	Semester Four
Course Sequence	C&I: “Strategies for Inclusive Schooling” (3 cr.) Ed Pol: “School and Society” (3 cr.) Ed Psy: “Adolescent Development” (3 cr.) C&I: Practicum in content area (3	C&I: “Teaching Diverse Learners” (3 cr.) C&I: “Literacy Across the Curriculum” (3 cr.) Content-Methods course (3 cr.) C&I: Practicum and tutoring	Ed Psy: “Human Abilities and Learning” (3 cr.) C&I: Content Methods Course (3 cr.) C&I: Technology Integration Course (3 credits) C&I: Half-time student-	C&I: Full-time student-teaching and seminar (12 cr.)

	days/week) (3 cr.)	experience in content area (4 days/week)	teaching (3 cr.) (4 hours/day, 5 days/week)	
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Note: This table details the scope and sequence of GLU's four-semester, full-time status, undergraduate secondary education degree. Semesters two, three, and four are shaded to indicate the three semesters of the study.

Discourses of Whiteness: Griffin O'Connor, the Devil's Advocate

Background: Cookie-Cutter Neighborhood

Griffin O'Connor, a 21-year-old aspiring math teacher, grew up in the city of Great Lakes and attended K-12 schools on the city's east side. His mother, a GLU graduate, provided in-home day care for several families for much of Griffin's upbringing and was presently employed by the city of Great Lakes. Griffin's father, a graduate of Great Lakes Technical College, worked for the state as a computer programmer. Griffin is the elder of two siblings.

Griffin described growing up in a "small, normal" house in a working-class, "cookie-cutter neighborhood" on the north side of Great Lakes. A cookie-cutter neighborhood typically refers to a neighborhood of homes mostly indistinguishable from one another (physical layout, location of doors, windows, and decks). He situated his family's home geographically into the city with the following description: "technically, we [resided] in the middle of this high class area and this comparatively low class area." Griffin depicted the north side as "segregated a little bit in terms of class." Unstated, however, is that the area is also segregated by race. Griffin, as other participants did,

seemed to brush off race and class segregation as the result of natural and neutral happenings, stating that after all, “most places are” segregated by race and class.

Griffin described the surroundings from his vantage point in this stratified society. In the “upscale” neighborhood, he referred to the community’s assets, “They have their own country club, and golf course, swimming pool ... It’s right on the lake.” On the other side of Griffin’s family’s location in the buffer zone, Griffin recounts the scene, “You see tons of apartment complexes, and I guess it probably doesn’t really qualify, but I guess you could call it the ‘ghetto’ of the north side. Where there were tons of families that weren’t as well off as my family.” Navigating through the stratified echelons cushioning the O’Connor’s geo-political location impacted Griffin’s attributing his own status and acceptance as “middle class.”

Politics, ethnicity, and race

Griffin considered himself a political “moderate” in the “liberal” context of the city of Great Lakes. He stated, “I always felt a little bit different than them [peers and teachers].” He attributed this “different” feeling to his upbringing and associated political views. In similar terms, Griffin described feeling “awkward” on the few occasions he visited churches with friends. In school, Griffin explained that during classroom debates, such as one about the Hiroshima bomb, he did not follow the script that many of his peers did, and instead took the stand that “sometimes violence and force ... while uncomfortable to think about talk about, and uncomfortable to experience, it may sometimes be necessary.”

Griffin expressed an evolving interest in his ethnic background. He explained, “I think of myself in terms of sort of a dual nationality. Because I play the bagpipes, and I listen to a lot of Irish traditional music ... I think of myself as very Celtic. I have a big aesthetic connection to Irish and Scottish heritage.” Griffin elaborated, “also, because, a lot of me is German and Norwegian, I feel like I have a big connection to [my] Nordic ancestry.” He felt personally connected to and vested in the Nordic and Celtic aspects of his heritage. For instance, Griffin marched in an annual regional parade that celebrated the histories and cultures of ethnic Europeans.

At the same time, Griffin did not feel connected to a particular race. He described “one of the most permanent things” he remembered from high school as taking place in an ethnic studies class. In a class discussion about standardized tests and surveys that asked for students’ race, Griffin recalled that his teacher said “that almost every single one of us should put ‘Other’ on there, because our ethnicity is our own definition, and it isn’t something that can be summed up in one word ...” This advice “resonated” with Griffin, who stated,

I’m not just some White person. I’m not just some blank thing in terms of ethnicity and cultural heritage. I do have this ancestry and these cultural practices. So, I’ve been trying to do that on most of the tests and things, is put ‘Other.’

Griffin, like several of his peers, saw himself as possessing culture through his ethnicity and heritage, but not through an affiliation with Whiteness. Further, Griffin advances a way of classifying the racial category “White” as empty of content. In this view,

Whiteness means empty of culture and lacking in cultural practices (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The end result leaves Whites as non-distinctive, socially, culturally, and historically untenanted, abstract, individual “Others”.

Devil’s advocacy: Developments and limits

While Griffin attended schools where White students were just over 50% of the student population, he rarely had classes with students of color. As a student in the district’s Talented and Gifted (TAG) program and as a student in AP and Honors courses (a trait shared with six other participants), Griffin’s teachers and classmates were predominantly White. By Griffin’s account, his opposition and eventual disillusionment with school curriculum, particularly English and history classes, really set the stage for what Griffin referred to as examples of his role as a “devil’s advocate” in school. Griffin recalled that “every year there was the topic on race and diversity” in the humanities courses. He began to question, “why are we learning the same thing every single year?” In junior high or middle school, Griffin noted that he “became bored during those books in English class” which afforded conversations on race and diversity. Even Griffin’s high school English classes “just seemed to hammer the same themes over and over again home. Year after year after year. It was like racism, free will, and ... discrimination.”

Griffin reflected on his interest in the topics of free will and individualism while explaining,

I wouldn’t mind if those were hammered over and over and over again to us, in

the curriculum, because I enjoy [free will and individualism]. But for some reason, I really don't particularly enjoy talking in a K through 12 setting about discrimination and race.

Avoiding talk of discrimination and race in schools serves to relegate discrimination and race as non-relevant and non-existent.

On several occasions and through the discourse of victimization, Griffin perceived his status as White and male (or privilege squared), to be under threat, a target of various forms of "injustices". In addition to a critique of popular culture depictions of men as buffoons (e.g., television shows), Griffin felt "a sense of injustice" about student organizations that tended to serve minority group interests in his school (e.g., United Asians Club, Sistahs Supporting Sistahs). Griffin stated that he understands "the reason for it now" but he was somewhat rankled back then.

He posed a hypothetical situation about his sentiment toward "minority" student groups to situate the disparity he felt, stating,

If I were to try to try to make the same club, like the White Student Alliance, it would be immediately, *immediately*, not allowed. Like, 'No, you can't do that.'

And, I always thought that that double standard was – I never liked that.

Griffin was quick to describe what he considered a "double standard," particularly when an aspect of his identity ended up as the "subordinated" membership category. He did not necessarily see such clubs as part of a broader effort aimed at equity. By-and-large, Griffin perceived institutional equity actions that accounted for race and ethnicity as a

“form of reverse discrimination.”

Griffin was not persuaded by the argument that school science and math clubs are primarily “White Student Alliances.” He argued, “Math Club is not a club specifically crafted to be a White Student Alliance. It is a club specifically crafted to develop an appreciation for math and anyone is welcomed.” He recognized that he could not be prevented, legally, from joining a school club, but rendered the following justification for not pursuing such membership, “I feel like me being in that club [Sistahs Supporting Sistahs] would be a much more hostile environment than an African American joining a math club.” In this instance, Griffin (mis)construes the intersections of his racial and gender identity memberships as a White, middle-class male as subordinated to the identity memberships of (“hostile”) African American females in a faith-based student organization.

In addition to explaining the “injustice” he felt with school clubs, Griffin was averse to efforts at his high school to celebrate diversity through “Diversity Week.” “I never really liked the various [Diversity] weeks that [the school] had,” Griffin explained, “I never really had much of an appreciation for them.” Furthermore, while Griffin noted that the school’s effort was in part precipitated by a desire to impart “appreciation for other cultures,” he countered, “but they were already hammering that home in other classes.” The stance echoes a claim stated by Griffin and other participants that GLU’s teacher education program “forced” diversity and ideas about teaching for social justice onto its teacher candidates, thus disrupting the personal comfort of many Whites.

Around his sophomore and junior years of high school, Griffin recalled, “I would start to raise my hand and really just play devil’s advocate with the teacher, and start to question what they were saying.” Griffin “prepared” for class as if it were a debate, recalling, “I would raise my hand probably at least ten times during every single class and ask questions, and just keep on drilling the teacher.” As a bonus for Griffin, even though he tended not to read most of the books he was assigned, he found that he still earned A’s “mostly through engaging in class discussion and the teacher was never the wiser.” During his junior year of high school, Griffin was assigned to read Mark Twain’s (1885/1994) *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Griffin recalled a student teacher’s introductory remarks on the book in relation to censorship. In particular, the book’s use of the “n-word” in reference to Jim, Huckleberry Finn’s accomplice, was the central topic. Griffin re-stated his then-student-teacher’s introductory remarks on the book,

‘There’s a lot of controversy about this book, because it uses the n-word a lot and a lot of African American and otherwise students feel uncomfortable reading this book in the school setting, because that word makes them uncomfortable. And we need, at school, to try and set an environment as comfortable as possible. For everyone in this school.’

Griffin continued, “I waited a couple of minutes for him to finish. And I raised my hand, and I presented a situation, a hypothetical one.” Griffin asked the student teacher,

If there were a member of the Ku Klux Klan, or the Aryan nation or someone like that, who was open about being a member of such a group, but did not disrupt

school culture in any way ... did not get in any one's business ... Did not actively recruit, just went about their own way. But they were very open and very comfortable with talking about their views ... Would they feel welcomed in this school?

He also asked, "it seems like we're placing greater value on one type of student over another, which isn't that the same thing as discrimination? ... aren't you discriminating against this person through this philosophy of not discriminating against these other groups of people?" Through the "devil's advocate" performances, Griffin "succeeds" in portraying Whites as "discriminated" against or targeted by a society that does not tolerate certain (racist) views.

Adding to his annoyance of learning about discrimination in school, Griffin was discomfited by discussions on White Privilege in college. "[B]y someone telling me that I have all this privilege and that it is through this privilege that White power is continued, essentially saying that it's my fault," Griffin declared, "then turning and saying that essentially I can't do anything about it. It's like it's saying, 'It's your fault, but you can't do anything about it because it's engrained in society.' That really throws me into a Catch-22." Immobilized by what he described as a "Catch-22," Griffin avoided any meaningful analysis of the ways in which he has benefitted from White skin privilege, in effect reinscribing structures of power and oppression in society.

While Griffin generally reveled in role-playing the devil's advocate in school classrooms, it is important to note the limits to his interest in speaking up for the

marginalized or overlooked perspectives. Griffin's characteristics as quick-thinking, creative, and critical as a "devil's advocate" recede from view when confronted with White Privilege in an academic setting. Rather than tap into his questioning and challenging role as an "advocate," Griffin felt immobilized and "frustrated": "I can't do anything about it. Like, what do I do? Do I just not accept the privileges?" Confronted with Whiteness and dominance as operating in daily interactions throughout society, as some *thing* in need of interruption, Griffin described feeling powerless but to surrender. An individual who prided himself on swimming against the current in (some) school contexts, when confronted by White skin privilege, Griffin struggled to move against the current. Feeling rooted to the spot, Griffin questioned, "How do you go against that grain? I don't know what to do." This inaction must be recognized as powerful reinforcement of the status quo.

Discussion

The narrative of Griffin O'Connor illustrates a combination of discourses of Whiteness as embodied in one White preservice secondary mathematics teacher. Intersecting and overlapping in Griffin's discursive performances, the discourses of individualism, power or privilege-blindness, and Whiteness as a liability were revealed through a focus on discursive productions of Whiteness. These discourses do not operate in isolation of one another, nor are they always working in tandem or in harmony. Furthermore, as Gee (2001) posits, "The various Discourses which constitute each of us as persons are changing and often are not fully consistent with each other; there is often

conflict and tension ...” (p. 527). Griffin’s narratives are replete with conflicts and tensions.

Griffin’s narrative offers insight into the simultaneity of “privilege-cognizant and privilege-evasive White scripts” (Bailey, 2000, p. 296). The stories of Griffin O’Connor both encourage and constrain ways of understanding and representing discourses of Whiteness. The purpose here has not been to re-center and reinforce the dominance of Whiteness (Solomon, et al., 2005; Garner, 2007; Apple, 1998). Rather, my goal has been to situate the interruption of Whiteness as part of a broader collective effort aimed at eliminating oppressions and inequities in a society rife with both.

Taking a critical look at the discourses of Whiteness (re)circulating in Griffin’s stories must be seen as an important first step toward greater understandings of the existence and materialization of pervasive and organizing discourses. This work has provided important footage related to the discourses of Whiteness operating in many White preservice teachers’ narratives. In doing so, this work has illuminated opportunities for disrupting and challenging misconceptions and stereotypes related to power, privilege, and prestige (Andersen & Collins, 2010). It is not enough, however, to merely view the discourses as situated in one individual. That is, while Griffin O’Connor indeed embodied a variety of discourses of Whiteness, we cannot locate the discourses as emanating from him alone. These discourses simultaneously are embedded into the social, political, and institutional fabric of U.S. society (Goodman, 2011).

Griffin’s narrative reveals several contradictions important to understandings of

Whiteness in efforts aimed at eliminating racisms and inequities. For instance, despite “insider” group status, in some narratives, Griffin positions himself as having “outsider” status in relation to constructs of place, privilege, and politics in various settings in his hometown and school settings. In other words, through the discourses of individualism and blindness (power and privilege), Griffin disassociates himself from being connected to a distinct racial group collectively recognized as “White”. While ethnicity was an important category of membership for Griffin, he was less inquisitive or curious about the significance of his racialized status as White.

The discourses of individualism and blindness, unchecked, provide Griffin the means of ignoring crucial social, cultural, and economic capital as the result of membership into an identifiable racial group. From college attainment to occupational status, prestige, and salary, the O’Connor family’s access to education (e.g., post-secondary schooling; Talented and Gifted and Honors programming), employment (i.e., city and state entities; Griffin’s employment), and housing is not the result of happenstance or fortuity. The construct of Whiteness has both contributed to and upheld an existing social order in which Whites maintain advantages when face-to-face with powerful institutions open to some and exclusionary to others. The fact that Griffin’s parents (and extended family) owned properties rather than lived in what Griffin termed “the ghetto” of Great Lakes was not the result of a natural order of things. Rather, a variety of categorizations (e.g, race, class, and gender) came together in relation to one another, here favoring Griffin.

The discourses of power and privilege blindness reveal the discomfort Griffin experienced when confronted with issues related to power and privilege. While the discourses of “free will” and “individualism” were comforting and familiar to Griffin in secondary schooling, he was discomfited by discourses related to power and oppression. In this case, Griffin did not think that the topics of “race and discrimination” should have a place in K-12 schooling, though he was comfortable with the topics of “free will and individualism”, as if the latter were unencumbered with ideological residue.

Furthermore, avoiding talk of race and discrimination or denying its existence serves to blot out a history of oppression and resistance. The avoidance claim highlights the imbricated nature of the discourses of denial (of racism and discrimination) and individualism (as abstract and un-raced) prevalent in Griffin’s narrative. We must ask, whose interests are served through a view that deems discrimination and race as non-relevant and non-existent? And whose interests are dismissed or discounted through such a perspective?

In Griffin’s stories, he was ultimately rewarded for performances as the “devil’s advocate” in secondary schooling. At times, he was even congratulated for being a “good student” by teachers who lauded his rhetorical performances at parent-teacher conferences. Similar behaviors emanating from students lacking majority status (White, middle class, male), however, are likely to have exacted consequences quite contrary to Griffin’s treatment of exemption (e.g., referral, detention, suspension). In effect, discourses of blindness (power, privilege, and color) ultimately render

conversations related to power and privilege as taboo or futile. That is, though the discourses of blindness offer promises that absence of talk about critical issues will result in the disappearance of power imbalances, we must seek to expose the continued existence of institutional and race-based hierarchies in society's structures. A pedagogy that disrupts discourses of individualism, privilegeblindness and powerblindness must expose the power embedded in perspectives that seek to silence certain discussions as unnecessary or divisive.

Another contradiction in the narrative of Griffin relates to recognition of his privileged status as a White male while also casting Whiteness as a liability. For instance, Griffin described being confronted with White Privilege in college as being caught in a "Catch-22." That is, he described feeling as if there were no actions he could take when confronted with the existence of White skin privilege. It is the inaction, however, which must be seen as a powerful action. Indeed, the (in)action enables White norms, behaviors, values, and attitudes to persist.

Conclusion and Implications

Teacher educators can expect a variety of responses and emotions to be expressed as the unpredictable and difficult work of examining discourses of Whiteness unfolds within particular socially, culturally, and geographically localized contexts. Those who strive to teach in critical ways and who work with preservice teachers must recognize, as Schieble (2012) has noted, that many Whites from predominantly White geographic locations have had "limited access to Discourses that model reflecting on race and class

privilege and undertaking white ally work” (p. 219). In other words, critical undertakings seeking to disrupt Whiteness do not allow for the traditional comforts many Whites expect in institutional settings, including schools. In part, discourses of Whiteness have been maintained through prolonged silences and “sotto voce” (Ladson-Billings, in Schneider, 2013) undercurrents of recognition without responsibility.

Reading and composing through, dialoguing about, role-playing, and attending to the intersectional social categorizations on-the-scene in our daily interactions are some ways to prepare students to see that antiracism and social justice oriented teaching are not “Catch-22’s”. In a world of possibilities, there are alternatives. For instance, Griffin could benefit from further opportunities to work with students whose backgrounds differ from his (in terms of race, social class, gender, and sexual orientation) in combination with opportunities to talk through various challenges encountered along the way. As well, Griffin might benefit from a community member mentor who could shadow him and talk through Griffin’s ongoing and developing perspectives related to educational and institutional inequities. Lastly, Griffin could be encouraged to educate himself by reading journals, viewing films, and attending conferences that call attention to inequities and offer action-oriented resolutions applicable to his content area of mathematics. By highlighting actions, ideologies, and individuals who recognize that White supremacy is deeply engrained in society yet who remain committed to fighting injustices, we can support preservice student teachers like Griffin as they learn to think more critically about instances of fear, guilt, or resistance that may induce kneejerk reactions or

temporary paralysis.

We must offer support to White students who feel immobilized when confronted with their own complicity and their own internalized dominance (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2011). At the same time, we must recognize that this work is situated in a system that favors the privileged as they work through (but not necessarily beyond) their realizations in healthy and generative ways. The goal here is not to avoid talking about particular binds that Whites may feel as a result of realizations about Whiteness, but to demonstrate how such discursive turns tilt the scales of justice in favor of one group over multiple “other” groups. Examining internally held discourses of Whiteness requires a kind of persistence that that has yet to be required for membership into the category of Whiteness.

Equipping teachers to engage as antiracists committed to thinking about race and racial identity in new ways, of course, is in part the charge of teacher education programs. Taking inventory of the discourses of Whiteness is one of many avenues providing direction for future action. Courses alone, however, as evidenced in Griffin’s account and consistent with the literature on the combination of White teachers, antiracism, and multiculturalism (Sleeter, 1997, 1998, 2005; Rosenberg, 1997; Picower, 2009; Applebaum 2007, 2008; Mazzei, 2008), cannot be imagined to transform deeply-held attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. Indeed, one course alone is not enough to disrupt the constantly evolving discourses of Whiteness. The likelihood may well be that such courses merely serve to strengthen the discourses altogether rather than challenging them.

In this paper, I sought answers to questions about the presence of discourses of Whiteness in preservice secondary teacher narratives. In addition to identifying discourses, I attempted understand how multiple discourses of Whiteness worked together to maintain power and privilege. Lastly, I aimed to expose the workings of various discourses of Whiteness for the purpose of interruption and to contribute to pedagogies seeking to disrupt power(s). While a critique of discourses of Whiteness, this project also must be seen as an attempt to offer “alternative realities” (Rogers, 2011, p. 5) to popularly held beliefs and worldviews that reinforce dominance.

Though perhaps tempting to fashion Griffin O’Connor as a flat, static, one-dimensional representation of Whiteness, it is important to imagine Griffin as moving toward a future destination rather than being rooted in the spot, given the embodied nature of discourses. As a “temporary mouthpiece” (Gee, 2011 b, p. 36) for some powerful discourses, Griffin must not be seen as a lifelong host to the damaging discourses of Whiteness. Further, as Cabrera (2012) articulates, “working through Whiteness is not an end met, but a continual process engaged” (p. 397). The process of learning to disrupt Whiteness is not linear. Nor is it the result of prescriptive adherence to a suggested daily dosage of treatment to refine intentions and to gain information (Chubbuck, 2004). Rather, the process of disrupting Whiteness requires recognition that everybody starts somewhere and can expect the difficult work to continue throughout one’s lifetime.

As Gomez, Allen, & Clinton (2004) posit, “[t]here are no recipes for how one

might replace an existing set of cultural models [or discourses] and practices with other, 'better' ones" (p. 487). However, teacher education programs can provide a more comprehensive picture of Whiteness by going beyond privilege inventories and explicitly outlining and interrupting discursive representations of Whiteness in large group settings. Examining internally held beliefs, values, and assumptions in a reflective manner is one way for preservice teachers to critically review and question the ways in which particular worldviews enable and constrain a more equitable and just society. Further, teacher education programs must encourage the development of critical perspectives through attunement to institutional inequities resulting from the intersections of privileged positions.

Chapter Three

Equity Traps

“When You Carry All of Your Baggage With You ... You’re Carrying All of Your Baggage With You”: Identifying and Interrupting Equity Traps in Pre-Service Teachers’ Narratives

Introduction

As a teacher educator who thrives on teaching and learning that bends “critical,” I was out of my seat with enthusiasm as preservice teachers in a recent literacy across the curriculum course shared, responded, and reflected on a variety of issues related to the topics of censorship and critical literacy. Pulling the easel closer to the group and uncapping a new dry-erase marker, I scribbled onto the board some of the key tenets of critical literacy that could serve as a rubric for one’s teaching. I identified four tenets synthesized from over 30 years of research that helped to define critical literacy: (1) disrupting familiar routines, (2) considering multiple perspectives, (3) focusing on social and political issues, and (4) taking action to promote change (Lewison, Flynt, & Van Sluys, 2002). The students were taking notes and we were ruminating on recent events in schools and our course readings that seemed to help situate the tenets in meaningful ways.

I cued up a five-minute scene from a film documentary, “Monumental Myths” (Trinley, 2012) to highlight the interrelated nature of critical literacy tenets. The scene takes place at Mount Rushmore and follows the director, Tom Trinley, through a guided

walking tour of the monument and park. Near the end of the tour, Trinley poses a question to the tour's guide: "What is Gutzon Borglum's affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan?" Borglum is the artist and sculptor credited with carving the famous monument into the hills of South Dakota.

The guide concedes that she has never read anything about the matter. Shortly thereafter, the director is accompanied by a park ranger at all times and is asked not to ask any "controversial" questions to park staff. The film then provides a point/counterpoint on the Borglum issue (among other issues). That is, park visitors respond to whether the park's "official" versions of Borglum and the controversy of sacred Sioux land are satisfactory, or if the narratives and monuments are in need of revision.

Several White visitors in the park's parking lot do not feel misled. At least one visitor, a working class white male, attributes Borglum's background in the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan as an exercise of his freedom to hold such beliefs while still being accepted into the "melting pot" that is the U.S. His companions (also white) seem content with learning about the day that Borglum was born, but do not feel defrauded by not learning the more robust and "controversial" version of the past. Another park visitor, an African American male, expresses disbelief and indignation that the tour sweeps such details under the rug, especially given that we live in a democracy that "values diversity."

As the film coasts through its final scenes, several historians, activists, and

authors, including Howard Zinn, James Loewen, Lonnie Bunch, and Adam “Fortunate Eagle” Nordwall unpack many of the issues surrounding “monumental myths” present in textbooks, memorials, and other remembrances of historical events. I turned on the lights and the dialogue continued. Students noted that some key tenets of critical literacy were demonstrated in the film. One student, Taylor, a white, middle class male, wondered aloud if we could be “critical” of the film. Specifically, he questioned, “Was it effective to show an angry black male at the end of the film?”

A chorus of classmates began disrupting Taylor’s apparent misreading of the scene. They did not see “anger,” but instead saw concepts we had been covering in class – diversity in language use and practice, regional dialects, variations of discourse – as being prominent in the scenes captured by the video camera. Some saw “passion” and “spiritedness,” but there was an overwhelming re-routing of the notion that the film depicted an “angry black male.”

I begin with this anecdote as a way to situate a key term for this paper: equity traps. While I do not believe that Taylor had malicious intentions with his question – I think he was excited about the prospect of being given the task to be critical – his question is an example of an equity trap. Equity traps are patterns of thinking, whether implicitly held or explicitly articulated, that impede the achievement of equity in schools and society (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Cohen, 2000). Taylor was “dysconsciously” (King, 1991) sustaining a social and cultural perspective that permeated his background and worldview as a middle class, white male from a predominantly white small

community in a Midwestern state. In terms of equity traps, Taylor was *employing the gaze* – focusing on the behaviors and language of a racial “Other” while deflecting any attention from the role of Whiteness in the Mount “Hushmore” dispute. Taylor’s utterance offers an opportunity to explore the unearned privileges and benefits associated with Whiteness and ways of disrupting these habits.

Pondering this scene and others like it in teacher education courses engaging the topics of racism, classism, and sexism and the intersection of these oppressions with literacy, I wondered: What are the patterns of thinking that impede the pursuit of equity in schooling and society? And (how) might we interrupt these discourse practices?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify common “equity traps” in the narrative accounts of preservice teachers from a predominantly white institution in a large, Midwestern state university’s teacher education program. This study examined 11 white preservice teachers’ experiences with and perceptions of diversity, including their own Whiteness, while attending Great Lakes University (GLU). While this study is related to previous examinations of preservice and inservice teachers’ articulations and understandings of whiteness and racism (White, 2011; Picower, 2009; McIntyre, 1997, 2002; Landsman, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Kailin, 1999; Sleeter, 1997, 1998), unlike other investigations, this study consists of multiple interviews with individuals over time and analyzes the nuanced discourses of whiteness held by secondary preservice teachers.

While inquiries into white preservice teachers' understandings of whiteness exist, the language, grammar, and discourse of Whiteness is constantly evolving and dependent upon its many intersections with (to name a few) geography, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexual preferences (Conley, 2000, 2001). Further, naming and defining whiteness remains difficult and challenging as a result of collective silence on and aversion or resistance to topics of white privilege and white power (Lund & Carr, 2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2011; Sleeter, 1998; Tatum, 1994; Berlak & Moyneda, 2001; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Pollock, 2004).

I studied the articulated values, beliefs, and philosophies of the preservice teachers highlighted in this paper because they each expressed a desire to teach in ways that challenged the status quo. As teachers just beginning their journey into the profession, the participants were open to learning about how to identify and examine relations of power in their teaching and interactions with their students.

Conceptual Framework

In their important work on equitable schooling, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) describe four common "equity traps" held by educators working with diverse populations and students of color. McKenzie and Scheurich define equity traps as "conscious and unconscious thinking patterns and behaviors that trap teachers, administrators, and others" or "ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners" (pp. 601-602). These traps result in lowered expectations and negative views toward students' home language and culture,

and foil the possibilities for equity in schooling.

Described as occurring individually and collectively, equity traps are “often reinforced ... through formal and informal communication, assumptions, and beliefs” (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 603). Equity traps lead to what King (1991) has coined as “dysconscious racism” or an “uncritical habit of mind” that gives justification to inequity. Identifying and interrupting equity traps holds considerable potential for helping educators “rethink assumptions that uncritically privilege Whiteness” (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007, p. 234).

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) identify four constructs and provide strategies to help school leaders first understand, and then implement strategies to eliminate the habitual traps. Table 4 (below) situates each of the four traps and provides a brief description of each trap. Importantly, each trap is not a stand-alone category and frequently there is overlap between the traps.

Table 8.
Description of Equity Traps

Equity Trap	Brief Description of Equity Trap
<i>Deficit View</i>	A way of identifying students' language, culture, and behavior as a liability and not a resource for schooling.
<i>Racial Erasure</i>	Refusing to “see color,” taking a “colorblind” stance, and switching the conversation away from race to socioeconomics.
<i>Avoidance and Employment of the Gaze</i>	Avoiding the surveillance of White middle class parents and pressuring other White teachers to “fit in” with the norms

	established in a school.
<i>Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors</i>	Shifting responsibility for one's own inappropriate behavior by blaming students.

For this paper, I situate the first two equity traps outlined by McKenzie and Scheurich (2004): deficit view and racial erasure. Based on Valencia's (1997) deficit-thinking model, the first trap is the *deficit view* trap. According to this trap, "the student who fails in school does so principally because of internal deficits or deficiencies" (p. 2; in McKenzie & Scheurich, p. 607). In this view, students of color are regarded as having deficiencies attributed to linguistic limitations, inadequate intellectual capacity, unprincipled behaviors, and insufficient motivation. Also, student "deficiencies" are located within the student, as "inherent or endogenous" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 608). Further, participants express the *deficit view* trap by remarking on students' parents and communities as lacking in motivation, adequacy, or family stability and attributing this as a cultural and generational affliction.

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) observed that in addition to blaming parents and individual student's lack of motivation, teachers and administrators held that the students and their families "did not value education" and that students "did not know how to behave properly" (pp. 608-609). Ultimately, the findings of this view indicate that the teachers in their study held "a strong belief that their children of color walked in the school door at 4 years old with built-in deficits that the teachers should not be expected to

overcome” (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 609).

The second trap explored here, *racial erasure*, is based in part on the work of bell hooks (1992) and refers to the process by which some people refuse “to see color,” or take a “colorblind” stance toward all students of color. In addition to “forget[ting] about race,” the racial erasure equity trap tends to prioritize other factors, including socioeconomic class, as contributing to one’s school performance. Teachers in McKenzie and Scherulich’s (2004) study indicated that a student’s low-performance had little to do with race and everything to do with economics or poverty. The authors conclude that the *racial erasure* or colorblind equity trap is “a rhetorical strategy to hide [individual] racism” (p. 615) and offer suggestions for eradicating the racial erasure equity trap.

All four of the equity traps identified by McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) and outlined in Table 4 (above) were evident in this study. However, the first two equity traps, *deficit view* and *racial erasure* emerged with greater frequency than the latter two equity traps. I next turn to a description of my research methodology, including an account for data collection and analyses.

Research Methodology

As a narrative inquiry study, I drew on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to explore how participants viewed race, including their own whiteness, as the construct shaped their experiences as beginning teachers for several reasons. I found methods of narrative inquiry suitable to my research aims because, as Chubbuck (2004)

notes, “teaching is best understood when contextualized in the identity of the teacher in the context of the larger life story rather than being reduced to specific classroom behaviors” (p. 312). Further, I found narrative inquiry as particularly useful in providing for a depth of complexity and nuance necessary to work in service to disrupt social and economic inequities.

Data Generation and Collection

I gathered data from multiple sources. To begin, I interviewed 11 prospective teachers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds on three occasions at a location of their choosing. The semi-structured interview protocol encouraged participants to narrate their schooling experiences, including enrollment in a teacher education program advocating a philosophical and pedagogical mission of teaching for social justice through multicultural teaching (Grant & Sleeter, 2007) and critical reflection (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). In addition to individual interviews, 7 participants took part in a two-hour focus group interview. I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews.

Data Analyses

I began the analyses of preservice teacher narratives by creating “interim texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The interim texts became amalgamated sites of different genres (interview transcripts, field notes, course assignments) on one canvass. Creating the interim texts encompassed a process of crafting a portrait out of the words (spoken and written), stories, and intent of the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). One goal of the interim text was to situate the participants in the social, cultural, and

personal contexts out from which their histories appeared to unfold as told (and re-told) through select stories. The interim text task enabled me to condense, abbreviate, summarize, rearrange, and reinterpret texts generated throughout the length of the study.

I utilized both inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. Inductively, I labeled recurring themes and equity traps from stories that were narrated by the prospective teachers and from my observations of participants' narratives. For instance, themes related to talking about one's self as raced, classed, or gendered (or not), attending to diversity in teaching and learning settings (or not), and developing cultural competencies emerged as categories in initial coding. Deductively, I connected themes from the professional literature related to white teachers' talking about (or avoiding talk about) race and McKenzie and Scheurich's (2004) descriptions of "equity traps" within the stories narrated by the prospective teachers in this study. Specifically, I employed McKenzie and Scheurich's (2004) "deficit views" and "racial erasure" as deductive categories for analysis.

Context and Setting

At Great Lakes University (GLU), approximately 85 % of the student body (over 30,000 students) identifies as White, 7% identify as Asian American, 5% identify as African American, 3% identify as Latino, and about 1.5% of the total student body identify as Native American. Out of 31 students in a course I taught on diversity in the spring of 2010, 29 students self-identified as White. Such numbers are reflective of previous and current cohort demographics in GLU's elementary and secondary education

programs and its faculty, instructors, and supervisors.

All participants grew up in the state where GLU is located. According to the U.S. Census (2010), nearly 90% of the state's 5 million inhabitants identify as White, less than 7% identify as African American or Black, just over 6 % of the population identifies as Latino/a, and fewer than 3 % of the population identifies as Asian. At the time of this writing, at least one secondary school in the state was the center of a “controversy” regarding an un-named White parent's objection to her 17-year-old White son's learning about White Privilege in a high school class titled “The American Dream” (Starnes, 2013).

According to the U.S. Census (2010), over 230,000 people populate the city of Great Lakes, where the research was conducted. Approximately 79 % of the city identifies as White (U.S. Census, 2010). In contrast to city demographics, the school district's demographics provide a different snapshot of the city's racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, as 50% of the district's 25,000 students are White, 24% are African American, 15 % are Hispanic American, 10 % Asian American, and 1% Native American (District Website, Introduction to the District). Teachers of color account for less than 10 % of the district's teachers and district administrators are predominantly White.

Historically, students of color in the district have struggled to receive equitable teaching and learning experiences. In recent times, addressing the graduation rates for African American males (approximately 50% graduate) and Latinos (fewer than 60% graduate) and “closing the racial achievement gap” between students of color and their

White and Asian counterparts has become a focal point in the district's search to hire a new superintendent.

Beginning in the fall of 2011, another relevant situation – one that had been simmering for some time – occurred on campus that further helps to contextualize this study. The controversy centered on GLU's diversity initiatives and the university's holistic admissions approach. A conservative think-tank, Center for Equal Opportunity (CEO), released a report that stated "severe discrimination" related to race and ethnicity was occurring in the school's admissions. Specifically, the CEO group charged that White and Asian students were discriminated against in the admissions process while African Americans and Latino/as had a greater chance of being admitted. While this public debate occurred after the conclusion of this study, the situation underscores the racial tension that continues to permeate the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which data was collected.

As for the 11 participants in this study, four students grew up in mostly rural contexts. Six of the participants grew up in suburban settings, and one participant, the focus of this paper, grew up in the metropolitan city of Great Lakes. Nine of the participants described their elementary upbringing as predominantly White in terms of their peers and teachers. Few participants had a teacher or school leader of color in their K-12 schooling experience. All participants described their school's curriculum as Eurocentric, and only in high school did some participants encounter classes focused on multiple perspectives of issues of power and privilege. Seven of the participants in the

study were enrolled in Talented and Gifted programs or in Advanced Placement or Honors courses during their K-12 school. Accordingly, this predicament lessened their likelihood of interacting with racial, cultural and linguistic “Others” in their school. I began collecting data for this study in the spring of 2010 and continued data collection through the summer, 2011. The participants all were 21-24-years-old, born between 1986-1990. All were at the same stage of GLU’s two-year teacher education program through the duration of this study. I followed the participants through their second (spring 2010), third (fall 2010), and fourth/final (spring 2011) semester of GLU’s secondary teacher education program. Students complete their Liberal Studies and minor requirements before applying to GLU’s secondary teacher education program and they progress sequentially through the program in consecutive semesters within one of two cohorts (n≈25-30). In Table 9, I show the scope and sequence of the program for the purpose of showcasing students’ multiple encounters with GLU’s programmatic values of inclusion, diversity, and teaching for social justice.

Table 9.
GLU’s scope-and-sequence

Term	Semester One	Semester Two	Semester Three	Semester Four
Course Sequence	C&I: “Strategies for Inclusive Schooling” (3 cr.) Ed Pol: “School and	C&I: “Teaching Diverse Learners” (3 cr.) C&I: “Literacy Across the	Ed Psy: “Human Abilities and Learning” (3 cr.) C&I: Content Methods	C&I: Full-time student-teaching and seminar (12 cr.)

	Society” (3 cr.)	Curriculum” (3 cr.)	Course (3 cr.)	
	Ed Psy: “Adolescent Development” (3 cr.)	Content- Methods course (3 cr.)	C&I: Technology Integration Course (3 credits)	
	C&I: Practicum in content area (3 days/week) (3 cr.)	C&I: Practicum and tutoring experience in content area (4 days/week)	C&I: Half-time student- teaching (3 cr.) (4 hours/day, 5 days/week)	

Note: This table details the scope and sequence of GLU’s four-semester, full-time status, undergraduate secondary education degree. Semesters two, three, and four are shaded and in bold to indicate the three semesters of the study.

Equity Traps in Preservice Teachers’ Narratives

Deficit View Equity Trap

According to the *deficit view* equity trap, students of color and students from low socioeconomic background do not perform as well as white middle class peers due to inherent deficiencies related to their social, cultural, and racial upbringings. The trap is expressed in beliefs about students’ language improper use, inappropriate behaviors, and lack of motivation as factors contribute to a lack of success in schooling. In addition to locating “deficiencies” within individual students, the view places blame on parents who do not value education or who are unsupportive or said to be uninterested in their children’s school lives.

Miranda Heistand, a secondary preservice mathematics teacher, attended a

predominantly white Catholic elementary. As an Honors student in secondary school, she had little interaction with students of color in high school. The deficit view equity trap emerges in her recollection of an occurrence at the middle school where she did her student teaching. Miranda described the following scene,

[T]here was one [African American] girl who was talking about how she was going to get in a fight with this other girl because she had to like stand her ground ... which I don't get at all. I was like, 'Why would you fight?' Like, 'Why?' She was like, 'Well, I'm going to fight this girl. I'm gonna do it.' Why would you do that? ... I like don't get it. I still don't. It's one of those things I don't get. And, maybe it's because of her upbringing, or where she grew up, or who she – the kinds of people she was around when she grew up around. But this sense, that everything can be solved through fighting is something that I see a lot ... Like, they are always talking about it. And it's like probably over something stupid, like a boy. It's just like, I don't get it.

Miranda begins by describing an individual female student as having inappropriate conflict resolution skills. However, by the end of the anecdote, she has attributed the unbecoming behavior to a group of individuals ("they"), presumably African American females, all of whom "are always talking about" fighting. As Miranda stated, she did "not get it," that is, she did not "get" the behavior of the student, but she did have some ideas about where the student learned such unseemly aggressive behavior. Miranda attributed the students' behaviors to their "upbringing," "where she grew up," and "the

kinds of people she was around.” In other words, Miranda perceived the student’s misbehavior as emanating from the student’s home life.

In a second example, Elaine Merchant, a secondary English major who attended K-12 schools in her predominantly white suburban hometown, attributed student behaviors at school as related to students’ “really rough home lives.” Elaine’s described the students in her practicum placement at a Great Lakes High School as “predominantly people of color in a special education core.” In Elaine’s schooling experiences, she had never witnessed skirmishes in the hallway or a police presence in her school. She explained, “I had never experienced a fight in the middle of the hallway. Or ... numerous people being arrested [in school].” However, at GLHS, she said, “I experienced it numerous times throughout the course I was there.” Elaine explained that such experiences had “never happened” in her hometown, so witnessing such actions and behaviors as a practicum student caused dissonance. In her words,

I have never experienced that ... And so, it just really opened my eyes to the populations of people that I was working with and the backgrounds that they were coming from, and allowed me to kind of look at that and say, ‘Okay, this group of students is kind of from a really rough place. A lot of them are coming from a really rough place and from really rough home lives. How am I going to make what I am doing relevant to them?’

In a new environment, Elaine focused on individual student behavior as attributable to students’ “really rough home lives.” Instead of questioning the school’s disciplinary

policies and procedures and in lieu of inquiring into the effect of low teacher expectations and zero-tolerance policies on students who have been historically marginalized (Fuentes, 2012; Christensen, 2012), Elaine ascribed students' lack of achievement to the "really rough place[s]" in which the students grew up. Like Miranda, Elaine located student "deficiencies" as rooted in students' social and cultural backgrounds and communities.

In addition to positioning students as having deficiencies related to their behaviors, home lives, and language use while overlooking structural factors as crucial to understandings of the achievement of *all* students, several participants located student achievement in school as correlated to their parents' involvement (or perceived lack thereof) in their children's educations.

Eric Van de Kamp, a secondary preservice mathematics teacher from a rural, predominantly White (K-6 Catholic grade school) schooling background, described what he saw as "a general disengagement from school" in a third example of the deficit view equity trap. Eric related such disengagement to the alignment of a student's and her/his parents' attitudes and levels of (dis)engagement. According to Eric,

[S]ome of the parents who haven't received as much schooling, maybe don't quite value it as much or see the importance of it, and because they are not directly paying for it ... they are forgetting about like where that money is actually coming from. And it also allows them to be a little bit less engaged with their child's learning. And because there is two disengaged people on education in that household now, they are going to come to school and they are gonna not be as

willing to engage in the learning.

For Eric, student success in school is dependent upon factors related to their home life. According to Eric, parents who did not “value” or “see the importance” of education contributed to student disengagement from school. This disengagement was described as compounding in a household where multiple generations live together and uphold a tradition of de-valuing a free education. Underlying Eric’s sentiment is his belief in a “meritocratic society” where the maxim “equal opportunity for all” is skewed by a conviction that we all depart from the same concourse or that we all embark from the same port (McNamee & Miller, 2009).

In the final instance of the *deficit view* equity trap examined here, Eric attributes negative outcomes of a student of color to an inescapable condition. Eric illustrated this trap through the following anecdote:

[T]here was a student of mine when I was at [Great Lakes Middle School], a young African American male, that he moved from [another city] because he was in a gang there. And his mom ... didn’t, obviously, want that kind of life for him, [so she] moved him out ... and they both came over here, and very quickly he found a new gang. ... started right where he left off. And yeah the mom ... she wants good things for him, but because they are in a way like bringing their problems over ... picking up and moving is not the answer. You know, it may help, but, it’s – when you carry all of your baggage with you ... you’re carrying all of your baggage with you.

The metaphor of “carrying” one’s baggage implicitly calls for an “unpacking” of sorts regarding this illustrative story that Eric has told. Using a deficit lens, Eric refers to a student’s “baggage” (e.g., “gang” affiliation) as following the student wherever he moves. An assets-based lens might instead identify traits and characteristics of this student and his mother in a more redeeming manner (e.g., charisma, leadership potential, intrapersonal skills). Further unpacking Eric’s depiction of problems springing from, or preceding from, a student’s social, cultural, and racial origin, reveals an underlying belief in “inherent or endogenous” “problems” as braided into the DNA of various cultural groups. Of course, such a perspective is the result of uncritical, or unmindful, consideration of the role that antecedent historical conditions and institutionalized forms of racism play in the maintenance of contemporary inequities (Schmidt, 2005). In this view, whiteness remains the privileged, though un-named, standard by which many white teachers were holding their students “accountable.”

Racial Erasure Equity Trap

A common (mis)conception in the U.S. maintains that having elected and re-elected an African American president, the nation has moved “beyond race” (and its legacy of racism) and entered an era as a “post-racial nation”. The stance holds that the U.S. and its people have moved beyond, or rather overcome, various forms of racism, mostly conceived as individual acts of hate to the exclusion of other forms of racism, including cultural and institutional. While comforting to many, such beliefs must be examined and interrupted given the social stratification that continues to exist along racial

and ethnic lines in contemporary society. Examples of the stratification can be observed in health care and poverty statistics, arrest and conviction rates, graduation and employment rates, zero-tolerance occurrences and repercussions, overrepresentation of students of color in special education and disproportionality of students of color in Talented and Gifted, and further exist in areas related to residential housing and segregated schooling (Winn, 2010; Green, 2010; Lipman, 2004; Gamoran, 2001). In other words, racism is embedded in social, cultural, and economic practices and policies. People refusing “to see color” as part of an effort to “forget about race” (hooks, 1992) perpetuate racism, even if this is not their intention.

As McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) discovered, even when people profess to “erase race” as a meaningful category providing structure to their interactions (or not) with others, they still refer to race through subtle phrases or code words which indicate they do “see” race. To no avail, assertions of color-blind or racial erasure discourses attempt to “hide racism.” Through silence(s), pretending not to see consequential identity markers, and shifting the conversation to socioeconomics, the equity trap serves to privilege the interests of whites, who benefit socially, economically, and culturally from the un-naming of race. Such views serve the (white) self by perhaps freeing one from guilt or responsibility, yet the same view conveniently overlooks existing realities and possibilities for collective action toward a more justice-oriented society.

In the first instance of the racial erasure equity trap, preservice secondary English teacher from a predominantly white suburban K-12 schooling experience, David Jones,

held firmly to his beliefs in a colorblind and meritocratic society. David questioned whether race or skin color was consequential or not: “I always viewed it as, does the color of their skin really matter? Is that just sort of an incidental thing? Deep down, we’re all humans, so we should all be treated as such.” While many will read David’s belief that one’s race or skin color is “incidental” as an insult, under the illusion of a colorless society – a society where one’s race has no bearing on interactions with cultural “Others” – such discourse is both tolerable and presumed.

David’s poetic, “we’re all humans,” can be seen as an attempt to “erase race” as a factor in schooling and as a factor in his daily performances (instructional style, dress, gestures, expectations, reading and writing assignments, and assessments) in schools with students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Someone who considered himself a skeptic of the critical race theory tenet that racism is a normative aspect, a “permanent fixture” to life in America (Bell, 1992; Solórzano & Yosso, 2009; Delgado, 2000), David did not agree, despite claims to the contrary, “that there necessarily is that deep-seated racism” in the United States.

In the case of Miranda Heistand (preservice mathematics teacher introduced above), she did not think about herself as having a race until attending college at GLU. Living in a predominantly white setting, race had been erased from her upbringing through a silence on and avoidance of the topic at home and in schools. Miranda “didn’t see it [race] as an issue at home,” and stated, “it wasn’t something you had to deal [with].” In this view, race is something that people who are not white have to “deal”

with. While Miranda was surrounded by friends and family who were white, she did not perceive her surroundings to be permeated with race. According to Miranda, race

was hard to come into contact with. I mean if we go into [urban city] ... that makes sense ... but it was just something that was not dealt with on a daily basis.

You know, if you don't see it, you don't think about it kind of thing.

Miranda's socialization in a predominantly white setting led her to believe that race is something that is "dealt with on a daily basis" by colored "Others," but that whites did not have to "think about it" because they were not in possession of a race.

The racial erasure equity trap also was visible in some of the experiences that Miranda detailed from her experiences working in diverse schools throughout GLU. Miranda prefaced her story with a disclaimer, "I don't want this to come out in a negatively," before continuing, "but I think sometimes [students of color] use [the race card] when I'm not ever trying ... to act in a negative light toward them." Miranda recalled instances while working with students of color when the students felt "slighted" for one reason or another by the instruction or attention they were receiving (or not) from the teacher.

The students in these instances ascribed the perceived rebuffing as attributable to their race. In response, Miranda was quick to erase race as a factor in the instance, telling the students, "It's not because it's a racial thing, it's because what you are doing is wrong, and that's why I am talking to you." When students in these instances "flip into that" mode of turning on race, even though Miranda is not intentionally paying attention

to her own or the students' race as she interrupts "inappropriate" behavior, Miranda stated, "I feel like you have to handle [such instances] lightly." In other words, Miranda is in favor of dismissing students' claims of unfairness as not legitimate because she was not acting "in a negative light toward them" or singling students out for their race, but for their unsuitable behaviors.

Miranda stated that in situations when students "play the race card," she found it "hard as a white teacher" and conceded that she "was somewhat at a loss for things." What made these situations so difficult for Miranda? She explained, "Because I can't really, I'm not an African American. I have no idea what your life has been like or how people treat you ... I can guess at it, but not having those experiences, I can't relate." Growing up in a society in which she was never made mindfully aware of her racialized status as a white, Miranda was "at a loss" for how to empathize or "relate" to her students of color, specifically African American students, for whom it can be presumed were made aware of their status as "raced" early on in life. In the same way that Miranda did not "see it," race, growing up in a predominantly white setting, Miranda is unable or unwilling to "see" that her expectations, beliefs about behavior, and interactions with students and staff continue to be saturated with race and power.

Elaine Merchant (secondary English teacher introduced above), echoes many of the sentiments of Miranda as she narrates interactions with racial "Others" that were "not at all in relation into race." Elaine worked in a supervisory role in the dormitories on the campus at GLU. During her junior year, Elaine reported an African American Resident

Assistant to her supervisor about an incident related to poor work performance. Elaine stated that she “didn’t necessarily get along with” her supervisee, but that this detail was “not at all in relation to race but more in relation to how she performed her job and things like that.”

Similar to Miranda, Elaine does not categorize her expectations and assessments of others’ behaviors or accomplishments as having anything to do with race, yet the case could be made that the situations actually had everything to do with race. In both Miranda and Elaine’s narratives, they are in positions of power as a result of many centripetal forces, race being prominent among the coagulants.

Elaine describes the situation with the African American RA as follows:

[I]t came down to me kind of overseeing this whole series of events, and me feeling like she hadn’t upheld – there were numerous individuals who hadn’t upheld their responsibilities in taking part in these events – and I then had to report to my supervisor about, okay, ‘No these things weren’t done, and these were the people that were responsible for them.’ And so she [the African American RA] sat me down to have a conversation where she felt like I had targeted her as a result of her race. Which was something that absolutely floored me, because it was never at all, in relation to her race.

Though unmentioned by Elaine, we are to infer here that the RA, to use Miranda’s expression, was “playing the race card.” Sorting through the narratives, it appears that only people of color carry a “race card.” And, if we are to take each teacher’s narrative at

face value, it also appears that people of color use this so-called card in inappropriate ways. Of course, this view only contradicts many whites' claims, including participants in this study, that they have been "victimized" by their white skin when it comes to access to scholarships and entry into a teacher education program that values diversity among its teaching candidates.

Discussion

In this inquiry project, using a lens that accounts for equity traps reveals some of the discursive ways that preservice white teachers reinscribe or rearticulate existing scripts that diminish the significance or interrogation of whiteness. Through the *deficit view* equity trap, students' language, abilities, behaviors, and family/home lives were conceived as liabilities that resulted in lowered expectations from the preservice teachers in this study. The deficit view equity trap renders students of color and students from low socioeconomic background as not performing as well as white middle class peers due to deficits related to their social, cultural, and racial upbringings. Frequently, this trap allowed preservice teachers to place blame on students and their parents, all the while concealing institutional factors, including whiteness itself, as contributing to the plight of students of color and low-income students.

Instead of attributing the designation of African American students in a "special education core" as the result of an institutional fault or flaw, Elaine Merchant situated her students' predicament to the students' "rough home lives." That is, while Elaine could have questioned the school's culture and its role in disproportionately placing students of

color in special education classes, she chose instead to blame the students' cultures as leading to their lack of access to a fair education.

The "standard" by which Miranda held her students to was reflective of white, middle-class values, norms, and behaviors. Instead of viewing her students of color as potentially talented and gifted story tellers and writers, Miranda expressed concerns for their future welfare due to her perception that their thinking (and writing) would serve as barriers to their future academic success.

Eric Van de Kamp was tripped up by the *deficit view* equity trap when he located "gaps" in achievement to family structures and cultural "baggage." For Eric, student disengagement in school was compounded at home, where students' parents were also disengaged from the process of schooling. Instead of examining the structures and institutions of school and society as out-of-step with the needs of students of color and low-income students, Eric found students' and parents' conditions and expectations as in conflict or incompatible with the credibility of the school.

The *racial erasure* equity trap captures discursive attempts to diminish the importance of race by claiming some variation of (a) we're all members of the human race, (b) everyone is equal, and (c) I judge others by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. Such views obscure and trivialize lived experiences and ignore and deny social, economic, cultural, and historical facts that speak to existence of oppression(s) then *and* now. Contrary to the subtext of being colorblind, race still matters (West, 2001). An intersectional analysis disrupts notions that the U.S. has lived

up to its promises or that there exists a level playing field or common starting place (Andersen & Collins, 2010).

Despite David's marginalization of race as something "incidental," for many students of color, race is far from a peripheral identity marker in terms of their family, history, and culture. Further, race also is important to whites. Even if whites choose not to reflect on the histories of oppressed groups, these histories exact consequences on the descendants of both the oppressed and the oppressors (Goodman, 2011).

When it comes to teaching, it is not possible to avoid teaching or talking about race, privilege, and power. Race is embedded in the institution of schooling – from the construction and sustaining of the building(s) and social networks to the expectations, "norms," values, standards, and priorities emphasized in brick-and-mortar and virtual schools. The seduction of "erasing race" allows many well-intentioned whites to avoid the necessary dissonance associated with having a role in the maintenance of white supremacy. The avoidance of meaningful talk about privilege and power – though destabilizing as it may be for powerful group – cannot be absent if the end goal is equity. In other words, preservice white teachers should have "to deal with" their Whiteness. Whiteness is a space that whites inhabit 100% of the time (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Conclusion and Implications

In this research, I have examined the stories of white preservice secondary teachers as they articulated their experiences and beliefs about learning to teach in environments that differed widely (at least demographically and culturally) from the

environments in which they were schooled. By sharing valuable lessons that I have gleaned from my analysis of preservice teachers' narratives, it is my hope that conversations on equity traps and other obstacles to achieving equity move others to action beyond the four walls of the classroom. In addition to discerning equity traps from one's own and others' vernacular, it is important for teacher educators to offer direction and counsel for problematizing existing structures and our places within them (Foss, 2002).

This narrative inquiry into the experiences and understandings of pre-service secondary school teachers from a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the Midwest holds several implications for teacher educators. Central to the task of unsettling the settled is working toward a mass of teachers and pre-service teachers in various stages of developing and refining a "critical stance" (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). A critical stance is an outlook, an attitude, a way to think, and a way to teach (Pennycook, 1999). A critical stance allows students and teachers to question authority and "to stand their ground, to develop opinions that are consistent with deeply held values, and, when conscience requires it, to act against consensus or the crowd" (Kohl, 1995, p. 18). Such a stance subverts the traditional model of teacher-as-transmitter or disseminator of knowledge, positioning practitioners as learners and inquirers. A critical stance requires interrogations into equity traps or patterns of thinking that decelerate the possibilities for equity in schooling.

It would be a fault to address, through teaching and assessment, the skills and

abilities necessary for one's proficiency as a teacher while disregarding the values that we must be working toward as well (democracy, justice, equity) (Zeichner, 2009). Enacting such values, programmatically and individually, however, cannot be a comfortable space for everyone at all times. The topic of privilege makes many preservice teachers (and teacher educators), particularly whites, uncomfortable and vulnerable (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Leonardo & Porter, 2010).

While the task of questioning one's own privilege and role in maintaining dominance is uneasy and uncomfortable, all changes require one to experience dissonance. This dissonance should not be avoided, but rather attended to. Indeed, if we do not experience discomfort – and many of the preservice teachers we teach have always been successful in *doing* school – we can expect our teachers to replicate the conditions under which they thrived. If teachers are to go against the status quo, we must equip them tools for recognizing and acting on unfairness in its discrete and indiscrete packaging.

To address the *deficit view*, school leaders must “reframe” teachers' perspectives from a deficit-based to an assets-based way of thinking about students, parents, and communities of color (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Dignifying students' cultures by recognizing students' “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992) or abilities, ideas, and strategies brought from home/community to school is one way to validate and support students. The neighborhood walk or home visit strategy is one way for teachers to establish rapport and get to know their students and families on a deeper

level. Community oral history projects and even 3-way conferencing (teacher-parent-student) have also been identified as strategies for transforming the deficit view equity trap (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). It is important to be mindful, however, that such practices, when done without critical reflection, have a tendency to reinforce existing stereotypes or beliefs, rather than disrupting or challenging them.

In order to interrupt the *racial erasure* equity trap, one strategy to shed light on the ways that whites view and talk about racial “Others” is to create book study groups that facilitate such conversations. Another powerful tool for creating conversation on the inequities within a school or district relates to the “equity audit” (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Groenke, 2010). An equity audit provides school leaders and even future teachers the means to disaggregate school data by race in order to identify problematic areas and to make plans for equalizing inequities. For instance, through an equity audit, school leaders are likely to find that students of color are underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors track courses and overrepresented in special education when compared to their white peers (Waitoller, Artiles, & Cheney, 2010; Artiles, 2009). As well, the audit may point out inequities in terms of which students are taught by the most- and least-experienced teachers in the school. The cycle of the audit – “analyze the data, discuss its meaning, and devise solutions” (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 618) – allows educators to focus on the ways in which schools produce inequities along racial boundaries and invites teachers to “see” systemic inequities and have a hand in dissolving them.

It has not been my intention here to frame or portray preservice student teachers as deficient in or averse to issues of diversity and its influence in the arenas of teaching and learning in an increasingly diverse society (Lowenstein, 2009). While my narratives may appear to some readers as an indictment on individual preservice teachers as flawed or defective, my purpose is not to devalue any individual in this study. Rather than focusing on individual narratives, I aim to call attention to these and other equity traps as embedded in the larger social and institutional contexts in which such views are imposed and endorsed.

As Gomez, Allen, & Clinton (2004) posit, “[t]here are no recipes for how one might replace an existing set of cultural models [or discourses] and practices with other, ‘better’ ones” (p. 487). However, teacher education programs can explicitly outline and interrupt discursive representations of equity traps in large group settings. Examining a variety of beliefs, values, and assumptions in a reflective manner is one way for preservice teachers to critically review and question the ways in which particular worldviews enable and constrain a more equitable and just society. Further, teacher education programs must encourage the development of critical perspectives through attunement to institutional inequities resulting from the intersections of privileged positions.

Chapter Four

Critical Literacy

Narratives of Critical Literacy From Two White PreService English Teachers:

Disrupting Familiar Routines and Attuning to Social and Political Issues

Introduction

The process of learning to become a teacher of reading and writing is filled with obstacles and opportunities, triumphs and frustrations, and tensions and contradictions. Strategies or texts that work with one group of students may flop for the next group of students. Likewise, one mentor teacher's signature style may be fruitful for one prospective teacher while leading to another prospective teacher's demise. Like all human endeavors, teaching is a process that is fluid and neither predictable nor mundane. As teacher educators, we expect our own teaching and other teachers' efforts to be guided by an overriding ideal or lofty vision, yet we simultaneously accept that one's daily efforts will inevitably fall short (Argawal et al., 2010).

Teacher education programs across the United States have documented ongoing efforts to support pre-service teachers' understandings of and teachings for social justice (Zeichner, 2009; North, 2008; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2011). As an outgrowth of the traditions of multicultural education (Banks, 1993; Banks & Banks, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Nieto & Bode, 2008) and critical and liberatory pedagogies (Freire, 1970; Macedo & Freire, 1987; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995; Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006), critical literacy has emerged as "a major ideological construct influencing education"

(Behrman, 2006, p. 490). Like multicultural education, critical literacy rejects claims of neutrality in teaching and curriculum by exposing the deeply value-laden process of producing and receiving language (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Lankshear, 1994; Janks, 1993). Far from uniform in *what* is being observed or studied and *how* one is conceptualizing critical literacy, teaching critical approaches to the production and consumption of language is a process of redefinition or reinvention and remains understudied in pre-service English Education (Comber, 2001a and b; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004a and b; Luke 2000; Morrell, 2005).

My own interests in the production and re-production of structural inequalities in U.S. society and my interest in the efforts of teachers and students working to disrupt such inequities compelled me to undertake this study, to act as a “critical secretary” (Apple, 2010; 2013) by documenting the day-to-day struggles and celebrations of real teachers. The narrative study is an examination of how critical literacy practices guided the beliefs and practices of two secondary English prospective teachers (both of whom identify as White/European) teaching in suburban and urban school settings in a Midwestern state. As a university supervisor to pre-service teachers developing a “critical consciousness” (Anyon, 2005), I wondered: What critical literacy practices did the student teachers enact? If any, what dilemmas did they encounter in doing so? And what lessons might be gleaned in reflection on the practices?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how critical literacy tenets informed the

decision-making of prospective teachers from a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Midwest. This study can be seen as an extension of other investigations into the critical literacy practices of pre-service and in-service teachers (Scherff, 2012; Groenke, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). While inquiries into critical literacy practices exist (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008; Skerrett, 2009; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004 a and b; Beck, 2005), the philosophy and practices of critical literacy remain difficult to define due to the changing temporal and geographic locations in which it exists (Luke & Woods, 2009).

I studied the practices and philosophies of the two pre-service teachers highlighted in this paper because they each expressed a desire to teach in ways that challenged the status quo. As teachers just beginning their journey into the profession, the participants were open to learning about how to identify and examine relations of power in texts and society with their students. Further, I had multiple opportunities to work with the participants in various settings over time. I first met each of the participants in this study through a 3-credit, 15-week course I was teaching during the spring of 2010. The class was focused on teaching diverse learners and consisted of 31 pre-service secondary students from each of the core subject areas (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) of the Great Lakes University (GLU) secondary education program.

Following the course, I recruited students in the class to participate in a narrative inquiry project in which we met periodically over the course of their final two semesters

of student teaching (Fall 2010-Summer 2011) to discuss encouragements and constraints related to enacting multicultural education, teaching for social justice, and equitable teaching practices.

This study has implications for literacy educators working with pre-service teachers to develop and refine a “critical stance” (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). For Lewison et al. (2008), a critical stance is not about introducing gadgetry to one’s teaching. A critical stance is an outlook, an attitude, a way to think, and a way to teach (Pennycook, 1999). A critical stance allows students and teachers to question authority and “to stand their ground, to develop opinions that are consistent with deeply held values, and, when conscience requires it, to act against consensus or the crowd” (Kohl, 1995, p. 18). A critical stance is an attitude of confidence and competence, “rooted in principles of democracy and justice, of questioning and analysis, of resistance and action” (Lewison, et al., 2008, p. 3; Edelsky, 1999). Scherff (2012), citing Fecho (2004), states that a critical stance “allows preservice teachers to create a sense of agency: having the capacity, understanding, self-belief, and capability to generate change” (p. 203). Such a stance subverts the traditional model of teacher-as-transmitter or disseminator of knowledge, positioning practitioners as learners and inquirers.

Related Literature

For this paper, critical literacy means exploring underlying worldviews and ideologies in texts and exploring the moral commitments and ethical stances required in order to work toward social justice (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010;

Chapman, Hobbel, Alvarado, 2011; Christiansen, 2000). However, no single definition of critical literacy exists and attempts to define critical literacy can be seen as in conflict with the overarching goals of the philosophy, which retains its possibilities only by challenging, and not becoming, the central focus or status quo approach to literacy education. Scholars, including Luke (2000) and Shor (1999) have provided accounts of critical literacy while emphasizing the changing nature and practices associated with the philosophy.

Luke (2000) has suggested that there is a blending of theories informing critical literacy. At times, these theories and traditions of critical literacy are and have been “discordant” or in conflict with one another. As adaptable and dependent on contexts (geographies, sociopolitical systems, languages), critical literacies are not exportable but must instead be continually redefined. Generally speaking, however, overarching aims of critical literacy have related to achieving equity, raising the academic achievement of all students, and closely examining and critiquing relations of power in society.

Critical literacy must be viewed as having sprung forth from multicultural education (Banks, 1993; Banks & Banks, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Milner, 2010), which has historical roots in the Civil Rights Movement (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004, 2003; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Further, the genesis of multicultural education is situated in the efforts of reform initiated by African American scholars seeking a more just and equitable society. Since its origins in the 1960s, other groups of color and “minoritized” groups have found shelter (however temporary or tenuous) under the umbrella and built

upon the foundations of multicultural education in pursuit of justice and an end to oppressions.

The stated aims of multicultural education are in close alignment with the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy: believing in students' academic success, developing cultural competence, and refining a sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2009; 1995). Like any curriculum or approach to teaching and learning, critical literacy is unable to purport or claim political neutrality in its approach to teaching and learning (Shor, 1992; Stevens & Bean, 2007). It is important to note that critical literacy is not a static body of techniques or strategies, but rather, a philosophical and political approach to schooling (in-and-out of school) that advocates "reading between the lines and the pages" (Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 229).

At the heart of critical literacy is a cyclical process of examining complex issues such as power through reading, writing, reflection, and other actions (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004 b). Key features of critical *literacies* include its dynamism, adaptability, and emphasis on the local conditions in which it is practiced (Comber, 2001 b; Boatright, 2010; Rogers, 2002). It is counterproductive to think about critical literacy as an accumulation of concrete and specific skills with a repertoire of classic readings and exercises. That being said, however, critical literacy practices typically promote question-raising, searching for alternative (counter)narratives, juxtapositioning of texts, challenging/critiquing the authorial view, searching for silences or "underlying messages" and a deeper historical understanding of any given text (Yoon, Simpson, &

Haag, 2010; Boatright, 2010; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004b; Luke 2000). According to Luke (2000), the approach should allow for “critical perspective taking” that develops “languages for talking about language” (p. 4). Rather than accepting or receiving the “grand narrative” or prevailing wisdom, a critical literacy approach works to analyze the role of language in maintaining in-groups and out-groups in society (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

In her myth-busting paper, Lee (2011) explores seven myths related to the topic of critical literacy. Lee contends that pre-service teachers frequently hold the following beliefs about critical literacy: it is an instructional strategy; it is for high-ability students; it involves only reading and writing; it is critical thinking. As a result, understandings of critical literacy vary widely. Other impediments to accurate understandings of critical literacy relate to parent and administrator (as well as teacher) fear or suspicion of critical literacy as a subversive, “radical,” or “un-American” activity (White, 2009). As well, complying with state and federal testing and accountability measures and to local school boards has served to deter practitioners from taking on the approach.

In its attempt to use literacy to achieve social justice, critical literacy has been noted for its interrogation of “texts” including canonical literature (Appleman, 2009), popular culture and contemporary media (Dyson, 2001; 1997; Bigelow, 2001; McDaniel, 2006; Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999), advertising (Wood, Soares, & Watson, 2006), music and song-poems (Author, 2010), and social issues (immigration, homelessness, gender equity, GLBTQ rights) in children’s and

young adult literature (Ciardello, 2004; Boatright, 2010; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010), with a general focus of investigating power and its embeddedness in the language of such texts (Rogers, 2002; Michell, 2006; Wallowitz, 2008). While reluctantly recognized (Petrone & Bullard, 2012), critical literacy is not a universal remedy for success, nor is it “a neat and orderly endeavor that leads to a sense of triumph” (Petrone & Bullard, 2012, p. 126). Student resistance to the topic can be anticipated, must be viewed pedagogically, and should not be avoided or sidestepped (Vetter et al., 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Based on their review of 30 years of research, Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys (2002) synthesized and proposed a four dimensions model of critical literacy that requires text viewers to do the following: (1) disrupt the familiar and commonplace routines in text, (2) interrogate texts from a stance that seeks to understand multiple perspectives, (3) focus on the sociopolitical issues in texts (or absent from them), and (4) take action to promote social justice.

The first tenet, *disrupting the familiar*, can be enacted in a variety of literacy activities. For instance, in a junior English class, instead of reading works from the traditional canon of “American Literature,” which consists mostly of predominantly White males, a teacher may disrupt the familiar routine of reading about the “folklore” of Native Americans and instead “read” the work of contemporary Native American artists, musicians, film directors, and writers. Situating Native Americans or Indigenous First Peoples as living beings and not historical artifacts helps to unsettle traditional textbook

portrayals of Native Americans as relics from the past (Wills, 1994, 1996).

Interrogating texts from multiple perspectives, the second tenet, may necessitate providing students with opportunities to ask questions about whose perspectives are presented in a text and whose perspectives have been overlooked or dismissed. Such a stance may invite students to re-write or create scenes, song lyrics, advertisements, and poetry – their own and the work of professional writers – from any number of the perspectives that may have been neglected by an author or rhetor. Questions and activities under this tenet require students to ask, “Who benefits from this version of events?” and “How might someone else’s version differ?”

The third dimension of critical literacy involves teachers and students working together to attune to the *social and political issues* surrounding the composing and consumption of texts written within particular cultural and historical contexts. In addition to situating texts within a social and political context, students of critical literacy discern occasions when such features appear to be absent from texts. The dimension calls attention to social and political issues (e.g., environmentalism, globalization, ability awareness, gender roles and sexual “norms,” economic structures) that may be implicitly embedded in the works of writers and artists.

Lastly, *taking action to promote social justice*, is a crucial tenet of critical literacy. Actions to promote social justice can vary from writing an editorial to a local newspaper for the purpose of raising awareness to organizing a campaign or staging a non-violent and peaceful demonstration against injustice, unfairness, or exploitation in society (local

and/or globally). The action-component of critical literacy requires teachers to prepare students in identifying both the agents of oppression and the subtle and not-so-subtle actions of resistance. The goal here is not to overwhelm or immobilize students, but to convince students of their own agency in inducing change to extant uneven social structures.

The dimensions of the model are not meant to be stand-alone categories but must instead be seen as interrelated, and at times, overlapping in their packaging and their intent. Further, the dimensions should not be construed as a lock-and-step progression or prescription or a hierarchy of genres or scripts to be implemented with corresponding results. In other words, practices of critical literacy vary by teacher, by classroom, by school, and by “imposed” disciplinary boundaries (i.e., English, Social Studies, Science). For the purpose of this inquiry, two of the four dimensions serve as relevant categories that guide my analysis of the practices of two prospective teachers who saw themselves as embracing tenets of critical literacy. *Disrupting the familiar* and *focusing on social and political issues* serve as the two tenets elaborated upon here because of the richness of accounts observed.

Research Methodology

I draw on methods of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in this study to explore how critical literacy practices shaped my participants’ experiences as student teachers for several reasons. I found methods of narrative inquiry suitable to my research aims because, as Chubbuck (2004) notes, “teaching is best understood when

contextualized in the identity of the teacher in the context of the larger life story rather than being reduced to specific classroom behaviors” (p. 312). Further, narrative inquiry allows the researcher to travel in multiple dimensions of time and space. In narrative inquiry, it is permissible for the researcher to present data in ways that are not necessarily tidy, linear, or chronological. Consistent with Cole & Knowles (2001) and Mishler (1999), Bathmaker (2010) argues that narratives with moral import “reveal ambiguity rather than tidy it away ... ‘retain more of the ‘noise’ of real life than many other types of research’” (p. 2). This project set out to reveal and retain some of the “noise” that inevitably presents itself in lines of investigation with commitments to social justice and cultural understandings. Additionally, narrative inquiry must be viewed as relational – a mode of collecting research that values relationships with one’s participants. As such, narrative research offers uniquely valuable insights into a research participant’s ideas about events that have helped shape her life up to this point, and it allows participants to express her or his understandings of events in their own words (Goodson, 1980).

Data Generation and Collection

For this project, I gathered data from multiple sources. I recruited participants at the close of a 15-week course that I taught. After grade submission, I interviewed 11 prospective teachers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds over the course of three university semesters, on three occasions, at a location of their choosing. The semi-structured interview protocol encouraged participants to narrate their schooling experiences including enrollment in a teacher education program that espoused a core

philosophy in promotion of social justice through multicultural teaching (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) and critical reflection (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). In addition to individual interviews, seven participants took part in a two-hour focus group interview. I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews. Further, I retroactively collected course assignments from all participants. As the university supervisor to five of the secondary English student teachers, I also collected lesson plans and reflections on lessons created by the participants.

In addition to gathering documents, course materials, and participant narratives, I took descriptive and reflective field notes (Creswell, 2007) throughout the project. I drew on the notes during my teaching of the “Teaching Diverse Learners” course to describe, chronologically, the flow of class proceedings. Also, I reflected on key activities, patterns, and events in our class meetings. Further, I used a log to jot down descriptions, happenings, questions, and developments during lesson observations (for the five participants I supervised during the 2010-2011 school year) and to reflect on developing and emerging themes from the observed lessons. As well, I used a log to take notes prior, during, and after each interview with the participants. These notes focused on my impressions about how the interview proceeded, details about the length of and reactions to the interview, and conflicting or perplexing details that emerged within and across individual narratives.

Data Analyses

Through a multi-layered process of analyses of the prospective teacher narratives

(Creswell, 2007; Gomez, Walker, & Page, 2000; Saldaña, 2009), I utilized both inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. Inductively, I labeled recurring themes from stories that were narrated by the prospective teachers. For instance, themes related to talking about one's self as raced, classed, or gendered, dilemmas related to learning to teach in diverse settings, and developing cultural competencies emerged as categories in initial coding. Deductively, I connected themes from the professional literature related to Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys' (2002) dimensions of critical literacy and teaching for social justice within the stories narrated by the prospective teachers in this study.

Participants

The prospective teachers presented in this manuscript, all from Great Lakes University (GLU), a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Midwest, were student teachers during the 2010-2011 school year. Both participants in this study, two females, identified as White/European American, and both were in their early 20s. While I collected extensive data from a total of 5 secondary English participants, here I present the stories of two pre-service, secondary English teachers, Elaine Merchant and Lizzie O'Brien. I have chosen to select Elaine's and Lizzie's narratives here because they both experienced tensions or contradictions with self-confidence regarding their efforts to teach in critical ways. Both met what others might see as failure with resilience and persistence.

Context

According to the U.S. Census (2010), over 230,000 people populate the city of

Great Lakes, where the research was conducted. Approximately 79 % of the city identifies as White. The largest minority group, Asian Americans, account for 7.4 % of the total population, while the second largest minority group, African Americans, account for 7.3 % of the total population. Latino/as accounted for 6.8 % of the city's total population. American Indians or Alaskan Natives accounted for about 0.4 % of Great Lakes total population while persons reporting two or more races accounted for 3.1% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2010).

In contrast to the city of Great Lakes, the school district's demographics provide a different snapshot of the city's racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, as 50% of the district's 25,000 students are White, 24% are African American, 15 % are Hispanic American, 10 % Asian American, and 1% Native American (District Website, Introduction to the District). At variance with the diverse student body, teachers of color account for less than 10 % of the district's teachers and district administrators are predominantly White.

At Great Lakes University (GLU), approximately 85 % of the student body (over 30,000 students) identifies as White, 7% identify as Asian American, 5% identify as African American, 3% identify as Latino, and less than 1,000 students, about 1.5% of the total student body identify as Native American. Out of 31 students in a course I taught on diversity in the spring of 2010, 29 students identified as White/European American. Such numbers are reflective of previous and current cohort demographics in GLU's elementary and secondary education programs and its faculty, instructors, and

supervisors.

Students are expected to complete their major requirements before applying to the education program and they progress sequentially through the program in consecutive semesters with a cohort. I call attention to the scope and sequence of the program for the purpose of showcasing students' multiple encounters with GLU's programmatic values of inclusion, diversity, and teaching for social justice. Table 11 (below) details the scope and sequence of the program and highlights the three semesters during which this study was conducted.

Table 10.
Great Lakes University Scope and Sequence

Term	Semester One	Semester Two	Semester Three	Semester Four
Course Sequence	C&I: "Strategies for Inclusive Schooling" (3 cr.) Ed Pol: "School and Society" (3 cr.) Ed Psy: "Adolescent Development" (3 cr.) C&I: Practicum in content area (3 days/week) (3 cr.)	C&I: "Teaching Diverse Learners" (3 cr.) C&I: "Literacy Across the Curriculum" (3 cr.) Content-Methods course (3 cr.) C&I: Practicum and tutoring experience in content area (4	Ed Psy: "Human Abilities and Learning" (3 cr.) C&I: Content Methods Course (3 cr.) C&I: Technology Integration Course (3 credits) C&I: Half-time student-teaching (3 cr.)	C&I: Full-time student-teaching and seminar (12 cr.)

		days/week)		
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Note: GLU’s scope-and-sequence for a four-semester, full-time status, undergraduate secondary education degree. Semesters two, three, and four are in bold to indicate the three semesters of the study.

Over the past 20 years, the city and district of Great Lakes have changed significantly in terms of the diversity among race, ethnicity, immigrant, and multi-lingual populations. Changes in the city’s demographics can be attributed to a host of social and economic push-and-pull factors – factors that simultaneously “push” people from one place or region and factors that “pull” them to Great Lakes City. “Push” factors include economic instability, steady declines in manufacturing and industry, and the process of gentrification in areas outside of Great Lakes City (though Great Lakes is not immune from these same factors). “Pull” factors include the recreation, education, and employment opportunities available in Great Lakes City. Unfortunately, students of color in the district have been neglected during this time, as evidenced through its most recent graduation rates for African American males (approximately 50% graduate) and Latinos (fewer than 60% graduate).

Narratives of Critical Literacy

I next present findings from the narratives of the two pre-service English teachers, Elaine Merchant and Lizzie O’Brien. Each individual’s narrative highlights a different aspect of how these prospective teachers negotiated their experiences of growing up in predominantly White settings, attending college at a predominantly White institution (PWI), and learning to teach literacy with a focus on social justice. In each narrative, I

call attention to tenets of critical literacy that feature prominently in each teacher's narrative.

By assigning one tenet to each respective pre-service teacher, I realize that I reinforce at least two falsehoods: (1) that the critical literacy practices highlighted in this framework occur in isolation and (2) that each participant was the embodiment of one particular tenet of critical literacy. In reality, tenets of critical literacy interact with one another in dynamic and overlapping ways. At times they are complementary to one another and at times they may have the appearance of working in isolation. Further, although each of the two tenets is depicted using data from one participant, all of the secondary English participants in this study experimented with tenets of critical literacy with varying degrees of mindfulness. Lastly, while I present the tenets in an orderly fashion, my intention is not to reinforce a hierarchy or a formula that implies a progression from one tenet to the next.

Elaine Merchant: Disrupting the Familiar

At 23-years-old, Elaine Merchant, described her social class as middle to middle-upper class. Along with her older sister and younger brother, she attended public schools in a small, predominantly White, suburban village (population just under 10,000), Forestville, where her parents lived in separate homes after a prolonged divorce. Elaine's parents did not attain advanced degrees beyond their high school diplomas. Her father was a director in the medical field, while her mother held a position as a business analyst. Her soon-to-be-step-father was a school custodian and her step-mother worked in the

Information Technologies (IT) department at a financial institution.

Elaine describes herself as being “open-minded” and prides herself on her ability to get to know each and every one of the 256 students in her graduating class. Elaine explained that her school was “97 percent Caucasian” and she believed that she had a “sheltered” upbringing in a town with little racial or ethnic diversity and in schools that promoted a Eurocentric curriculum. Elaine had a reputation for befriending the few students of color and at least one exchange student who attended her school over the years.

Many of Elaine’s White male classmates in middle and secondary school were openly racist, and they derided her efforts to make friends with racial and cultural “others.” During middle school, Elaine recalls her White male peers saying, “You don’t want to hang out with them. That’s not somebody you want to hang out with.” Despite such intense pressure not to associate with students of color, Elaine remained friends with students of color and relations with her White peers, who eventually conceded to her inflexibility, saying, “Okay, fine, if that’s somebody you want to hang out with, we’ll continue to be friends with you.”

As a freshman at GLU, Elaine was placed in a dormitory on campus with a “random roommate.” Elaine explained,

Her name was Areanna Gonzalez ... I had no idea what to expect out of this random roommate. ... Everybody else I knew that came here got paired with somebody that was Caucasian, and everybody was like, ‘Oh, you’ve got

somebody that's Hispanic. They are from [an urban city]. You better watch yourself because you'll get stabbed.'

After hearing similar statements from “numerous people” from her hometown, Elaine became somewhat nervous as her townspeople spoke about violence, crime rates, and “bad stuff” associated with Elaine’s new roommate’s hometown. Elaine’s then-boyfriend was particularly vocal about his concerns regarding this new arrangement. Having attended school in Areanna’s hometown for a short time, he had firsthand knowledge of its potential for danger and peril. Out of concern for Elaine, he asked, “What kind of people is she gonna be bringing around?” Others from Elaine’s hometown eventually asked questions about Elaine’s roommate, “What’s she like? ... Does she speak any English even?” Despite the cautions from others and her feelings that the experience could be “scary”, Elaine stated that she wound up becoming “best friends” with Areanna. The two lived with each other as sophomores and parted ways when Elaine took a position as a Resident Assistant in the dorms during her junior and senior years.

During the semester in which I taught the course, “Teaching Diverse Learners,” Elaine’s friendship with Martina Hernandez, one of the two students of color in the class was evident to me as the instructor. While many of the White students in the class resisted the contributions of Martina by dismissing her questions and comments or by rolling their eyes and checking out when she made contributions to the class, Elaine described Martina as her “best friend” in the cohort and considered herself a confidant to Martina in and out of the classroom. According to Elaine, Martina would share her

frustrations and feelings as she negotiated her multiple social group identities in a class of predominantly White, middle class, and heterosexual (female) students from rural areas in the state.

Looking back on her college experience, Elaine explained,

I have come a long way in terms of this sheltered, ... Caucasian-centered life that I had when I was in school in [Forestville] ... it's like, 'Okay, I know how to communicate with different cultures and different whatever,' and I can't say that for all of the classmates that I am still friends with in [Forestville].

Many from her hometown express curiosity at how Elaine communicates and lives with international students in her role as a Resident Assistant, while also meeting the academic demands of college. Elaine laughs off her "closed-minded" associates from her hometown, expressing how she is making progress in terms of developing a critical consciousness, "I just have to really think about how am I relating to individuals, 'How can I best talk to and reach individuals whose identity is anything other than Caucasian, female, [and] middle class?'"

After meeting the GLU's teacher education program requirement to have completed at least two of her practice-teaching schools in a diverse setting (socioeconomic and/or racial diversity), Elaine's final two placements during the program were in suburban schools just outside of Great Lakes City. Elaine's full-time student teaching placement occurred in her hometown of Forestville. Similar to her half-time student teaching placement, Forestville was over 93% White according to the most

recent census (U.S. Census, 2010). Under 2,000 students were enrolled in grades 6-12 at the school. The school demographics at the time of this study were comparable to the demographics when Elaine attended schools: 87% White, 5% African American, 3.5% Asian American, 3% Latino/a. The district reported that 3% of its population received English Language Learner services, 18% of the student body qualified for reduced lunch, and approximately 15% of the population received Special Education programming (Forestville District Website, Facts at a Glance, 2008-2009).

In the seventh grade Forestville classroom where Elaine completed her full-time student teaching, she worked to *disrupt the familiar and commonplace routines* in texts and in schooling by carrying out a unit on “multicultural young adult literature” focused on East Asian geographies and cultures (Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese). The unit was part of her 7th grade team’s attempt to integrate what was being studied in social studies with what was happening in language arts. In preparation for the unit, Elaine chose several young adult novels that centered on characters with cultural backgrounds other than White/European, mostly immigrant characters from Laos, South Korea, China, and Japan. Elaine described each book to students who then chose the book they wanted to read and participated in “book clubs” with other classmates reading the same text.

In addition to selecting the texts that students would choose from, Elaine also prepared for the unit by enlisting several of the international students under her supervision as a Resident Assistant in the dormitory. She asked a total of four college students from Japan, South Korea, and China to video-record or write a narrative

overview of what middle school was like for them in their respective countries. Elaine then shared three videos and one narrative from the students in her dormitory with her seventh grade students, who had been reading about characters from their countries.

Elaine's students were shocked to learn that the student from South Korea had been labeled with a number, rather than his name, as a seventh grade student. Elaine described the experience of reading about "different" cultures in tandem with interviews from students from international contexts as being pivotal to her efforts at becoming a justice-oriented teacher. Prior to sharing the interviews with her seventh grade students in class, Elaine stated, "I didn't feel like a lot of the stuff that we were doing was really hitting home for them." She explained,

I felt like, a lot of it was, 'That's *those* people.' They still kind of had that 'othering' mentality. That, 'We're White suburbanites, living in rural [Midwestern state] with our farms and so we can't wrap our minds around bigger picture things.'

As a result of this attitude, Elaine sought ways to interrupt the flow of her students' limiting thinking. By showing her students the videos and narratives of international students whom she knew, Elaine felt like the kids were "starting to get it ... they are really understanding, 'Hey, there is a whole lot of difference in the world.' They are making those connections ... finding similarities and differences between [Western US culture and East Asian cultures]."

Despite "glaring differences," Elaine wanted her students to notice a number of

similarities her students were making between the multiple narratives they were being exposed to in the books and through the video presentations. While Elaine had gathered anecdotally that students were enjoying the books they were reading, she also felt that students responded to the interviews with more enthusiasm than the books. “It’s clear that they really enjoyed their books,” Elaine stated, “but, they are not grasping the cultural components that they need to be getting.” Elaine experienced frustration as a teacher when students were unable to name the country that the main character in their book was from. Elaine found herself trying to interrupt a number of students’ generalizations and well-intentioned-but-misguided comparisons. In her words, some students were “trying to making connections that [didn’t] exist.”

Immersing her students in learning about a diverse range of Eastern Asian cultures, Elaine observed that one of her few students of color seemed to gain confidence, interrupting misconceptions and misreadings from her White peers. Elaine was pleased with the assertiveness of the female student of color who interrupted a White male student’s conflation of the experiences of two of the international students’ narratives. Elaine recalled her student’s contention, “Absolutely not. That was Jay from South Korea, not Ray from China. Don’t mix those two up.” Elaine recalled that this “happy-go-lucky-girl” interrupted her White classmate with a smile on her face, but Elaine knew that the student was irritated at her White peer’s naïveté. “And to have her be the one to correct it, instead of me,” Elaine shared, “was really impactful for me.”

On another occasion in the same multicultural literature unit, Elaine described one

of her more “insensitive [White] student’s” mispronunciation of Laos, the country where the main character in the student’s book was from. On this occasion, similar to the previous example, a student of color in Elaine’s class, a Hmong female whose family immigrated from Laos and Thailand, corrected the male student by saying, “It’s pronounced Laos.” The male student resisted the correction, saying, “Lay-ose, Laos, whatever, what’s the difference anyway?” Elaine felt the White male student simply “poo-pooed it and threw it off” even though this pronunciation of Laos had been talked about “a million times” prior in the unit. Elaine came to the aid of her Hmong student, and in front of the class announced, “Wait a minute, you have people in this room that had the courage to correct you in the first place.” She continued, “I just said, ‘We practice respect in this classroom. And we pronounce things the way they need to be pronounced. Especially when you have somebody correcting you and telling you the correct pronunciation.’” The boy conceded and the lesson moved forward, but Elaine could see that that “it didn’t mean anything to him ... he didn’t necessarily learn anything about it. But, I was really proud of the individual that corrected him.”

Elaine saw value in encouraging students to interrupt ignorance and was learning that such work did not come without struggles. Elaine found herself trying to teach predominantly White students, many of whom were overtly racist. Elaine found herself confronted with the same “close-minded” attitudes and beliefs she experienced from her White peers while attending the same middle school. While Elaine created intentional opportunities for disrupting the familiar routines in curriculum and instruction, she also

learned that disrupting ignorance was not an endeavor left to the teacher alone. In this way, Elaine had formed an alliance with the few students of color in her class, who were engaged by her efforts and struggle. Refusing to be sidetracked by students who challenged her investment in multicultural literature, Elaine empowered several students in her class to share in the critical literacy tenet of *disrupting the commonplace*.

Lizzie O'Brien: Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues

Lizzie O'Brien, 22, grew up in a small, predominantly White city (90%), with a population around 40,000 (U. S. Census, 2010). Lizzie's history was replete with academic accomplishments: she was in her elementary school's Gifted and Talented Program; she was selected to travel and study abroad to Japan in middle school; she studied abroad in Spain during high school; she held leadership positions in various school organizations; and she was enrolled in numerous Honors and Advanced Placement courses in high school.

In addition to maintaining a rigorous academic schedule as a college student, Lizzie was a Resident Assistant in the dorms, a Writing Fellow for GLU's Writing Center and a course on race and education, and a committee member of the Student State Education Council. As a student in the "Teaching Diverse Learners" course I taught, Lizzie was engaged in the content, informed on many important issues and course readings, and genuinely thoughtful in her participation and contributions. Lizzie completed assignments with remarkable quality and she sought timely and specific feedback from teachers, supervisors, and cooperating teachers.

During the Spring 2010 when Lizzie was enrolled in the “Teaching Diverse Learners” course, each student in the class had an opportunity to be a “discussion leader” for a day. Typically, students worked in pairs on to create a plan for engaging their peers with the week’s readings and topics. Students signed up to lead discussion at the beginning of the semester, and in the days leading up to their session, emailed an electronic copy of an overview of their plan and questions.

Lizzie and another peer, Kelly Havens, signed up to lead discussion for the “Social Class and Education” week, about 9 weeks into the 15-week class. Collaboratively, Lizzie and Kelly created an outline for leading their peers in discussion on the topic of the intersection of social class and education. The outline included several activities and questions that Lizzie and Kelly hoped to facilitate. The implementation of the plan serves as a starting point for seeing *a focus on social and political issues* as a cornerstone to Lizzie’s pedagogy. The first activity, “Identifying Social Markers” (Barratt, 2011), was considered a warm-up activity. The discussion leaders handed out three slips of colored paper (Red, White, and Blue) to each student. The red slip represented debt and was meant to symbolize working and lower-socioeconomic classes, the white slip signified “middle class,” and the blue slip represented “the upper middle class.”

The “call-and-response” activity directed students to listen to the facilitators describe a range of topics (sports, clothing brands, cars, vacation destinations). After a particular topic was stated, students were asked to raise at least one slip (or more) based

on their perception of which social class with which they associated the activity, value, or recreation. This volley between the facilitators and students in the class lasted about five minutes. Students generally held up similar slips of paper, indicating similar, but not uniform, perceptions of social class markers.

Following the initial activity, Lizzie and Kelly directed their classmates get out of their seats and stand in a circle for the “Take a Step” Activity. Similar to the introductory activity, the facilitators made a statement, and their classmates responded. In this case, if the statement applied to them, they stepped into the circle for a moment, the group observed those who had stepped forward, and each individual returned back to their starting point. Lizzie and Kelly asked their peers to refrain from talking throughout the activity, to be honest, and to pay attention to their emotions throughout the activity. The activity began with questions statements such as: “Take a step forward if your father graduated from college before you started,” “Take a step forward if you have a relative who is an attorney, a doctor, or a professor,” “Take a step forward if you know how much your utility bill is each month,” and “Take a step forward if you will have student loan debt when you graduate from college.” Following the activity, the class circled and the facilitators guided participants to reflect upon their emotions and experiences with each activity. Lizzie and Kelly asked their peers to consider how social class was impacting real students in real schools.

Lizzie and Kelly’s facilitation of social class and education was one of the highlights of the student discussion leaders’ sessions. Indeed, several participants in the

study reflected upon the “Take a Step” activity as creating various forms of discomfort when they narrated experiences from the course that stood out. Because several participants brought up the “Take a Step” activity in their interviews, I was intentional about asking Lizzie to reflect on her experience of facilitating the activities. Lizzie explained that, in comparison to the other White peers in the class, both she and Kelly were “more working class than other students in [the course].”

The goals that Lizzie and Kelly hoped to impart through the activities they facilitated allowed those present to observe various forms of social, cultural, and economic privileges that existed within the group. The activity also allowed Lizzie to see many distinct ways in which she differed from the majority of her White peers in the GLU Teacher Education cohort. In particular, the “Take a Step” activity provided a visual for learning about who was paying for their college degree out of their own pocket and who was not. Whereas Lizzie and Kelly were paying for college on their own, the majority of their peers were not.

Lizzie explained that she was very conscious about her economic class, having filled out a FAFSA form on her own, knowing when her loans were due, and knowing how much to budget for her utility bill each month. In addition to her “class of origination,” she also explained that she was aware of the implications that teaching held for her “future class” standing: “I’m very class conscious in the sense that ... I think about paying for my education and going into a field that ... nationally is probably one of the lowest incomes with a college degree fields.”

Teaching for social justice, according to Lizzie, meant providing “an opportunity to challenge the mainstream ideas and teaching students to be more perceptive to that, to really start to think about things in a different way, and not just the same old, same old.” Lizzie referred to the importance of building rapport with students, seeing students as individuals, working one-on-one with them, and connecting with them through other means than the content or curriculum. Importantly, Lizzie also reflected on the importance of allowing students the space and time to “share their experiences” through multiple literacies (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) that allow them to make connections with school curriculum.

Her experiences student teaching influenced her understanding of the multiple ways that teaching for social justice could be enacted, but also how it could be avoided. Lizzie saw news and media as being necessary materials to foster student interest, student dialogue, and student engagement. This was reflected in various lessons that I observed in both the middle and high school settings. As the year progressed, Lizzie expressed awareness at how easily she began to integrate a number of different practices of teaching for social justice into her classes. While there was a time when Lizzie seemed overwhelmed at the prospect of teaching for justice, her student teaching experiences in Great Lakes City school setting altered her original reservations about being a White female with little experience working with racially and culturally diverse students. As Lizzie gained experience enacting a teaching philosophy that valued critical contemplation, she disclosed,

[T]eaching for social justice doesn't seem like a scary thing. It doesn't seem like something that we have to be perfect at. I think it's the everyday ways that you can incorporate it into your classroom. That makes it that much more accessible for me.

Lizzie repeated her message about “everyday ways” (greeting students at the desk, arranging desks and tables in circles, focusing on school issues) of incorporating social justice into the classroom near the end of the study, in the focus group interview. In the group interview, Lizzie was responding to a fellow student teacher struggling to see how to make social justice work in her math classroom.

Lizzie's awareness of inequities and injustices in schools is exhibited in various snapshots taken from Lizzie's written compositions, spoken life stories, and her teaching. She saw herself in alignment with GLU's stated mission that the future of teaching must be seen as a continuation of the struggle for equity in schools. While she did not arrive on campus with a desire to teach for social justice, by the end of her program, such a stance was at the forefront of her mind. In an interview, Lizzie stated, “I've felt like if you are not teaching for social justice, what are you teaching? Like, you are just teaching the same. You're not changing from what you were taught [years ago].”

At the same time that Lizzie was beginning to articulate her vision for equitable schools, as a student teacher, she experienced constraints to enacting a just pedagogy due to the power differentials that exist in the student-teacher and cooperating teacher dynamic. As a half-time student teacher at Great Lakes Middle School (GLMS) Lizzie's

cooperating teacher (CT) prevented Lizzie from taking some risks in her teaching by controlling the units Lizzie taught and by steering her clear of controversial issues. Approximately 600 students grade 6-8 were housed in Great Lakes Middle School (GLMS). Lizzie taught several sections of 8th grade Language Arts with an experienced White female (10-20 years of teaching). Demographically, the school was 22.5% African American, 14.5% Asian, nearly 12% Hispanic, less than 1% Native American, and 50% White. Nearly 40% of the students qualified for Free and Reduced lunch, 20% of the student body qualified for special education services, and a little over 10% of the students received English Language Learning support.

Lizzie's initial excitement upon learning that she would be teaching a "News" unit in the 8th grade classroom was hampered by her CT who selectively monitored and modified Lizzie's day-to-day plans on various occasions. What started as an opportunity to teach a unit on the news, Lizzie stated, turned into a unit on the newspaper. From there, Lizzie explained, "everything started to get more limited as I got closer to teaching it and it became, I was told ... that I really should stay away from political issues or very controversial things because that could be touchy subjects with middle schoolers."

Lizzie was frustrated by this decree, but she also realized that it would probably be in her best interests to go along with her CT in order to gain approval and to have a solid recommendation. As a result of this close monitoring/censorship of Lizzie's instructional unit, Lizzie felt that her opportunities to bring in aspects of critical literacy, multiculturalism, and teaching for social justice were limited, thus impacting her overall

assessment of her teaching:

I felt disappointed at the end of my unit because I wasn't able to make it as engaging. I mean ... what makes the news as interesting as it is, is the controversy and the things that you're not aware of that come up and it's like, 'Oh my goodness! How do I feel about this?'

Lizzie's teacher used various tactics to dissuade Lizzie from bringing in "controversial" material into the classroom. Her CT shared her concerns about students not feeling "safe" and marked Lizzie's teaching plans and materials as not "age-appropriate" for middle schoolers. Despite such setbacks, in her "Newspaper" unit, Lizzie felt a lesson on photojournalism and captioning allowed her to incorporate tenets of social justice, including a focus on power and reading between the lines, social and political issues, and disruption of the familiar in texts. In her lesson on captioning, Lizzie focused on the ways that texts manipulate readers/viewers into supporting or disapproving individuals, groups, or beliefs.

Lizzie felt that the photojournalism lesson was engaging to the students because it allowed students to consider multiple perspectives on an issue that they all had some familiarity with, Hurricane Katrina. In particular, Lizzie's students viewed two images from Hurricane Katrina. In each image, individuals could be seen holding garbage bags and wading through floodwaters. The caption for the image with two White people in it referred to "how they found or discovered food and bread from a local grocery store." Whereas, the image with an African American male had a caption that stated "how the

man had looted a grocery store.”

During that same lesson, Lizzie had her students critically view photos of OJ Simpson on the cover of *Newsweek*. Lizzie juxtaposed two images of Simpson, one that portrayed Simpson as looking “criminal” and the other photo which portrayed Simpson in a manner less like a “mug shot” than the digitally altered/darkened cover shot. In this setting, which Lizzie described as being deeply engaging for her students, her students were grappling with important questions about racial profiling – What is it? Who benefits from it? Who is harmed by it? What actions must be taken to disrupt the practice?

Lizzie recalled that her students noticed the racial bias right away. The event led to students raising important and critical questions about how even supposedly “objective” texts, such as newspapers and newsmagazines, have the capacity to contribute to institutional and cultural racism through stereotyping, silencing, and omission strategies frequently found in texts. Lizzie was aware that teachers and texts do not operate in a vacuum, but rather they labor in context filled with *social and political issues* that encourage and constrain various perspectives, narratives, and stories to be recognized as legitimate (or not).

Discussion

As Brandt (2009) has argued, in the global economy, literacy is a commodity that is withheld, rationed, and even managed for the purpose of sustaining profit or protecting an edge. English educators and teachers of Language Arts, act as “sponsors” of our students’ literacy acquisition and teaching. According to Brandt (2009), “sponsors of

literacy” can be seen as “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way” (p. 25). As brokers over this commodity, we have tremendous responsibility to equip students and future teachers to be firmly grounded in philosophies and “readers of the word and the world” (Macedo & Freire, 1987).

For this research, I set out to discover how/if two White/European American student teachers from a predominantly White institution were putting into practice and theorizing their roles as arbiters in the accumulation and regulation of the commodity of literacy. In addition to questions about dilemmas faced by White student teachers experimenting with critical literacy practices, I wanted to discover lessons to be learned from the efforts of the participants in this study. Positioning myself as a learner, I hoped to convey a sense of the dynamic tensions and assorted conditions in which pre-service English teachers enact and reflect upon teaching in ways that differed from traditional models of literacy that stress one right answer and decontextualized skills and strategies for reading and writing. I hope to have relayed an accurate depiction of some of the dilemmas to be anticipated in the early stages of enacting critical literacy tenets. Next, I return to the dimensions of critical literacy model and examine key lessons highlighted from each student teacher’s narrative.

Through Elaine Merhcant’s story, we see Elaine’s readiness to *disrupt the familiar* routines in her suburban hometown’s middle school by bringing in multicultural texts and first person accounts with the “Other.” Elaine chose to do her student teaching

in a place that was familiar to her. After all, she had attended the middle school less than a decade prior to her return there as a student teacher. However, Elaine was determined to provide her students with experiences that would disrupt the familiar, Eurocentric, male-dominated bend in the curriculum. In order to disrupt her students' "sheltered" schooling experience, Elaine chose multicultural texts for student book groups and she video-recorded five international students from her dorm as they narrated their schooling experiences in China, Japan, and South Korea. Through the process, Elaine discovered that texts (written and audiovisual) alone would not suffice to change some of her students' internalized dominance and unchecked privileges (Schmidt, 2005). While Elaine was prepared to "get critical" with her students, not all of her students were as inclined. Elaine learned that critical literacy, no matter how well planned, is not a cure-all for deeply engrained and reinforced racist and xenophobic ideologies.

Lizzie O'Brien faced a number of obstacles as a teacher with a commitment to social justice. While Lizzie's desire to *focus on social and political issues* was evident even before she began her year of student teaching, she encountered a CT who was timid about implementing an approach to teaching that emphasized questions of power in texts. Further, Lizzie felt the inevitable tension that accompanies a decidedly political approach to teaching students to critically read, write, think, and listen. Whereas her first CT reserved the last unit of the students' 8th grade Language Arts curriculum as "the social justice unit" (which occurred during the spring semester), Lizzie saw teaching for social justice as part of daily endeavor, not something earmarked for or postponed until the end

of the school year. As a “class-conscious” individual, Lizzie considered herself to have experience with and awareness of oppressions and inequities existent in our society. Lizzie sought ways to account for her multiple privileges and to approach her role as an instructor who had much to learn from her students. She recognized that many of her undue privileges also were potential impediments that stood in the way of establishing relationships with all of her students. From Lizzie’s narrative, we learn that critical literacy teaching, while powerful, is also at the margins of many teachers’ pedagogy. Embracing unpredictability, uncertainty, and tentativeness, in a society that imposes a “one right answer” approach to schooling, to choosing an occupation, and to conforming to gender and sex norms, is not yet and may never be a common or ordinary occurrence as Elaine and Lizzie both agreed.

Conclusion

It is not my intention here to valorize or romanticize the student teachers and their philosophies and practices of critical literacy in this paper. While my rendering here may appear to venerate each teacher, participants in this study were like all humans: replete with contradictions, vulnerable with insecurities, and seekers of truth and justice albeit comforted by fabrications and accomplished at deception. I have approached my process of writing each narrative with the dignity of each participant at the forefront. It would be to our advantage to keep in mind that we must look at the participants (and even the researcher) simultaneously as beacons of hope *and* flawed beings striving for a better a future (Apple, 1990).

Imperfect and incomplete as they are, the narratives presented reveal insights into the experiences of pre-service White teachers who are experimenting pedagogically with tenets of critical literacy. First off, the narratives provide a reminder that the process of teaching and learning does not take place in a vacuum, free from the constraints of social, political, economical, and cultural arrangements that provide structure to our society. In this way, teaching is a politicized act in that certain attitudes, values, norms, and ways of being are reinforced in school settings to favor, reward, and revere some dominant group while simultaneously marginalizing or omitting others by construing them as “at-risk,” “undeserving,” or “deficient.”

Secondly, a narrative inquiry into the teaching philosophies and practices of two White/European student teachers from a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Midwest holds implications for literacy educators. The study requires us to think relationally about the “invisible” forces that encourage and constrain certain and predictable pedagogies of teaching reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing. Power is embedded into the various and interplaying relationships teachers (and teacher educators) have with local, state, and federal bodies of oversight and testing, textbooks and curriculum, profiteers from the distribution of textbooks and curriculum, and the students, parents, school boards, and communities to whom educators are ultimately responsible. It should be noted as well that as the instructor and supervisor to the participants in this study and as the author of this piece, my relationship with each participant was not absent power dynamics. Furthermore, all of these relationships occur

in multiple and ever-changing contexts in which prominent and even unspoken identities and positionalities are interacting. We must consider the historical and institutional context, as well as each individual's (i.e., personal, cultural) sliding and intersecting signifiers and identity markers, throughout the unfolding of time and in various contexts.

Third, this study serves to guide and encourage literacy educators with commitments to social justice-oriented pedagogy to further explore the benefits (and risks) associated with putting into practice critical literacy practices in changing and evolving contexts. In this piece, I have attempted to showcase those practices from my work with each student teacher over the course of three semesters, but certainly it would be compelling to look more in-depth at each participant's narrative across these changing contexts, including the future.

This inquiry into the philosophy and practices of critical literacy in the hands of pre-service teachers contributes to conversations related to the development of a "critical consciousness" (Anyon, 2005) or "critical stance" (Scherff, 2012; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). A critical stance empowers teachers to see themselves as change agents. According to Scherff (2012), a critical stance is at the core of critical literacy and is defined by Lewison et al. (2008) as "the attitudes and dispositions we take on that enable us to become critically literate beings" (p. 13, in Scherff, 2012, p. 203). A critical stance requires conscious engagement, reflection on social inequities, inquiry, and a seeking of alternatives. In some ways, I have overlooked the participants' development of a critical stance in order to showcase practices and dilemmas.

Lastly, while the four dimensions framework has proven a useful analytical tool for my observations, critical literacy by its very essence rejects being reduced conceptually to four dimensions or four resources (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Critical literacy resists all claims to be bounded up as a commercially packaged formula. This paper has been both encouraged by and constrained by my use of the four dimensions. Indeed, the process of teaching and learning (and researching) abstract critical literacy tenets is far more complex than I have been able to portray here. While I have given minimal attention to some of the critical literacy practices that each participant in this study experimented with (e.g., juxtaposing texts, interrogating power through questions) in order to situate and contextualize each tenet as filtrated through individual participant's life and beginning teaching stories, I have overlooked many of the future and existing possibilities of further immersion into the concepts.

In this paper, I have examined the lives and stories of two prospective teachers from the Midwest learning to implement tenets of critical literacy into classrooms in which they were considered guests. As guests in public schools, it is important to remember that students mostly abided by the general rules that accompany a position of subordination (Britzman, 2003; Zeichner, 2009). Nonetheless, each student made conscious decisions to pursue a line of teaching that challenged and disrupted "business-as-usual" (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). Nearly all of the participants in this study were learning to teach in classrooms that were far more linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse than were their own schooling experiences. Instead of viewing this diversity as

an obstacle to overcome, the student teachers in this piece embraced opportunities to learn to teach in ways that confronted and challenged prevailing narratives about students of color, low income, and English Language Learners as deficient or “at-risk” learners in need of basic skills. Each student teacher, over the course of this study, grew exponentially in terms of their understanding about the importance of justice-oriented teaching and the role of critical literacy in the language arts classroom. I have attempted to showcase various risks taken by each student teacher. Also, I have given prominence to key scenes of critical literacy in action in order to foreground explicit and latent critical literacy practices. This work should be seen as a contribution, and not a roadmap, for pre-service teachers and literacy educators committed to developing “critical stance” (Scherff, 2012; Heffernan & Lewison, 2009; McDaniel, 2004) projects aimed at questioning, challenging, and transforming power in language.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I situated discourses of Whiteness, equity traps, and critical literacy as concepts relevant to the study of teacher education in predominantly white settings. To study these concepts, I utilized methods of narrative inquiry to guide my research. In the first article of the dissertation (Chapter Two), I explored the discourses of Whiteness that were (re)circulating in the stories narrated by a white preservice secondary mathematics teacher. Using literature from Critical White Studies, I provided analyses of the discursive productions of individualism, self-defense, and “Whiteness as a liability” as circulating and recirculating in the teaching and learning experiences of Griffin O’Connor. In Chapter Three, I identified “equity traps,” or impediments to educational equity, as readily identifiable discourses circulating in individual narratives and across the collective narratives. I argued that these discourses are culturally and institutionally embedded in U.S. society. In addition to naming various equity traps, I outlined the task(s) of interrupting these discourses as an initiative for teacher education programs. In Chapter Four, I highlighted the critical literacy practices of two preservice secondary English teachers, detailing the encouragements and constraints experienced by the preservice secondary English teachers as they drew upon literacy practices to disrupt familiar routines in schools and texts and to focus on social and political issues in (or absent from) texts.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I aim to review a number of the key

arguments outlined in this dissertation. After highlighting key conceptual and methodological insights from the research and outlining the affordances and constraints of the format of this dissertation, I present a plan for guiding future action.

Through a close study of white preservice secondary teachers' life history narratives, this study has unearthed a number of important arguments that bear repeating. For starters, this study begins with the understanding that race is a socially and historically constructed concept. Race is not a biological or a genetic fact. The concept has emerged from and continues to evolve in social, political, historical, and cultural relations and contexts. Though the concept is not "real" in the "scientific" sense (e.g., measurable, quantifiable, verifiable), this is not to imply that the concept of race therefore does not manifest itself in material ways. Individual and collective group investments in the socially constructed category of race do exert observable phenomena: discourses, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. These phenomena can be investigated using tools of narrative inquiry and sociocultural perspectives on literacy.

This study draws upon a qualitatively empirical methodology related to narrative inquiry. As a method of collecting data, narrative inquiry values the stories that people tell about their lives as sources of data. Accordingly, stories serve multiple purposes: (1) Stories help us to make meaning of our lives, (2) Stories reveal identities, and (3) Stories provide direction for future action. I have drawn upon methods of narrative inquiry to better understand the stories that white preservice secondary teachers tell about their ongoing understandings of race, including their Whiteness, in teaching and learning

settings. Collecting and analyzing the stories told by white preservice secondary teachers has provided insight into the socialization process of whites in the United States, particularly in the Midwest state where this research was conducted. The focus on Whiteness as an identity marker also has illuminated opportunities for interrupting pervasive and uncritical discourses that perpetuate status quo relations and investments that uphold white supremacy.

For this study, Whiteness has been conceived as a “real” phenomenon viable for study, but it is important to stress an important argument highlighted in this paper: The category of White and investments in Whiteness are not unchanging or monolithic constructs. Whiteness intersects with other identity markers (social class, gender, able-bodiedness, sexual preference) in dynamic and at times, unpredictable and nuanced ways. While I have examined Whiteness as represented in the talk and text of this study’s research participants, it is important to note that the concept of Whiteness is fungible. Its ability to adapt, change, and retain power (including an inequitable distribution of social resources) over time, has served to create, recreate, and protect its borders and interests across time and contexts (both local and global).

Throughout this study, a number of powerful and pervasive discourses of Whiteness were observed as circulating and recirculating in the stories narrated by white preservice secondary teachers. Though there is a danger in highlighting these discourses (e.g., they frequently reinforce racist beliefs and uncritical assumptions), I have argued that only by highlighting these discourses do teacher education programs in

predominantly white settings stand a chance at interrupting them.

Discourses of Whiteness exist in individual bodies and may be represented textually. While tempting to view discourses of Whiteness in individual terms (as existing only in individuals), we must situate these discourses as constructed within the social and institutional fabric of U. S. society. In other words, while enticing to view the individuals represented in this study as embodying particular detrimental discourses to equity and social justice, I have argued that we must not lose sight of the fact that the individual discourses highlighted did not originate in the participants. Rather, such discourses must be seen as produced and reproduced in the social, cultural, and institutional nebula of the United States. It has not been my intention to “shame” or pedestalize any particular individual in this study; rather, I have sought to excerpt individual discourses or “equity traps” that derive their power from the social, cultural, and institutional structures in which they are embedded.

Another important point I have emphasized in this study relates to “working through Whiteness” (Cabrera, 2012). I have argued that working through Whiteness is a process and not an end point. The process varies and is likely to result in a host of contradictions and complexities in individual (micro) and group (macro) case studies. While tempting to offer a ready-made solution to whites, I have stressed the significance of understanding that the work of disrupting Whiteness is a lifelong endeavor. There are no rewards or congratulations for one’s participation in the work. This is not to suggest that taking inventory of the effects of Whiteness in one’s life is a futile exercise, rather,

such a point serves to acknowledge that this kind of work is challenging, strenuous, and unfinished. In the current social arrangements, only whites have the choice to dismiss or turn their back to issues of race, privilege, and power when the port waters get turbulent. In fact, it is to their advantage to do so. For groups that have been historically minoritized, however, no such option exists if change is the intended outcome.

In addition to identifying and proposing ideas for interrupting detrimental discourses of Whiteness and equity traps, I have situated critical literacy as a tool for disrupting the status quo. Though perhaps understated in this paper, it is my contention that critical literacy can be used as a tool to focus on and disrupt various manifestations of Whiteness (discourse of egalitarianism, individualism, meritocracy) in curricular and instructional materials. As an ideological model of literacy (Street, 1995), critical literacy is a philosophical and political approach to teaching reading and writing. Critical literacy practices may offer important contributions to social justice efforts, but the philosophies and practices of critical literacy must not be seen as universal remedy for social injustice. For this study, I have argued that critical literacy practices and pedagogies vary and must be situated in their social, cultural, and political contexts.

At the same time I have recognized critical literacy as a potential tool for disrupting the status quo, I have not overlooked that the structure(s) of schooling and the imbalance(s) of power (cooperating teacher/student teacher; administrator/teacher; teacher/student) exert a powerful force on individual agents in school settings. Further, I have suggested that institutional structures do not necessarily determine the actions of

individual agents, though such structures certainly exert profound influence.

Lastly, for this study, I have situated white preservice secondary teachers as active learners on the path to developing and refining a sociopolitical consciousness with regard to teaching and learning in public schools. In other words, it has not been my intention to portray white preservice secondary teachers as resistant or deficient in their abilities to becoming culturally relevant teachers. Participants in this study were at a variety of junctures related to developing a sociopolitical consciousness. However nuanced, all participants saw themselves as teachers developing commitments to social justice and social change. All developed insights into their role as an individual agent navigating structures of power, knowledge, and politics.

Future Directions for Research

For this dissertation, I have focused my analyses on a few pervasive discourses of Whiteness, scratching the surface of the proverbial “tip of the iceberg”. I do not claim to have catalogued and labeled an exhaustive list of the many discourses of Whiteness that have existed historically or in (re)circulation in the present moment. Further, I have narrowed my investigation into these discourses through a study of their circulation and recirculation in white preservice secondary teachers, all from the same cohort, from the same university, from similar geographic, social class, and cultural backgrounds. That is, this work must be seen as a small sampling of a highly selective cross-section of participants from one large predominantly white institution in the Midwest. It has not been my intention to generalize the results of this study to *all* white people (or even all

white teachers) in the U.S. who identify with the socially constructed racial group “White” due to the pigmentation of their skin.

Given the evolving and transformative nature of discourses, important work remains to continue to inventory, analyze, and take action against the “new” manifestations of discourses of Whiteness as they circulate and re-circulate in individuals and local and global societies. For instance, as I move forward with data collected for this study, important work remains in terms of seeking out insights into the “varieties of Whiteness” that exist in light of the socially constructed and intersecting categories of social class, gender, able-bodiedness, and ethnicity among the participants. In addition, this study has focused primarily on the attitudes and beliefs of white preservice secondary teachers. I might broaden this study to collect life history narratives from a variety of teachers (K-12) and backgrounds (e.g., content area, specialists, race, experience) in future research.

Additionally, I have studied Whiteness as limited to the discourse (oral and textual) of white preservice secondary teachers. The ubiquity and pervasiveness of Whiteness, however, extends far beyond a limited study of spoken (and written) discourse of individual white preservice secondary teachers. Promising future areas for investigating the status of Whiteness may include young adult literature, textbooks, popular culture and media (e.g., television, film, media, music), and classroom observations of teachers from various grade levels and sociopolitical contexts. Another important avenue for future research investigating Whiteness relates to studying and

challenging the role of Whiteness in my own worldviews, further exploring the ideologies of Whiteness (e.g., individualism, competition, internalized dominance, sense of entitlement) and their impact(s) as they operate in my day-to-day teaching and learning as an anti-racist educator. As Goodman (2011) argues, “It is important to stay cognizant about how our social locations impact us and our relationships” (p. 172).

DiAngelo (2012) argues, “Challenging [racism] requires ongoing and sustained study and practice, and is not accomplished solely through good intentions, open-mindedness, taking a class, or reading a book” (p. 259). In addition to humility, such work requires the willingness to continue to unlearn and re-learn, to be discomfited and to embrace uncertainty (and not knowing) in the intense, personal and collective ongoing work of anti-racism. In this study, I have gained valuable information about how a number of white preservice secondary teachers have responded to extended conversations about their racial identities and accompanying privileges. For many in this study, such an invitation was the first of its kind and followed a progression of talking about race and racism in U.S. society writ large and as experienced throughout meeting the institutional requirements of the teacher education program at GLU. It would be naïve for me to suggest or claim that these initial conversations led to dramatic or readily measurable outcomes in the lives of the participants. While an initial step into the examination of the “taken-for-granted status” of Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2012, p. 249), I must continue the process of learning by seeking out allies and cross-racial relationships that continue to inform teaching and learning practices and philosophies. I must remain willing to make

mistakes. They are likely to occur and they likely will offer valuable experiences that provide opportunities to learn and grow. At the same time, however, I recognize the importance of limiting “the damage to the people and causes [I] seek to support” (Goodman, 2011, p. 161).

In addition to studying a variety of discourses of Whiteness (including equity traps), this dissertation also situated key principles of critical literacy as important to tenets for contributing to efforts aimed at teaching for social justice. I situated critical literacy in this dissertation as a social, cultural, and political philosophy and practice aimed at disrupting familiar and commonplace routines in texts and social relationships in society. I argued that critical literacy offered white preservice secondary English teachers a means for action and reflection – praxis – to disrupt the status quo in terms of school routines and to focus on social and political issues embedded (explicitly and implicitly) in texts. Critical literacy, I argued, is *a* way for teachers (preservice and experienced teachers) to prepare themselves and their students to “read and write the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987) as active agents rather than passive objects (or victims) of a schooling system that demands and rewards obedience and conformity.

In my inquiry into critical literacy in this paper, I focused on the experiences and reflections of two white preservice secondary English participants. Certainly, critical literacy is not limited to the field of English or Language Arts. That is, critical literacy must be seen as a multidisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. Future research investigating the practice(s) and reflection(s) of preservice and inservice teachers *doing*

critical literacy from a variety of “traditional” school fields (e.g., Social Studies, Mathematics, Science) and in interdisciplinary contexts is warranted. In addition to learning from white preservice secondary teachers’ experiences of learning to teach and learn in ways critical of the status quo, I seek opportunities in future research to continue to learn from the experiences of teachers from diverse backgrounds (e.g., preservice and inservice teachers committed to social change). Further, I seek opportunities to learn from students in K-12 settings who negotiate a variety of identities in in-school and out-of-school contexts with understandings of and dispositions compatible with critical literacies.

In future research, the interrelated Bourdieusian constructs of habitus, field, and capital may provide crucial insight and clarity into the experiences of enactment (or not) of critical literacy pedagogies across multiple and varied contexts, or fields. Thompson (2003) describes habitus as “a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways” (J. Thompson, 2003, p. 12, italics in original). The habitus can be said to provide individuals with a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 67), or the awareness and social and cognitive faculties to “fit in” appropriately without being detected as an “impostor”. These embodied ways of being, dispositions, perceptions, and attitudes appear as “natural” without necessarily being consciously synchronized or coordinated.

The field is a metaphorical and physical site whereby particular forms of capital (cultural, economic, and symbolic) are converted (or not) into each other. It is the “*relation between* the habitus ... and the specific social contexts or ‘fields’ within which

individuals act” (Thompson, 2003, p. 14, italics in original) that provides insight into the ways of being and practices of individual actors, or agents, in specific sociopolitical settings. At times, the habitus and a field result in “compatibility” or “congruency”, and at other times, there will be less harmony or incongruity between the two structuring notions. In Bourdieu’s work, the constructs of social, cultural, and scholastic forms of capital provide an orientation to the symbolic marketplace that exists in social contexts whereby particular groups and individuals from differing backgrounds accrue access to (or are denied access to) opportunities on the basis of an inheritance of dispositions, practices, and refinements that allow them to navigate social settings in ways that seem “natural” (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999; Collin, 2012). A focus on the “‘innovative’ capacity of habitus” (Swartz, 1997, p. 102) is likely to reveal insights into opportunities, challenges, and constraints confronted by teachers in situated contexts.

A Word on the Format

As noted in the introductory chapter, this manuscript has not been prepared as a traditional, five chapter dissertation (Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Results, Conclusions). Working outside the traditional boundaries of the dissertation genre, I have instead crafted three manuscripts targeted for specific scholarly journals. I will touch briefly on the affordances and constraints of working outside the traditional dissertation in the remaining paragraphs.

On the affordance side, working outside of the traditional dissertation has provided me with relevant practice of creating authentic texts with a peer audience in

mind. As a result of crafting three separate, though inter-related texts, I have gained valuable rehearsal time and techniques for a future of publishing in peer-review scholarly journals. Second, the creation of three stand-alone manuscripts in lieu of one traditional dissertation manuscript has challenged me to build an argument in an accessible and economized way. Instead of building an argument over the course of one book, each manuscript required a concise argument to be introduced, situated, and analyzed in a scholarly manner. Lastly, the three manuscript format for this dissertation afforded me the freedom to try on multiple theoretical frameworks. This flexibility provided opportunities to examine and explore the data in ways that may not have been possible had I been wedded to one particular framework.

While I have outlined a few of the affordances of the manuscript format, I also must analyze a few of the constraints to this work in contrast to the traditional dissertation format. First, writing three stand-alone manuscripts, to some extent, has constrained a more robust deliberation on the tensions experienced as a researcher navigating a host of social, cultural, political, moral, and ethical boundaries. While I have not altogether overlooked these tensions (e.g., my relationship as a teacher to the participants; my racial biography or history; aspects and contradictions of my work in relation to my own contributions to whiteness, maleness, and middle classness; social and political ramifications for race treason, etc.) the discussion has been limited to some extent by the genre of the manuscript dissertation. Secondly, having written the non-traditional (manuscript) dissertation, my ability to advise future dissertation projects in

the traditional dissertation genre is limited, though not altogether compromised, by my (non-traditional) experience. Finally, the process of writing for publication (manuscript dissertation) has limited the depth to which I have been able to portray my understanding(s) of the theoretical framework(s), literature reviewed, and research methodology and data analyses processes.

Final Thoughts

This inquiry study began, like many academic pursuits, with self-interest. I wanted to discover more about a subject that I had rarely and uncritically reflected upon as a practicing white teacher in a predominantly white and working-class setting, teaching out of an American Literature textbook which reflected predominantly white, middle class, (male) perspectives. In order to learn more about the “normalcy” of Whiteness, I had to develop a number of conceptual lenses that would bring into focus and illuminate a concept that had the effect/appearance of being overlooked and undertheorized in my lived experiences. In addition to drawing upon social identity stage frameworks to table Whiteness, I delved into perspectives on language and identity that allowed for analyses of the social, cultural, and historical production and reproductions of relations of power, situated here as discourses of Whiteness and equity traps.

Throughout the process of learning, I also had to unlearn a number of assumptions, biases, and prejudices I had subscribed to as a part of my socialization into a U.S. society and the reinforced dominant myths related to the historical and existing relations between power and privilege in society. This work required and began with

critical self-examination and reflection and led to my gathering of additional insights into the “taboo” topics of power, white privilege, and social justice in the academic literature. In addition to taking an inventory of past teaching and learning experiences, observing and interrupting dominance in general and Whiteness specifically begins anew each day in the process of participating in socially, culturally, and historically situated literacy practices that maintain, disrupt, and/or transform inequities and injustices.

Inquiring into the role of power and dominance in the process of socialization into the teaching profession led to inquiring about the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, knowledges, and dispositions of white preservice secondary teachers. These white preservice teachers were (mostly) beginning to articulate commitments to social justice pedagogies and culturally relevant teaching in the context of their previous schooling experiences and present teacher education program. In order to improve my own future teaching as an anti-racist and justice oriented teacher educator, I sought to learn from the stories and experiences of white preservice secondary teachers who had been students in a class I instructed. Through their stories, the preservice teachers have provided me with insights that will inform future teaching and learning experiences (e.g., course readings, writing exercises, assignments, experiences). Importantly, the inquiry study participants have provided insight that will guide future research endeavors. I have learned a great deal from their commitment to interview research and the sacrifices made in order to accommodate the requirements and demands of the qualitative research genres of

narrative inquiry and interviewing. I am indebted to the participants for their spoken words and stories.

The preservice teacher participants' words and stories provided for crucial insights into the historical (re)production of discourses and power. Further, the stories serve to instruct future teaching in predominantly white settings in the fields of literacy and education. An awareness of the discourses of Whiteness, including equity traps, however, is not an end, but a beginning to a process of disrupting other familiar socialized patterns and interactions that contribute to inequities and injustices. As a result of recording, cataloging, analyzing, and (re)constructing stories from white preservice secondary teachers on their understandings of power dynamics in educational settings, I have learned to embody and employ tenets of critical literacy and to continue, in praxis, to develop and refine a sociopolitical consciousness that recognizes power in micro (individual) and macro (institutional) settings and contexts.

While a display and an analysis of individual white preservice secondary teachers' narratives cannot be expected to accomplish a complete dismantling of the current social, cultural, and material institutionalization of Whiteness, our responses to the existence of these pervasive discourses lay the groundwork for additional steps necessary to disrupt social and educational inequities. Whiteness, to some extent, has maintained its power by remaining undefined, the "absent presence" of all interactions, understandings, and interpretations. Throughout this study, I have attempted to make the absence visible in ways that require future action(s) for teacher educators and future

teachers. I have offered critical literacy as a project literacy educators may find relevant to disrupting investments in Whiteness and to pursuing teaching aimed at eliminating inequities and achieving social justice.

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Appendix A.1

Sample of Interview Protocol Questions

Interview 1: Background/Family (May/June 2010)

- Please tell me where you were born and in what year you were born.
- Please tell me the names of your parents and what they do for work.
- Please tell me the names and ages of your siblings and what their occupations are today.
- What were some important characteristics of your neighborhood(s) growing up
- What were some routines?
- Did your family attend religious ceremonies or church activities?
- If you were aware of your family's SES, how were you aware of this?
- What, if any challenges, did you or your family face with discrimination of any kind – of racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, or discrimination related to their sexual orientation?
- Did you have friends or family members of other races growing up?
- Who (or what) would you say has had an influence on you and your beliefs about race?
- How would you define racism?
- Sometimes people act in ways that are interpreted as “racist.” Have the ways you have acted ever been interpreted as racist? Please describe.
- When did you first realize you were white?
- Do you think of yourself in terms of any nationality? What? Do you think of yourself in terms of any color or race?
- Can you remember a time when you were treated differently because of your whiteness? What happened?
- As a child, were you exposed to situations where people from different social classes mixed? Please explain the circumstances.
- Growing up, how did your identity as a white, gendered person affect your relationships with people from other races, genders, and/or social backgrounds?
- How were you perceived by people in your community as a white person?
- What multicultural issues are important to you?
- Can you think of a time you helped increase someone's multicultural awareness? How did it feel?
- Are you proud to be white today? Do you think being white has made any difference in your life?
- What are your thoughts on Affirmative Action?
- Can you describe any relevant, salient, or critical moments from our 537 class this past semester? What were some important readings, conversations, activities, discussions, or disagreements that you can recall? Why do think these things stand out?

Appendix A.2

Interview 2: Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Schooling (Winter 2010/2011)

- What were you like as a student? Describe your strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies
- What do you remember about reading or writing activities in school?
- How would you describe your peer make-up throughout schooling?
- How would you describe the diversity of the students and teachers in your school district?
- Describe some favorable memories from your early years of schooling. What were some of the challenges you faced?
- How do you describe your adolescent and young adult years in school? How would you categorize your life in elementary and middle school compared to high school?
- Did you ever observe teachers or students treating students of color as different from white students?
- Do recall being instructed in or learning about any languages other than English in your schooling?
- Did you ever learn about or experience white privilege in school?
- How did multiculturalism, or the promotion of understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of cultural diversity, present itself in your schools' curriculum? Please describe the efforts made your teachers, schools.
- In what ways did you examine social justice, injustice, culture, and/or diversity in the world or your community as a student in school?
- Are there any other experiences from your schooling years that seem pertinent to this study on whiteness? Can you elaborate?

College Experience (Winter 2010/2011)

- What factors went into your decision to attend this university?
- Why did you want to become a teacher? When did you discover your interest in becoming a teacher?
- How have you experienced diversity on campus? Have your experiences been encouraged or constrained?
- Are you involved in any organizations or extra-curriculars on campus? How are the topics of race, privilege, or social justice discussed or talked about?
- As a student at UW, have you observed – in dormitories, in classrooms, on campus - instances of injustice that you would attribute to a person's race or class?
- Describe any experiences in which your race or social class was given prominence or emphasized as privileged.
- How has your background as a white person impacted your experience as a college student at UW? Do you think you have benefitted from or been constrained in any way(s) due to your whiteness?
- How would you describe your identity as a student at this university? How has this identity developed over the past few years?

Appendix A.3

Interview 3: Teacher Education (Spring 2011)

- How would you describe the evolution of your relationship(s) to your peers in your cohort? In what ways do you consider yourself different from or similar to your peers?
- In what ways have you developed an awareness as a prospective teacher who believes in teaching for social justice?
- How has your coursework or fieldwork influenced your thinking about social justice? Can you elaborate upon what you mean or provide an example?
- Have you witnessed schools or teachers interrupting injustice(s)? What have you observed in schools related to social justice?
- Think back to an experience as a tutor, practicum, or student teacher. Can you describe a lesson or time in which you intentionally tried to impress upon students the importance of cultural differences? Were you successful or not in terms of your intended outcomes?
- What experiences or critical moments have had the most significant impact on how you think of yourself and your role as multicultural, antiracist, socially just-minded practitioner?
- In what ways have you had to question your own experiences – in terms of race and class – as a prospective teacher?
- What does “teaching for social justice” mean to you? How does it play into (or not) your future role as a teacher?
- What kind of teacher are you working to become?
- How do you teach? Describe a typical lesson you present.
- What are your future goals as a teacher or a person?
- Do you think whiteness, or any teacher’s race, plays a role in the methods they use to teach their class, the curriculum, or their effectiveness with difference populations?
- What have you learned about yourself and your whiteness through your experiences in the teacher education program?
- Will this information be useful to your future teaching?
- How has participating in these interviews impacted your thinking about race and class, if at all?

Endnotes

¹ All proper nouns, names of individuals, and institutions are pseudonyms.