

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

How does it feel to be a problem?

W.E.B Dubois opens his 1903 text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, with the rhetorical question, “How does it feel to be a problem?” Dubois informs white America that he isn’t “a problem,” nor is there a “Negro problem” in America. According to Dubois, the only problem that persists is the perception and treatment of the Negro because of the color of his skin. Dubois likens the color of Negro skin to a veil because it keeps him and other Negroes “shut out from the rest of the world” (pg. 2). It divides the Negro from white American society because white Americans can’t see past the Negro’s veil. As a result, the Negro isn’t extended the same opportunities nor granted the same liberties as his white counterparts.

I open the chapter with the quote from Dubois because today, in 2005, the issues that Dubois raised 100 years ago are still relevant today. African Americans continue to be perceived and treated as “problems” in this country, especially in the area of education. As a matter of fact, any group outside the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1995) is categorized as “other” and thus is deemed a “problem.” In addition to African Americans, this group has grown to include: the disabled, Latino(a)s, the poor, and people who speak English as a second language. Again, the problem does not rest in skin color, lack of wealth, or knowledge of the English language, but with how these individuals are perceived and treated because of their skin color, ethnicity, and poverty. Examples of these misconceptions include the overrepresentation of minority students in special education programs (Nieto, 2000) and the under representation of these same groups in accelerated programs of study. Often times, academic failure is attributed to these

students' ethnicity, social positioning, or the "cultural disjunctures" between home and school rather than the "structured inequalities" of schools (Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Irvine and York, 1993). Thus, when cultural differences do not coincide with white hegemonic standards, they are interpreted as "deficits" to be overcome (Villegas and Lucas, 2002) through understanding diversity and tolerance.

Viewing children of color and poor children from what Lucas and Villegas call a "deficit frame of reference" inhibits cross cultural understanding and prevents teachers from being able to effectively interact with diverse students (Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Oddly enough, from this "deficit frame of reference" comes saving discourses that include "closing the achievement gap" in order to prevent minority students from being "left behind." Educational practitioners must be careful of the language they use both explicitly and implicitly while discussing cultural difference and working across those differences. Otherwise, cultural difference will continue to be perceived as a problem that needs to be fixed. For example, conferences such as "*Addressing Diversity to Close the Achievement Gap*" implicitly suggest that diversity is some type of issue that must be "dealt with" in order to close the achievement gap. This discourse that is supposed to "save" and/or "help" poor and minority students is doing just the opposite. This language signifies that the child has to be fixed in order to achieve academic success and reinforces the "deficit frame of reference." Education professionals will continue to educate diverse students within a deficit frame of reference unless there is a change in discourse. Until then, poor and minority students will continue to be perceived and treated as "problems" and the gap in achievement will continue to widen as their white peers continue to leave them behind.

Teacher education has turned to multicultural education principles as a means of addressing the “diversity as deficit” perception of new teachers who are discomforted by culturally diverse students. A major challenge in teacher education has been providing sufficient experiences inside and outside of the classroom to develop within their new teachers dispositions conducive to working in diverse settings.

In an attempt to understand the types of experiences needed to evoke the qualities necessary for working effectively with diverse students, it is imperative to talk to effective teachers of diverse students about their pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1996). The focus of this research project is to engage in such inquiry in order to understand the experiences that impacted these teachers’ multicultural development, which in turn helped them resist the “deficit frame of reference” in regards to working with children who are not from the “culture of power.” The ultimate goal of this research is to find a way to facilitate teachers’ understanding of difference so the veil [that Dubois wrote about 100 years ago] is finally removed so no one is perceived as a “problem.”

Understanding the research problem

In upcoming years, American classrooms will see a dramatic change in their cultural composition. By 2010, children of color will represent almost half of the student population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). While public schools continue to grow with students from diverse racial and linguistic backgrounds, the majority of those in teacher preparation programs are white and middle class (AATE, 1999; Cruz, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Coballes-Vega, 1992). In addition, recent studies indicate that preservice teachers feel unprepared to work with culturally diverse students, due to the behavioral and cultural differences portrayed by the students (Martin, 1997; Cabello and Burnstein,

1995; Rodriguez and Sjostorm, 1995). Most of these preservice teachers feel ill equipped for the diversity of the 21st century classroom and less than 9% expressed an interest in working with culturally diverse students (Gordon, 2000; Cannella & Reiff, 1994; AATE, 1990). Based upon this surmise, it is apparent that future teachers must be prepared to work with diverse children in order to become effective teachers.

Multicultural education principles have been incorporated into teacher education curriculum in order to provide beginning teachers with the preparation they need to successfully work with diverse students. Teacher educators have included multicultural content in their course work and provided field experiences in their syllabi to facilitate preservice teachers' multicultural competencies. However, the literature indicated isolated courses and field experiences do not significantly impact beginning teachers' knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles of multicultural education: institutional change and educational equality and empowerment (Sleeter, 2001; Xu, 2000; Goodwin, 1997; Banks, 1995). The literature also informs us that multicultural teacher education must be reconceptualized in organizational structure (Irvine, 2003; Lucas and Villegas, 2002) so that multicultural education is no longer reduced to content that is merely added on to the existing curriculum, but a framework upon which teacher education is built. In this reconceptualization, all stake holders in the development of preservice teachers need to be involved. This includes the cooperating and supervising teachers, as they are major forces in beginning teacher development (Goodwin, 1997). This research seeks to involve inservice teachers in the multicultural development of novice teachers in an attempt to disrupt the "multicultural silences" which pervade many classrooms (Grant and Zozakiewiz, 1995).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and salient experiences that have facilitated their multicultural understandings and how they have enabled them to work effectively with diverse students. A secondary emphasis of this research is to examine multiculturally competent teachers' perceptions of the multicultural needs of beginning teachers. This research will inform the field not only about significant learning experiences which impact teacher attitudes and dispositions in regards to working with diverse students, but it will also provide teacher educators with other possibilities for developing the multicultural competencies of new teachers.

Research Questions

1. What are the most salient experiences that teachers say have shaped and/or influenced the philosophies and pedagogies?
2. How are the practices of effective teachers of diverse students manifested in a classroom context?
3. What are the implications of these teachers' accounts for change in teacher education?

Definition of Terms

In order to better understand the goals of the research and research questions, an explanation of the terms used in this study will be explained in the following section.

In the context of this study, *preservice teacher* refers to an individual who is enrolled in a teacher preparation program and is preparing to become a teacher.

Inservice teacher refers to a practicing teacher who is no longer enrolled in teacher preparation programs. *Inservice teacher* and *veteran teacher* will be used synonymously throughout this study.

According to Lucas and Villegas (2002), *culturally responsive teachers* possess the following characteristics (1) understand that their students may see the world differently than they do and accept that worldviews are not universal but are shaped by each person's individual, social, and cultural experiences; (2) recognize that all students bring resources to learning and show affirming attitudes toward students of diverse backgrounds; (3) see teaching as a political and ethical activity and see themselves as agents of change who are skilled at identifying inequitable school practices and challenging them; (4) understand and embrace constructivist views of teaching and learning; (5) know their students well; and (6) use what they know about their students to support their learning through practices such as engaging all students in the construction of knowledge, building on their interests and strengths while stretching them beyond what they already know, helping them examine ideas from multiple perspectives, using varied assessment practices, and making the culture of the classroom inclusive of all (198). *Effective teachers of diverse student, multiculturally competent teachers, and culturally responsive teachers* will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

Diversity is a term that refers to the various identities, experiences, and social positioning of individuals. In this study, specifically, diversity refers to the multiple differences of students including racial, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic.

In the *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (Banks and Banks, 1995), James Banks defines *multicultural education* as “a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women studies.”

In this study, *mainstream multicultural education* refers to the superficial understanding of various cultures through recognizing cultural heroes, celebrating cultural holidays, eating ethnic foods, and performing ethnic dances. Little to no emphasis is placed upon social justice, empowerment, or equity issues.

In this study, *sociocultural implications of race* refer to the understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and political ramifications of racism in society.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

The following chapter provides a review of current issues in teacher preparation for diversity. This review is important in understanding (1) the purpose of multicultural education in teacher preparation, (2) the multicultural needs of preservice teachers and (3) the considered current best practices for developing culturally responsive teachers.

The chapter begins with the brief history and intended purposes of multicultural education in an attempt to understand how its multiple meanings evolved. The chapter continues to explain the significance of multicultural education in teacher preparation programs and highlights popular multicultural approaches in teacher education. From a critical race theoretical perspective, the chapter discusses problematic areas teacher education has incurred in its attempt to incorporate multicultural education principles in the teacher education curriculum. The chapter concludes with a discussion of characteristics of culturally responsive teachers and examines current suggested best practices in the literature for cultivating culturally responsive teachers.

History of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education can be traced back to the late 1800s, during a period of time when African Americans researched their own culture so that it could be included in the school and college curriculum (Banks, 1995). This period of time [from the late 1800s to the 1960s] was known as the Early Ethnic Studies Movement. The goal of this movement was freedom and equality for African Americans. During this period, there were three pivotal books that educated America about multiculturalism: George Washington Carver's *History of the Negro Race in America*, Carter G. Woodson's and

Charles C. Wesley's *The Negro in Our History*, and Carter G. Woodson's *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. Each of the aforementioned texts was produced during the early Ethnic Studies Movement.

During the 1940s and 50s, a new movement emerged. White liberal educators and social scientists led this movement, also known as the Intergroup Movement. "Interracial harmony and understanding as well as conflict reduction and resolution" was the focal point of this group (Goodwin, 1997). This group was established after World War II in response to the animosity shown by African Americans to a country that did not guarantee or protect their equal rights, after they risked their lives to protect the country (Banks, 1995; Goodwin 1997). Members of the Intergroup Movement worked to ease the hostile tensions by creating Intergroup relation centers, identifying objectives and methods for schools, describing curricular units for schools, and establishing programs. This attempt to create peace and harmony was short-lived, as African Americans grew impatient with the nation's slow movement toward desegregation.

Rather than waiting to be included in the nation, African Americans created their own movement for their own plight. The focus of this movement was on Black pride and nationalism. African Americans worked toward creating school environments, which concentrated on empowerment, and advancing the race (Banks, 1995; bell hooks, 1997). This new movement was the Ethnic Studies Movement of the 1960s and 70s.

The Ethnic Studies Movement of the 60s and 70s began to run out of steam when large education associations such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) entered the conversation. During this time various terms were used to capture

the essence of multicultural education. “Multiethnic education” was used to bridge racial and ethnic groups; “multicultural education” broadened the scope to include other forms of diversity including gender and sexuality. In order to gain the support of a larger audience, the term “culture” rather than “racism” was adopted (Sleeter and McLaren, 2000). In doing so, the emphasis was redirected from social justice issues to celebrating all ethnic cultures, which explains the breadth of multicultural content and curricula in the field.

The multiple meanings of multiculturalism in education

Today, in the field of education, “multiculturalism” has been an attempt to promote tolerance and acceptance across racial, ethnic, and gender lines through the celebration of differences. Unfortunately, in the United States, we have yet to see genuine acceptance among our differences. Identifying authentic multiculturalism and multicultural practices proves to be a difficult task because of the varied meanings of multiculturalism. Russian social theorist M.M. Bakhtin’s term “heteroglossia” expresses the idea of various interpretations we take from words.

“‘Heteroglossia’ refers to the variety of spoken languages of social groups and classes, professional groups and generations and the different languages speakers adopt for different occasions even within these broader distinctions. Every word spoken in any of these languages is charged with multifarious and conflicting meanings” (Dentith, 1995).

I would like to appropriate Bakhtin’s term as a context for understanding the multiple and sometimes-contradictory meanings the term “multicultural” connotes. For example, the term “multicultural education” has an entirely different meaning in the mainstream than it does to multicultural theorists. Mainstream multiculturalists believe that “if individuals are taught to give up their individual prejudices and treat everyone the

same, we will all ‘get along,’ and any remaining limits to equal opportunity will simply disappear” (Berlak, 2001, p. 94). According to Berlak, mainstream multiculturalists don’t acknowledge institutional and systemic racism that plague our schools. Mainstream multiculturalists want to change individuals so they are able to tolerate one another and “get along for the sake of getting along” (p. 94).

Multicultural theorists (whom Berlak calls critical multiculturalists) provide a sharp contrast: their primary aim is to change society and the forces within society that privilege certain groups and oppress others. The emphasis of Berlak’s “critical multiculturalists” coincides with the efforts of those involved in the earlier Ethnic Studies Movement. Berlak states that “central to critical multiculturalism is naming and actively challenging racism and other forms of injustice, not simply recognizing and celebrating differences and reducing prejudice” (p. 92). Social activism, social justice, and antiracist pedagogy are of paramount concern to critical multiculturalists (Berlak 1995; Banks 1995; Sleeter and Grant 1988). Because of the multiple connotations of multicultural education, teacher educators and researchers must be explicit in their descriptions of multicultural education, so their messages aren’t lost or misconstrued (Banks, 1993).

The teacher education literature provides a variety of techniques and approaches under the umbrella term “multicultural education.” Again, because of the multiple meanings of “multicultural education” the information in the teacher education literature ranges from tolerating others’ differences to working for social justice.

Multicultural Approaches

Since the 1970s, educational organizations like the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have recognized the importance of

multicultural education. In teacher education, specifically, several multicultural education approaches have been added to the curriculum. Today, the most often cited approaches to multicultural education are Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant's five approaches of multicultural education, and James Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education (Banks 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Researchers Sleeter and Grant (1987) developed five approaches to multicultural education:

1. *Teaching the exceptional and culturally different*
2. *Human Relations*
3. *Single group studies*
4. *Multicultural education*
5. *Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist.*

The *teaching the exceptional and culturally different approach* builds a bridge between the culturally different student and the dominant culture. It focuses on relating the curriculum to the lives of the students and basic skills. The *human relations* approach promotes peace and harmony between members of the dominant group and the culturally different. This curriculum is centered on prejudice and stereotype reduction and celebrating diversity. The *single group studies approach* focuses on one particular oppressed group. The contributions and oppression of this particular group is at the center of study. The *multicultural education approach* emphasizes social structural equality. The curriculum examines intersections of race, class, and gender inequities and how these things play out in society. The last approach, *education that is multicultural and social*

reconstructionist, promotes critical analysis of inequality and oppression in society. It also challenges students to challenge inequity and to work for social justice.

James Banks developed five typologies of multicultural education (Banks, 1993). They include:

1. *Content integration*
2. *Knowledge construction*
3. *Prejudice reduction*
4. *Equity pedagogy*
5. *An empowering school culture and social structure*

Content integration deals with how teachers incorporate examples, data, and information from different cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline. The *knowledge construction process* describes how scientists create knowledge and how implicit cultural assumptions shape the way knowledge is constructed. The *prejudice reduction* dimension provides strategies to help develop positive racial attitudes towards others. An *equity pedagogy exists* when teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse backgrounds. Lastly, Banks' fifth dimension, an *empowering school culture and social structure*, involves the process of restructuring a school's culture and organization so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment (Banks, 1993).

The intended purposes of multicultural education: Are we missing the point?

According to James Banks, the major goal of multicultural education stems from its roots in the Ethnic Studies Movement- to "reform the school and other educational

institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality” (p. 3). Although researchers and scholars agree that institutional changes and reform must occur, there is still contention about how these changes should occur. Banks states “many school and university practitioners have a limited conception of multicultural education, viewing it primarily as curriculum reform that involves only changing or restructuring the curriculum to include content about ethnic groups, women, and other cultural groups” (p. 4). If university faculty have only a surface understanding of multicultural education, then students will not be able to work for the ultimate underlying purpose of multicultural education: to restructure schools so that all students will experience educational equity.

Perhaps this narrow understanding of the purpose of multicultural education among educational researchers and practitioners is manifested in the limited knowledge preservice teachers have about multicultural education and about diverse students. Most preservice teachers understand multicultural education as a means for promoting racial and social harmony, eradicating prejudice and stereotypes, and teaching children who are culturally different from their teachers (Sleeter, 1996). Few understand the purpose of multicultural education as a means to challenge and change the current system in order to create societal change (Villegas, 1998; Zeichner, 1993). Even fewer understand the systems of oppression and institutional racism that are in place, from which they benefit and others are made subordinate.

Patricia L. Marshall (1996) found that both preservice and inservice teachers were primarily concerned with creating positive relationships with their students and learning techniques to meet the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms, rather than a social

reconstructionist pedagogy. A Lin Goodwin's (1994) study showed that most of the preservice teachers believed that multicultural education meant changing an individual's views on racial issues or adapting instruction to account for individual differences.

Johanna Nel (1993) surveyed university students to learn which of the five goals [Sleeter and Grant's framework] they would use to teach in a pluralistic classroom. Most of the students chose the Human Relations goals statement. The goals selected emphasized changing the individual, not society.

Multicultural Approaches in Teacher Education

In teacher preparation, strategies used for teaching prospective teachers about diversity are organized in two ways: an infusion approach or a segregated approach (Melnick and Zeichner, 1997). The infusion approach integrates issues of diversity throughout the program's curriculum including the courses and field experiences. The segregated approach is a sharp contrast to the infusion approach as issues of diversity are treated separately from the existing curriculum. Often times, issues of diversity are either single courses or separate topics within a course. Clearly, the segregated approach is the least beneficial in facilitating multicultural understanding; however, in teacher education, this approach is more widely used (Melnick and Zeichner, 1997; Gay 1986).

In the following sections, a review of the literature regarding multicultural courses and field experiences in teacher education and its impact on the attitudes and beliefs of preservice teachers are discussed. Many of the courses and field experiences highlighted in the review were used in a segregated approach rather than the preferred infusion approach.

Multicultural courses in teacher education

The implications of the research on multicultural courses on preservice teachers show us that a course can make a positive impact; however, students leave with only a surface understanding of diversity and multicultural education (King, 1991). Weisman and Garza (2002) found that after taking one multicultural education course, students overall had a positive orientation to diversity. However, most of the students did not have an understanding of oppressive systems embedded in society and their impact upon the education of minority students. Teaching strategies for culturally different students and knowledge about different cultures was of paramount concern for the preservice teachers. A. Lin Goodwin (1997) found that preservice teachers believed that problems minority students encountered were best solved by helping them cross over into the mainstream rather than examining structures within the school that perpetuate inequity. Goodwin further asserts that the preservice teachers ignored broader sociopolitical contexts and focused on individual situations. Finney and Orr (1995) found that the majority of preservice teachers learned something positive from a multicultural education course, yet they still failed to recognize systematic and institutional racism that privileges some and oppresses others. Lawrence and Bunche (1996) found that one course was able to increase White students' knowledge about racism and racial identity. While introducing preservice teachers to issues in multicultural education may be positive, beginning teachers with only this limited background still lack knowledge about fundamental principles of multicultural education: school reformation, educational equality, and institutional change (Sleeter, 2001; Banks, 1995).

Multicultural field experiences in teacher education

In addition to multicultural courses, field experiences in diverse communities can also make a positive impact on the attitudes and dispositions of preservice teachers. According to Cruz (1997) these experiences provide preservice teachers with opportunities to understand and empathize with the people from these communities. Hong Xu (2000) found that most of her students had positive attitudes toward the differences between themselves and their students. Some of her student teachers held on to their biases and stereotypes against the students. Xu posits that most of the preservice teachers' understandings about diversity were at the "tangible level of culture," such as knowledge of students' cultural values (Goodwin, 1997). She further asserts that few of her students were able to situate their students' experiences within a broader social context. Cabello and Burnstein (1995) found that the initial beliefs of preservice teachers about diversity can be affected when students are given opportunities to critically reflect upon what they are observing and experiencing during the field placements. Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1995) advocates writing as a means for preservice teachers to assess and reassess their assumptions about people who are different from them. Smith claims that preservice teachers should be encouraged to write about their own personal experiences, their experiences in the field, and their responses to required readings that challenge their beliefs. Smith's use of writing provides preservice teachers with opportunities for the critical reflection that Cabello and Burnstein encourage.

Multicultural Silences: The role of the Cooperating Teacher & University Mentor

In addition to coursework and field experiences, the university supervisor and cooperating teacher are crucial keys in preservice teacher development. There is little

research in the literature about the role of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor in the development of preservice teachers' understanding of diversity and how to implement what they've learned about multicultural education in their practicum. Maureen Gillette (1990) states in her review of supervision and multicultural education literature that "...we currently know almost nothing about what techniques, methodologies, or curricula facilitate or impede the development and maintenance of multicultural perspective in student teachers" (p. 83). Maureen Gillette (1990) found in her study of supervising teachers that the supervising teacher focused on issues of content and management. The supervising teacher gave little to no attention to multicultural education or issues relating to it. The literature involving cooperating teachers and multicultural education has little discussion about issues of multiculturalism and diversity. Martin Haberman and Linda Post (1990) found that 80% of cooperating teachers believed that the goal of multicultural education should be tolerance and cooperation. Few of the teachers believed issues of societal equity and social justice should be at the forefront of multicultural education. Carl Grant and Cathy Zozakiewicz (1995) call the absence of, or limited discussion of, multicultural education "multicultural silences." They continue to describe the following as the reasons for the multicultural silences among the preservice teacher, supervising teacher, and cooperating teacher:

- A lack of knowledge and practical understanding about multicultural education
- Differing philosophies, personal backgrounds, educational experiences, and commitment to issues of diversity among members
- Fear of taking a critical stand will affect their position or reputation and
- A perceived lack of time

Unless these multicultural silences are interrupted, as Grant and Zozakiewicz assert, “multicultural education and social justice actions will remain silent as well” (p. 269). Goodwin (1997) advocates stronger relationships between the schools in which student teachers are placed and the teacher education program that places them there. He suggests that preparation programs could do this by providing professional development opportunities for cooperating teachers, and through dialogue about multicultural issues between teacher preparation faculty and public school professionals. Perhaps Goodwin’s suggestion is a means for interrupting the multicultural silences that Grant and Zozakiewicz describe.

The need for the infusion approach in teacher education

Multicultural education programs are needed to disrupt the multicultural silences that plague our university and public school classrooms. Multicultural education scholars and researchers emphasize an infusion of multicultural education in teacher education programs rather than limiting it to one course or field experience (Goodwin, 1997; Zeichner and Hoeft, 1996; Grant, 1994). Although researchers find positive results engaging students in multicultural coursework and field experiences, one isolated course or field experience is not enough to permanently alter the attitudes and perceptions of preservice teachers about diversity (Larkin and Sleeter, 1995). Preservice teachers must not only know about strategies for teaching culturally diverse students and how to create a warm place for them in their classrooms. They must also confront and challenge their own prejudices and stereotypes. Preservice teachers who were able to acknowledge racism and privilege they’ve received from racism showed a greater understanding of how structures within society perpetuate inequity (Weisman and Garza, 2002). Weisman

and Garza also note that while multicultural education should be infused throughout entire teacher preparation programs, issues relating to the “sociocultural and political realities of color should be integrated throughout teacher education programs” (p. 33). In addition to coursework and field experiences, preservice teachers need opportunities to confront and challenge their biases, stereotypes, and prejudices (Villegas 2002; Goodwin, 1994). Student reflection and discussion of their beliefs and values provide an opportunity for students to learn from each other and the teacher educator to guide and facilitate their students’ learning (Weisman and Garza, 2002). In addition, they must critically examine the society in which they live and acknowledge the institutional and systematic racism from which they benefit.

Critical race theory and mainstream multicultural education approaches

Critical race theory (CRT) provides a lens for examining the limitations of the current multicultural approaches in teacher education. It boldly exposes racism and maintenance of systemic racism in the current multicultural education movement. In addition, it unapologetically demands radical change of our current system in order to eliminate racism. To understand the problem of the current mainstream multicultural education movement from the CRT perspective, one must understand what CRT is and how it can be used to critique the present mainstream multicultural education movement.

Understanding the origins of critical race theory (CRT)

Critical race theory emerged from legal scholars of color discontent with the discourses surrounding critical legal theory (CLT). The major source of frustration being that CLT did not include the impact of race and racism in the maintenance of institutional and systemic oppression embedded in American society. Thus, the essence of CRT,

according to Gloria Ladson-Billings, is in the understanding that “race [still] matters” (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Critical race theory is set firmly upon the following key principles: (1) racism is normal in American culture; (2) narrative theory or story telling; and (3) a critique of liberalism. It is based upon the premise that “racism is normal, not aberrant in American society” (Delgado, 1995, xiv). With this presupposition, CRT seeks to unmask and expose racism in its many permutations in order to reveal the deeply ingrained racial hegemonic structures enmeshed in American culture (Ladson-Billings, 1998) in an attempt to eliminate racism. In addition, critical race theory utilizes the narrative or story telling to analyze oppressive myths endemic in our culture. According to Ladson-Billings (1998), narratives provide a “context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting” (pg. 13). In addition, narratives allow oppressed groups to speak from their own experience and voice their realities. More importantly, the voice of the oppressed can have an impact on the oppressor. Critical race theory also functions to critique liberalism in an attempt to include race and racism in the discussion of oppressive structures embedded in American society. These structures subtly infused within the whole of society play a major role in influencing the philosophies governing the nation’s educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1993).

Multicultural education from a CRT perspective

As mentioned earlier, a major problem in teacher education is preparing new teachers for the diversity of the 21st century classroom. While teacher education has included multicultural content in its existing curriculum, many new teachers still lack the necessary dispositions to work successfully with diverse students.

From a CRT perspective, a major reason for this problem rests with the existing multicultural teacher education curriculum. Too often in teacher education, as Ladson-Billings and Tate assert, “multicultural education has been over curriculum inclusion” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Banks, 1993). In addition, they posit, “current multicultural paradigm follows the traditions of liberalism-allowing a proliferation of difference.” Thus, this “multicultural movement” is no more than liberal conjecture because of its focus on “being united through differences” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) rather than offering a radical change of the current system. This also sheds light as to why preservice teachers have a limited understanding of the purpose of multicultural education. If they do not have opportunities to critically examine difference and the hegemonic system that perpetuates inequity, then these new teachers will not know how to resist these oppressive structures on the micro and macro levels.

CRT exposes the benefit of schools of education not explicitly addressing issues of race and racism in its preparation programs. In her reflection of teacher education curriculum courses, Connie Titone states “none of these [education courses] systematically addresses the issue of race or class in critical ways...” (Titone, 1998). She further asserts, “training new generations of workers in this manner ensures the perpetuation of a racist system.” When preservice teachers are not consistently exposed to the subtle workings of racism and how it plays out in educational settings, then they will not be able to work to dismantle institutional racist practices. Without this type of knowledge and practice in their teacher education programs, then preservice teachers will continue to be ineffective in their work with culturally diverse students.

Examining issues of whiteness in teacher education

As mentioned earlier, critical race theory calls for radical change in order to eliminate racism. From a CRT perspective, in order to see a significant change in the attitudes and disposition in new teachers, then drastic changes will have to be made in how multiculturalism is addressed in teacher education. Whiteness studies can be an invaluable part of teacher education curriculum, as it requires students to “come face to face with the concepts of racism and their own complicity in maintaining a system from which they benefit” (Titone, 1998).

It provides a lens for white students to examine the effects of institutional and systematic racism not only on people of color but on themselves as well. Paula Rothenberg states that

“unless we name it [white privilege] we are in danger of wallowing in guilt or moral outrage with no idea how to move beyond it. It is often easier to deplore racism and its effect than to take responsibility for the privileges some of us receive as a result of it. By choosing to look at white privilege we gain an understanding of who benefits from racism and how they do so. Once we understand how white privilege operates, we can begin to take steps to dismantle it on both a personal and an institutional level” (Rothenberg, 2002).

Whiteness studies are particularly salient in the construction of antiracist pedagogies, which are the center of the multicultural education movement. It gives teacher educators a context for helping their predominantly white, monocultural students understand their own prejudices and stereotypes and the hegemonic systems that reinforces them. It also provides preservice teachers an opportunity to realize and hopefully become empathetic with the social and political realities of people of color. Most importantly, whiteness studies provide a context for the social justice component, which has been omitted from multicultural education. Students engaged in whiteness discussions may be discomforted

and even resistant as they view society and themselves from a totally different lens than they are accustomed to using.

Discomforting Pedagogy and Student Resistance

In Feeling Power, Megan Boler characterizes the uneasiness or anxiety students experience as they “engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others” as a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999, pg. 176). In other words, this teaching method is purposefully discomforting to students. It requires the student to critically examine and/or confront his/her passive engagement in or active resistance to white supremacist patriarchy. Perhaps a theory of this sort is what teacher preparation programs must consider as they try to move students beyond additive approaches to multicultural education to a social justice/social reconstructionist approach. In order for students to critique societal inequity and its impact upon minority people, students must first confront and acknowledge the racism that plagues our society. In addition to critiquing societal systems, they must deconstruct who benefits from white racism and who suffers from it. Lisa Delpit asserts that teachers must “understand their own power, even if that power stems merely from being in the majority, by being unafraid to raise questions about discrimination and voicelessness with people of color...” (Delpit, 1995, p. 47). A pedagogy of discomfort will allow future teachers to examine power and their roles in the power equation. It will give preservice teachers an opportunity to critically examine their own privilege and benefits from white racism. Boler also warns us that a pedagogy of this sort involves great risks. These risks include feelings of guilt, frustration, anger, and fear. bell hooks concurs as she states, “...there can be, and usually is, some degree of pain

involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches” (bell hooks, 1992, p. 43). Despite the obvious risks of student resistance, research indicates that risks are necessary to deepening students’ awareness and understanding of multiculturalism (Dee and Harkin, 2002). From a CRT perspective, this type of risk is necessary not only for developing culturally responsive dispositions in teachers but to combat racism and racist practices on both institutional and personal levels.

Culturally Relevant Teaching Theory and related theories

In her study of the pedagogies of successful teachers of African American students, Gloria Ladson-Billings theorizes these teachers’ practices as culturally relevant teaching. Teachers whose pedagogy is culturally relevant do the following:

1. Focus on students’ academic achievement
2. Support students’ cultural competence
3. Promote students’ sociopolitical consciousness

Billings claims that successful teachers are able to help students move between their home and school cultures. These teachers recognize and respect the cultures of their students are able to help students do the same. In addition, these teachers are working to raise the consciousness of their students by having them critically analyze society and working with their students to challenge and change societal inequity and injustice.

Billings’ work is especially significant as her findings coincide with other studies regarding the impact of teacher perceptions on the academic success of students (Tamura, 1996; Dorene & William, 1994). The implications from these studies inform teacher education of the critical role teacher perception plays in how effectively the teacher interacts with students.

It is the goal then of teacher education to produce teachers' whose pedagogies are culturally relevant-that is "sensitive to the needs, interests, and abilities of students, their parents, and their communities" (Irvine & Armento, 2001). According to Irvine (2003), *culturally relevant*, *culturally responsive*, *culturally responsible*, *culturally appropriate*, *culturally congruent*, and *culturally compatible* are all terms that can be used synonymously to describe effective pedagogical approaches in diverse classrooms. She also indicates that teachers who utilize these approaches pay special attention to the context of the classroom and the students' individual needs. Irvine cites Geneva Gay's work in which Gay (2000) describes teaching as a "contextual and situational process. As such, it is most effective when ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students, are included in its implementation" (p. 73). In culturally responsive classrooms, teaching is most productive and beneficial when the teacher connects the students' prior knowledge and experiences to the instructional content (Irvine, 2003; Villegas, 1991).

Culturally Responsive Teachers: What are they like?

In order for teachers to become culturally responsive, they must be encouraged and given opportunities to do so. Teacher preparation programs across the country are trying to figure out what they can do in their respective programs to develop the dispositions of culturally responsive teachers within their preservice teachers.

Ana Maria Villegas and Tamara Lucas (2002) describe culturally responsive teachers as individuals who:

1. Have a sociocultural consciousness
2. Have affirming views of students

3. Have a sense of responsibility of bringing about educational change
4. Embrace constructivist views of teaching and learning
5. Are familiar with their students' prior knowledge
6. Design instruction that builds on what students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar.

Villegas and Lucas describe culturally responsive teachers who have a *sociocultural consciousness* as being able to recognize the influence of race, language, and class on how individuals view, interpret, and interact in the world. They insist that this capability allows these teachers to “cross cultural boundaries that separate them from their students” (Villegas and Lucas, 2002, p. xiv). Teachers who have an *affirming view* of their students do not view the cultural differences of their students as deficits but as assets for all of their students' learning. These teachers also see themselves as *agents for social change* and in their pedagogy they try to make schooling more equitable for all students. In addition, Villegas and Lucas describe the *constructivist* perspectives of culturally responsive teachers as an “active process by which learners give meaning to new information” (p. xiv). Finally, culturally responsive teachers are *familiar with their students' prior knowledge* and are able to design their instruction around it so that they can build upon it and take them beyond. Villegas' and Lucas' work on culturally responsive teachers is consistent with the findings of other researchers regarding the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers (Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003). These findings highlight the dispositions and pedagogical practices of culturally responsive teachers, which provide teacher educators a framework for how they should plan their curriculum in order to develop culturally responsive teachers.

Reconceptualizing Multicultural Teacher Education

In order to produce teachers whose practices are culturally relevant and responsive, teacher preparation is going to have to take a serious look at how they prepare teachers for diverse schools. They're going to have to examine their own practices and methods for preparing teachers for diversity.

As we know from previous research, preparing teachers for diverse classrooms requires more than adding a few courses and field experiences to an existing curriculum. Jacqueline Jordan Irvine (2003) posits that multicultural education has to be more than a "technical strategy" otherwise there is a great risk for more additive type programs, which are of no benefit. She further asserts that this type of [segregated] approach does more harm than good, as it produces individuals with superficial understandings of culture and does not impact these individuals' perceptions of culturally diverse students (Irvine, 2003).

Rather than focusing on the "what's of a multicultural curriculum", Irvine states that attention should also be given to the "critical elements of the organizational culture and climate" (Irvine, 2003); otherwise, she reminds us; the end results will be "inconsequential and perfunctory" (p. 17). Teacher educators must be thoughtful and purposeful as they reconceptualize the organizational structures of their preparation programs. Everyone involved in teacher education [i.e., administrators, faculty, instructors, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors] need to share a common vision in preparing teachers for the 21st century. In doing so, educating teachers to become culturally responsive doesn't become the responsibility of one department or one cooperating teacher; it becomes everyone's responsibility, as it should.

Educating Culturally Responsive Teachers: How do we do it?

As do many other educational researchers, Villegas and Lucas call for a reconceptualization of the teacher education curriculum (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 1995) in order to produce culturally responsive teachers. This reconceptualization includes two dimensions: the curriculum [courses, field experiences, etc.] and the organization of the institution. Villegas and Lucas indicate that these two dimensions are critical in the development of culturally responsive teachers and cannot be treated as separate entities as they are interdependent parts. They assert, “a conceptually coherent curriculum and instructional practices that are aligned with it, while essential to preparing culturally responsive teachers, are not likely to produce the desired results without an institutional infrastructure to support and sustain them” (Villegas and Lucas, 2002, p. 24).

Villegas and Lucas (2002) posit that the institutional dimension has the following four essential characteristics: (1) ongoing work to make the college/university a multicultural community by actively seeking to recruit and retain students and faculty of color; (2) use of multicultural criteria to recruit and select prospective teachers; (3) support for the establishment of structures and processes that foster collaboration among faculty in education, the arts and sciences, and the public schools—all of whom play a critical role in the preparation of teachers; and (4) strong investment in faculty development. Without these elements at the institutional level, teacher educators will continue to have great difficulty preparing preservice teachers to become culturally responsive (Irvine, 2003; Melnick and Zeichner, 1997).

Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe six strands in a curriculum proposal for preparing culturally relevant teachers. They include: (1) gaining sociocultural consciousness; (2) developing an affirming attitude toward students from diverse cultures; (3) developing the commitment and skills to act as agents of change; (4) understanding the constructivist foundations of culturally relevant teaching; (5) learning about students and their communities; and (6) cultivating culturally responsive teaching practices (p. 26).

Within the reconceptualized curriculum, Villegas and Lucas discuss the importance of modeling the practices of culturally responsive teaching. They insist that instructional practices must coincide with what is being taught in the classroom. This is especially significant as they insist “teachers tend to teach in the ways they were taught” (p. 113). In order for them to practice culturally responsive teaching, they must first see it modeled in their own teacher education programs. They describe various components of classroom-based practices and field experiences necessary to facilitate culturally responsive dispositions.

In the classroom, Villegas and Lucas state the importance of developing a community of learners in which prospective teachers are engaged in a variety of activities that will help them develop the dispositions necessary to work effectively in diverse schools. These activities include: exploring family histories, examining teaching cases, reflective writing, simulation activities, and reading accounts of successful teaching and learning in diverse settings.

Villegas and Lucas also identify characteristics of field experiences that help produce culturally responsive teachers. They include:

- Early field experiences in order to give novice teachers ample exposure to diverse schools and communities
- Experiences that are planned in advance
- Prospective teachers are well prepared prior to the field experience
- Schools selected as field placements serve diverse populations
- Cooperating teachers who already work successfully with diverse students or are actively seeks ways to improve their success with their diverse students

Villegas and Lucas highly recommend frequent opportunities for preservice teachers to reflect on their field experiences. They suggest that reflective activities “are designed to both challenge prospective teachers to go beyond their own perspectives and to support them ‘through the turmoil that these experiences can produce’” (Nelson-Barner & Mitchell, 1992, p. 257). They describe the field seminar as a space that is conducive for this type of reflection and support. Villegas and Lucas also advise that the facilitator of the field experience should have experience working with culturally diverse students.

In addition to the field placement, Villegas and Lucas note the critical role the university supervisor and cooperating teacher play in the development of culturally responsive teachers. They suggest that all participants (university faculty and supervisors, cooperating teachers) who prepare culturally responsive teachers should work together throughout the practicum experience. Each has a part in engaging the novice teacher in reflection and providing constant support. Finally, Villegas and Lucas stress the importance of the level of multicultural understanding of the teacher-mentor. According to Villegas and Lucas, this individual will “have high degrees of sociocultural consciousness and affirming attitudes toward diverse students, are actively engaged in

working toward equity and social justice, and practice culturally responsive teaching in their own classrooms” (p. 148).

Villegas’ and Lucas’ work is based upon a reconceptualization of teacher education. In their model, multicultural education serves as the framework upon which the entire teacher education program is built. Multicultural content is not added on or limited to additional classes and field experiences; but rather the arrangement, sequence, and presentation of the curriculum content are to facilitate prospective teachers’ understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Most importantly, the reconceptualized multicultural curriculum is located within a supportive institutional infrastructure, which is conducive for cultivating culturally responsive teachers.

Villegas and Lucas’ work outlines the framework and describes the pedagogy for educating culturally responsive teachers; however, additional research is needed to understand the types of experiences that facilitate multicultural understanding in order to provide beginning teachers opportunities to foster culturally responsive dispositions. Villegas and Lucas’s approach for facilitating the multicultural understandings of novice teachers is based upon best practices noted in the research; however, neither Lucas or Villegas nor any of the other research cited in their work includes the voices of effective teachers of diverse students in this process. This proposed research project seeks to do just that- involve the voices of culturally responsive teachers in an attempt to facilitate the multicultural understandings of preservice teachers so that they, too, can become culturally responsive and be of service to *all* children.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to understand the research methods needed for this study, it is necessary to revisit the purpose for conducting this study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand experiences that facilitated the multicultural competencies of effective teachers of diverse students, through asking the following research questions: What are the most salient experiences that teachers say have shaped and/or influenced their philosophies and pedagogies? How are the practices of effective teachers of diverse students manifested in a classroom context? What are the implications of these teachers' accounts for change in teacher education?

Because of the large number of beginning teachers who feel unprepared to work in today's culturally diverse classrooms (Martin, 1997; Cabello and Burnstein, 1995), it has become even more important to understand the types of experiences that facilitate multicultural understanding. There are an overwhelming number of studies that highlight beginning teachers' discomfort with working in diverse schools (Gordon, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1991; Delpit, 1995; Goodwin, 1994; Gomez, 1994), yet there are only a handful of studies that provide examples of what effective pedagogy of diverse students looks like (Irvine, 2002; Nieto, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

With the changing demographics in our public schools and the majority of new teachers entering the teaching profession being white, middle-class females (Villegas, 1998; Banks, 1991), there is a need to understand the types of experiences novice teachers need in their professional development in order to help them become culturally

responsive teachers. With critical race theory as a framework for exploring experiences that promote sociocultural awareness, teacher educators and educational researchers will realize the essentialness of race in moving pre-service teachers past superficial understandings of multicultural education. More importantly, they will recognize the critical role of race in fostering the culturally responsive dispositions they would like their pre-service teachers to possess.

The remainder of this chapter presents the development of this qualitative, ethnographic study on salient experiences that facilitated the multicultural understanding of effective teachers of diverse students. It begins with the context for the study, a description of the research environments, the methods used for data collection, and how the data was analyzed. It also includes my personal story in which I describe experiences that inspired me to conduct this research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the results.

Motivation for research study

My interest in the preparation of culturally responsive teachers came from a very personal place. Actually, it stemmed from my own dissatisfaction with my teacher preparation program, which I felt did not adequately prepare me for the diversity I encountered during my first year of teaching at Jefferson Middle School (pseudonym used here and throughout the paper). I not only questioned my own teacher education program during that turbulent first year. I also questioned the programs of my colleagues as well as they had the some of the same issues as me. We were all frustrated because we spent more time disciplining than teaching. By the end of my first year, I questioned teacher education as a whole as I tried desperately to understand why by January I was

the only teacher on my hall who was no longer yelling at students or having to chase students around the school in order to make them go to class? Why was I able to teach lessons while my colleagues [with several years of experiences] were managing classrooms where it sounded as if the students were going to come through the wall?

My teaching experiences and commitment to helping my children are what led me back to graduate school. I wanted to learn how teacher preparation programs prepared or did not prepare teachers for teaching in schools like Jefferson. Personally, I did not feel as though I received enough information or experiences in my program to be a successful teacher in an urban school such as Jefferson. My stubborn streak and deep commitment toward the African American community helped me make it through my first year. I felt that returning to graduate school would confirm or negate my suspicions regarding my preparation for teaching in an inner city school and would also provide some valuable insight as to the best pedagogical methods for working in these schools.

Upon my return to graduate school, I worked as a university mentor and supervising teacher to fifth year preservice teachers in the elementary education program. The majority of these students were white middle-class females from Northern Virginia or from rural areas. Most have had very few interactions with people of color. This was primarily because of the tracking system, which segregated students according to performance on standardized tests. Many of these young women in our program were tracked into college preparatory or advanced placement type courses, while their minority counterparts were tracked into academic or basic courses, which in turn, explained the minimal contact between these young women and people of color.

Ironically, these preservice teachers were sent to student teach in the same school system where I used to work. Many of these preservice teachers had similar attitudes about the children they taught as my white colleagues at Jefferson. They had low expectations of the students and were afraid of them. These hidden fears and assumptions were manifested during their student teaching experiences. Many of these young teachers shed tears of frustration and questioned their own competence as teachers, while others blamed the children or their parents, and didn't recognize the overall structure of the school and the organization of their classrooms as contributing factors that impeded the success of their minority students. In a post-observation conference, one young white female commented, "it's no wonder that *these* kids are struggling since their parents aren't involved." Is it any wonder that the "these kids" she was talking about were her fourth grade African American students? Why was this her initial response after having had multicultural exposure in her methods courses and a diversity course? Why didn't it occur to her that she could do something differently with her instruction or classroom management to help those struggling students rather than blaming them or their home environments for their lack of success?

Past experiences that influenced my research interest

My experiences as a classroom teacher and a supervising teacher of preservice teachers have led to my current research interest: the preparation of preservice teachers for diverse classrooms. Working with preservice teachers I can't help but think of my own experience in a similar education program, although the emphasis was in English and not elementary education. I took the same educational psychology courses and social foundations of education courses. A major difference between my preservice teachers

and me is that all of my field experiences were in rural or suburban school districts whereas the pre-service teachers I supervised were completing their field experiences in an inner-city school district. I didn't have the struggles that my preservice teachers had in their field experience until my first year of teaching. Comparing my personal experiences of teaching poor minority students to the experiences of my former White colleagues and preservice teachers, I realized our common link was our teacher education preparation experience. What were the things that we were gleaning from our respective programs? What were the things we had yet to grasp or had not been taught? Why did I feel like several other teachers and I were prepared to teach only one type of student: white and middle class?

As I think about my own multicultural development, I realized that during those first few years of teaching I didn't have the language to articulate my practice. I didn't even know the word "culturally relevant teaching" much less know that I was practicing it. What I did in my classroom was intuitive-something I just knew that I was supposed to do. As I reflected upon these experiences being older and now having a vocabulary to articulate my practice, I realized that my positioning in the world as an African American shaped my own pedagogical practices (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999), like so many other teachers of color. Adair (1984) described the varied roles of African American teachers as being "anchored in a collective Black identity where the teachers perceive the success or failure of their pupils as gains or losses to the Black community" (p. 122). The tenacity and resilience I had with my students was firmly rooted in my belief that as an African American teacher I had a responsibility to make sure each and every one of my students learned. Thus, my instructional strategies and activities I used in my classroom

were designed to build upon and extend their knowledge. The strategies that I used to engage students came from things in our culture and our collective experience as African Americans. I definitely did not learn these pedagogical tools and strategies in a university classroom.

The irony I find with teacher education today is that new teachers are being introduced to multicultural content and principles, yet they do not demonstrate multicultural understandings and lack the dispositions needed to work effectively in diverse settings (Sleeter, 2001). These young teachers claim that they are inundated with diversity and multiculturalism to the point that they are “multi-cultured to death” (2002). Often times, they are discomforted and resistant to the social justice component of multicultural education (Sleeter, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2004) and seem to gravitate towards a superficial level of understanding of multiculturalism (Sleeter, 1993; Banks, 1991).

Considering my own personal multicultural development along with the novice teachers I supervised, I decided that the best way to understand experiences that develop multicultural competence was to consult with multiculturally competent teachers about experiences, which facilitated their own multicultural understandings. In order to gain an understanding of the types of experiences that would foster culturally responsive teachers, my research project explored significant experiences of effective teachers of diverse students that impacted their multicultural development.

Methodology

According to Denzin and Lincoln, “Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln,

2000). Therefore, qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). In an attempt to investigate teacher learning, qualitative research methods will be employed, more specifically ethnography. Ethnography, according to Creswell, calls for a “holistic cultural portrait” in which the researcher includes his or her own viewpoints as well as the participants’ viewpoints about human social life (Creswell, 1998, p. 60). In order to do this well, ethnographers use a variety of procedures in order to produce this cultural portrait. These procedures include a “detailed description of the culture-sharing group [or individual], thematic analysis of the culture-sharing group, and an interpretation of the culture sharing group for meanings of social interaction and generalizations about human social life” (Wolcott, 1994).

Since the focus of this research project was to explore salient experiences, which impacted the philosophy and pedagogy of multiculturally competent teachers, it was very particular in its purpose- to learn more information about a specific topic. Therefore, a particular type of ethnography was utilized. This ethnography was focused ethnography, which was used “primarily to evaluate or elicit information on a special topic” (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 53). Focused ethnography research focuses on the participants’ common experiences from a shared experience enabling the researcher to make assumptions from a shared culture (Morse and Richards, 2002).

In the context of this research study, the researcher focused on the participants’ experiences, which facilitated their multicultural understanding, enabling them to work effectively with diverse students. Although, participants’ experiences [i.e., life histories,

lived experiences and teaching experiences] varied the researcher explored commonalities in those experiences that shaped the beliefs and pedagogical practices of those participants in an attempt to understand the types of experiences preservice teachers need in order to develop culturally responsive dispositions.

Description of the Research Environments

City Middle

City Middle is a predominantly white middle school located in a middle-class neighborhood. About 58% of the population is white, 39% of the population is African American, less than 1% of the population is Asian and/or Latino(a), and about 1 % of the population is American Indian.

Approximately 49% of the students are on free or reduced lunch, which is a 10% increase from the previous year. In the city school system, students who are on free and reduced lunch live below the poverty level.

City Middle has been a fully accredited school for the last four years. However, there is a major gap in performance between the white and African American students. Over the last years, the white students have increased in its percentage of students passing the Virginia Standards of Learning Tests (SOLs), while the percentage of African American students passing the tests have been substantially less. For example, on the eighth grade mathematics test, 78% of white students passed the test in 2001; 79% of white students passed the test in 2002; and 82% of white students passed the test in 2003. While 47% of African American students passed the mathematics test in 2001; 31% of African American passed the test in 2002; and 43% of African Americans passed the test in 2003.

Rockville, Virginia

In order to understand how the students at City Middle are situated within the school and surrounding community, a brief description of the city and a discussion of its history are provided. City Middle is one of six middle schools in the Rockville City School System in Rockville, VA.

Rockville, Virginia is nestled within the Blue Ridge Mountains in southwest Virginia. Rockville is the largest city in southwest Virginia. It is comprised of 26.7% African American, 69.4% European Americans, and 3.9% of the population is classified as “other” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Rockville has a large immigrant population because it serves as a placement for refugees. The majority of the immigrants come from the following countries: Bosnia, Croatia, Iraq, Mexico, Mongolia, Southeast Asia and Sudan. These immigrants occupy different areas of the city. For example, most of the immigrants from the Middle East live in southwest Rockville and most of the immigrants from Southeast Asia live in Northeast Rockville.

Rockville is comprised of city and county governments. The majority of students whose families are on some form of government assistance attend the city schools. The majority of students who attend the county schools come from middle class backgrounds. The county school system has approximately 8% of the minority population enrolled in its school system while the city school system has 43%.

Rockville has been listed “among the nation’s most segregated metro areas” (Rockvillian Times, 2002). The newspaper article further posits “the U.S. Census Bureau ranks Rockville in the nation’s top twenty percent of racially segregated housing patterns and remains the most segregated metropolitan area in the state.” The majority of

African Americans [both poor and middle class] reside in northwest Rockville, the middle and upper middle class whites live in southwest Rockville, and the poor whites live in southeast Rockville. Neighborhood schools were popular in Rockville and as a result students attended schools within their neighborhoods; which meant that the students attended segregated schools. In an attempt to desegregate the schools, students were bussed across town to attend schools with children who were different from themselves and members of their neighborhoods.

As a result, many of the predominantly black schools received federal funds to become magnet schools. These magnet schools were intended to help reduce minority isolation in public schools while providing unique educational opportunities for increasing student achievement. Most of the magnet programs in Rockville either are or have been federally funded through Magnet assistance programs Congress allocated for purposes of voluntary desegregation and to increase student achievement in school systems. Federal money allow school districts like Rockville to develop innovative and exciting curriculum that “attract” students from outside of the magnet school’s attendance zones.

Because Rockville had students from disenfranchised backgrounds, the school system received additional funding from the federal government to create programs to benefit these children. Since the white parents did not want their children to attend schools in black neighborhoods, school board members and the superintendent took the federal money and turned the predominantly black schools into “magnet schools” to “attract” white students. Ironically, the magnet programs did not reduce minority isolation, as a matter of fact; these programs maintained the status quo. The majority of

students in these magnet programs were white students. These students were often separated from their minority student counterparts because the minority students were not in these accelerated programs. As a result, the school became a “school within a school,” in which, the white students were isolated within one area of the school and the black students occupied another area of the school. There was no interaction between the students whatsoever- not even an elective class, P.E. class, or common lunch period did these students share. According to school insiders, this was done in order to “satisfy the parents who were concerned about the ‘safety’ of their children” because they were attending schools that were not in their own neighborhoods (Field notes, March, 2002). Through a CRT lens, this was a classic example of how efforts designed to compensate for racial inequity -which some whites contend solely benefit African Americans- contradicted themselves as they continued to sustain racial imbalance. In this example, it was the white students who were benefiting from this school desegregation effort. The white students were enjoying the benefits of a challenging, innovative magnet program while their black counterparts [who occupied the same space in the same building] were learning basic skills.

In Rockville, there are two high schools: City High and Henry High. City High is the predominantly black school located in the predominantly black quadrant and Henry High is the predominantly white school located in the predominantly white quadrant of the city. City High is a magnet school offering specialized programs in performing and visual arts, aviation, and technology. City High is also home of the district’s International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. The Governor’s School and Center for Humanities is located at Henry High.

It was no surprise that these schools were rivals, since they were the only two high schools in the district. What was interesting about the town of Rockville was how the city perceived the two schools. According to a native Rockvillian, the local Rockville paper was quick to highlight negative publicity about City High. According to Mr. Jones, “Fights, illegal substances, and weapons were splashed across the front pages of the local paper. Henry High had the same types of problems, yet their dirty laundry escaped the scrutiny of the newspaper” (Field notes, February, 2002). With the bad publicity, it wasn’t any surprise that City High had the reputation of being “dangerous,” and that our student teachers were reluctant to do their student teaching there. During a discussion of early field placements, one such intern informed me that she had heard [from a previous student in the program] that her placement was like [the movie] “Dangerous Minds.” With this image in mind, the intern imagined students “walking across campus in gangs.”

Unfortunately, in the last year, City High wasn’t the only school in the district that received negative publicity. City Middle was under close scrutiny since a fight between two seventh grade students occurred in the cafeteria. The fight resulted in a twelve year old being severely beaten and a fifteen-year being tried as an adult on assault and malicious wounding charges. News of the fight was widespread throughout the tight-knit working middle class community. Parents demanded to know how a situation like such could have occurred and went to the media to express their anger and concern.

Since the incident, many articles were published in the Rockville paper about school violence and accurate reporting of violent occurrences within the schools. Once again, the city schools were in the “fishbowl” and were under close scrutiny of the media,

as the community was inundated with articles in the newspapers and segments on the news about school violence.

Interesting enough, what was left out of the newspaper and conversations among “concerned” parent groups was the discussion about building and maintaining community within the school. The children who attend City Middle came from several different neighborhood elementary schools. Unfortunately, most of these feeder elementary schools were homogenous because they were neighborhood schools. These working middle class white children and poor and minority students were not neighbors and did not get an opportunity to interact with each other until they began middle school. Because of this mixing of cultures, conflict was very likely to occur. Rather than falling into the roles of victim and victimizer, efforts should be made to build relationships based upon cooperation and respect. Unfortunately, these things did not sell newspapers or increase ratings; perhaps this was why the media still focused on the problem of school violence and did not look for solutions in creating and sustaining community.

University Community

In addition to reviewing the demographics of the area in which the preservice teachers are placed for field experiences, it is necessary to examine the demographics of the institution where these beginning teachers are being educated. This is essential in understanding how beginning teachers’ perceptions of diversity are manifested.

Rural university is a large, predominantly white land grant University in southwest Virginia. The university community is comprised of majority white faculty and students. According to the Rural University Office of Institutional Research and Planning Analysis (2003), approximately 82.4% or 2,249 of the 2,728 full time university faculty is Caucasian, while 11.25% of the faculty are minorities and the remaining 6.3%

of university faculty are classified as “non-resident aliens”. The student demographic data is representative of the faculty demographic data. According to the data, approximately 74% or 18,137 of the 24,482 of full-time students are Caucasian; while the remaining 13.5% of the students are minorities, 7.6% of the students are classified as ‘foreign’, and the other 4.2% of the student population is classified as unknown.

Specifically, in the Department of Teaching and Learning, 80% or 250 of the 311 students in the department are Caucasian. The remaining 20% of the student population are classified as the following: 7.7% ‘foreign’, 6.7% black, 2.2% Asian, 1.6% Hispanic, and less than 1% were classified as Indian or other.

Like the larger university community, the demographics of the department indicate that the faculty is predominantly white and male. According to the department’s diversity statistics, 93 % or 42 of the 45 faculty members are Caucasian, while the remaining 7 % are black. In addition, 62% or 28 of the 45 faculty members are male, while 38% or 17 members of the faculty are female.

Data Gathering Procedures

Selecting the Participants

In order to understand the types of experiences needed to facilitate multicultural understandings and culturally responsive dispositions in beginning teachers, I decided that I needed to talk to teachers who were successfully working with diverse students. Thus, I had criteria for my sample. Miles and Huberman (1994) call this procedure of establishing criteria for the participants being studied, criterion sampling.

Thinking back on my own teaching experiences, I generated a list of teachers who I knew personally were making a significant impact in the lives of their minority

students. The teachers included on my list exhibited the characteristics of Lucas and Villegas' culturally responsive teachers: (1) had an affirming views of students, (2) were familiar with students' prior knowledge, and (3) designed their instruction that builds on what students already know and stretches them beyond (Lucas and Villegas, 2002).

Realizing that I needed more than just my opinion of teachers who were culturally responsive, I made preliminary contacts with the six area city middle school principals and asked them to identify teachers in their schools who worked effectively with diverse students. In the age of the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, it was no surprise that the teachers on their list were there because of student achievement on standardized tests. In addition to high percentage pass rates, these administrators identified the teachers as effective because of their classroom management, few numbers of discipline referrals, and their positive interactions with students and parents.

After reviewing the lists, I noticed the names of two teachers who appeared on each of the lists. I also knew these teachers quite well as I had worked with both of them the year I was reassigned to another school because Jefferson was closing for renovation. Both were eighth grade science teachers who had taught in the city school system for over twenty years. One is an African American teacher and the other is Caucasian. Both teachers were leaders in the school, one served as the grade level leader of the entire eighth grade and the other was the chair of the science department. In addition to their teaching and administrative duties, both teachers served as mentors and cooperating teachers to preservice teachers from the surrounding universities. These teachers worked collaboratively in creating lessons that engaged students in inquiry and were

acknowledged by their principal for not only student success on state standardized tests but motivating students with innovative teaching methods.

These teachers were known for their consistency in student performance on end of year tests and their students scored higher on their test than on any other subject area test. Over the last three years, an average of 84% of their students passed the eighth grade SOL test in science. In addition, these teachers were committed to narrowing the gap in achievement between their black and white students. Both teachers read texts and attended seminars that addressed strategies for closing the achievement gap. These teachers did not keep this information to themselves; they conducted inservice meetings with their colleagues about how they, too, could work to close the gap in achievement. Over the last three years, there was a thirty-point gap in achievement between African American and white students performance on the SOL test in science compared to an average of a fifty-point gap in the other content areas. The teachers worked collaboratively to further close this gap.

Since both teachers exhibited success with working with all children, and most importantly, they continued to seek ways to improve their own teaching; I felt that the two would offer valuable insight as to the qualities of a culturally responsive teacher. In addition, I also felt that both teachers would provide an interesting juxtaposition for understanding experiences that facilitated multicultural awareness and culturally responsive dispositions.

Informed Consent Procedures

Request for exemption was made to the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) for this study (see Appendix A). The informed consent process began after the

university granted permission for the research to be conducted. All participants, including public school professionals and students, were asked to consent to participation in this study by signing an informed consent form (see Appendix B). The informed consent forms outlined anonymity and confidentiality guidelines, as well as any potential risks involved in participating in the study. Data collection and analysis began after the participants signed the informed consent forms.

The following data collection procedures were adhered to:

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

After the proposed research project received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the local school board, data was collected from February 2004 and continue through June of 2004. The data consisted primarily of observations and field notes, interviews and notes from the interviewer's guide. In addition, documents also provided data for this study. The procedure for data collection is outlined below.

Observations

Spending time in the school setting was very important to this study as it provided a context for understanding these teachers' practices and noting how their practices coincided with the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers outlined in the literature (Irvine, 2003; Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). For this reason, the researcher made weekly visits over a four-month period to these teachers' classrooms. According to Morse and Richards (2002), "observing is the most natural of all ways of making data" (p. 96). They also posit that observational data enables the researcher to understand the culture through watching and listening (Morse and Richards, 2002).

In this research study, each participant was observed while teaching in order to understand why and how her pedagogy was culturally responsive. Observations were recorded in detailed field notes, paying special attention to the following: (1) the teachers' interactions with students, (2) instructional strategies, and (3) student engagement.

Field notes

A field journal was kept to record observational data along with my own interpretations (Morse and Richards, 2002). Observational data consisted of descriptive notes, which described the classroom arrangement and activities occurring within the classroom. My interpretations of the activities occurring within the classroom were recorded as reflective notes. In these notes, I posed questions about the activities occurring within the classroom, reflected upon the observed activities, and mused about possible conclusions and themes for analysis. Descriptive notes were divided from the reflective notes with a line down the center of the page (Creswell, 1998).

At the end of the day, I shared observational notes with the participants. This was done to segue into discussions about: events that occurred during the class; the reason why the teacher conducted class in a particular manner; her reason for interacting with students in a certain way. When possible, these conversations were recorded so that the researcher could capture the essence of the conversation. In situations where audio recording was not possible, notes from these conversations were made in the researcher's field journal. This was done so that the teacher's voice was included in the analysis of what was happening in the classroom.

At the end of each observation, the audio recorded conversation and/or detailed field notes were transcribed for analysis.

Timeline for interviewing

Interviews occurred from February 2004 and continued through June of 2004. Participants were asked to participate in a minimum of three interviews; however, the number of interviews changed as the interview data was transcribed and analyzed. Additional interviews were needed to clarify points covered in a previous interview or to discuss interpreted events that occurred during a particular classroom event. As a result of the additional interviews, both teachers participated in a total of five interviews.

Interviews were anywhere from forty-five minutes to an hour in length. They were conducted in the teachers' classrooms or in an alternate desired location of the teacher. Follow-up interviews were scheduled when the conversations had to come to an end because of time constraints.

Types of interviews

The teachers in this study participated in different types of interviews. The types of interviews varied according to the interview topic, including family life, teaching philosophy and practice, and recommendations for teacher education. Some of the interviews were semi-structured in which I prepared an interview guide, while others were less formal and more conversational in nature.

Unstructured, Interactive Interviews

Morse and Richards (2002) note, "the most common type of qualitative interview is unstructured and interactive" (p.93). According to Morse and Richards, the unstructured interview allows the participant to tell his or her own story with little

interruption. The unstructured, interactive interview is used by researchers to learn what matters to participants and/or to understand a particular procedure (Morse and Richards, 2002). Again, the purpose of this type of interview is to hear the participants' story, so the teachers were asked open-ended questions. This type of questioning was used with the participants in order to have an open discussion of their life experiences and teaching philosophies and pedagogies.

Life History interviews

The first interview the teachers' participated in was the life history interview (see Appendix C). Both teachers discussed their background experiences including a description of the communities in which they lived, and their early, middle, and high school experiences. The purpose of this interview was to learn about experiences in these teachers' lives that "affected the manner in which [their] teaching is enacted" (Irvine, 2003). According to Irvine, teachers, like other professionals, operate from their own personal frames of references for viewing the world. Thus, their beliefs and interactions with students are based upon how the world makes sense to them, which is based upon their individual personal histories (Irvine, 2002).

Teaching Philosophies and Practices Interview

The second interview the teachers' participated in was the teaching philosophy and practice interview (see Appendix D). The purpose of this interview was to learn about the teachers' educational philosophies and practice. Teachers' responses in this interview was compared to the life history interview in an attempt to determine how their background experiences influenced their teaching philosophies and practices.

Recommendations for teacher education interview

The third interview the teachers' participated in was the teacher education interview (see Appendix E). The purpose of this interview was to learn what these teachers believed teacher educators needed to do to better prepare pre-service teachers for diverse students.

Teachers' background experiences and teaching philosophies and practices were considered in relation to the teachers' responses in this interview.

Focus group interviews

In addition to interviewing effective teachers of diverse students, the teachers' students were also interviewed. Interviews with students were especially relevant as they explained their feelings about their teacher, themselves, and school (see Appendix F). This data provided valuable insight as to the critical role teachers play in helping students develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward school.

According to Morse and Richards (2002), focus group interviews are useful when the researcher wants to learn about "a topic's dimensions or people's attitudes on an issue" (p. 95). In this research project, focus group interviews were employed to learn the students' perceptions of their teachers.

During the focus group interview, participants were asked to discuss their feelings about the subject [being taught], school, and themselves. The students' responses were considered in relation to the teachers' responses from their interviews about their teaching philosophies and practices. The purpose of the focus group interview was to learn how and why students felt the way they did about their teachers.

I interviewed a total of four student groups. There were four students in each group. The students participating in the interview were from the classes that I observed. Each group was made up of males and females enrolled in the eighth grade science course. The ethnicities of the student groups included a Latino male (repeating 8th grade), a Latina female, one Bosnian male and two females, two African American females, one African American male, four White females (one of which is hearing impaired and one other is learning disabled [LD]), and four White males. The age range of the student participating in the study was from 12 to 14.

All interviews were audio taped. At the end of each interview, the interview was transcribed for analysis purposes. In addition, the researcher recorded anecdotal notes in an interviewer's log during the interviews.

Interviewer's Log

An interviewer's log was kept throughout the study to record descriptions of participants' facial expressions and gestures during the interview as well as my own personal thoughts and feelings during the interview (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). The information in this log was used to construct future questions and to highlight areas and/or topics that required additional information or clarification.

Documents

Documents provided information about the school. They were collected and consulted in order to provide a thick description of the school culture. These types of documents included: local newspaper, The Rockvillian Times, the school profile, which provides the history of the school, statistics about student demographics [ethnicity, gender, family income level], and student scores on standardized tests.

Documents were also utilized to help frame interview questions and to help provide a context of how the teachers not only viewed themselves, but also their students and their school community.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

I was aware that my presence would have an influence on the research, which would in turn effect how the results were interpreted (Maxwell, 1996). Because my thoughts and beliefs influenced how I conducted this research and my interactions with participants, I am just as much a part of this research as the teachers being studied. Thus, I was an active participant in the study and should not be viewed as separate or detached from it.

Active participation on the part of the researcher allowed for an exchange of ideas regarding the pedagogical decisions and practices being observed and recorded. For example, my weekly post observation conferences with participants allowed us to discuss their practices and strategies. These conversations were especially beneficial as it allowed us to share strategies that were particularly effective. For example, during a conversation that Marie and I had about her lesson on heat, we discussed different examples we could use from the real world (i.e., baking pies) to illustrate the concept of how heat moves. It also made us reflective about our own practices. Active participation was essential as we identified, articulated, and understood pedagogical practices effective for working with diverse students.

Role of the Researcher

Realizing that as an active participant in the research, I am cognizant of my influence in the entire research process. From what and how the data was observed and

recorded to how the interview questions were structured and asked, my influence on this research was especially relevant as I constructed meaning from the data. This was especially important so that my findings were verified and credible.

Steps for Data Transformation

Creswell (1998) does not use the term “analysis” for making sense of ethnographic data. Instead, Creswell describes this process as “data transformation” and utilizes Wolcott’s three steps for transforming ethnographic data. Wolcott recommends description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture-sharing group for analyzing the ethnography. According to Wolcott (1994), description is presented in chronological order and/or describes the daily life of the group or individual being studied. In the context of this research study, the documents reviewed will provide the researcher with the information necessary to write a thick description of the school, school community, and its students. In addition, the semi-structured life history interviews will provide the researcher a context for describing the essence of the teacher.

Wolcott (1994) describes analysis as the “quantitative side of qualitative research,” which involves highlighting material introduced in the descriptive section. The researcher then has a variety of means for analyzing his or her data. One of the most popular analysis procedures according to Creswell is Wolcott’s (1994) identifying “patterned regularities” in the data. Other means of analysis in ethnographic research include: comparing cultural groups, evaluating the group in terms of standards, and identifying connection between the culture-sharing group and larger theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 1998).

In this research study, Wolcott's search for "patterned regularities" (1994) were employed, I tried to locate themes in the teachers' experiences, philosophies and pedagogies, and recommendations for teacher preparation programs. These themes were analyzed and presented according to their respective topics.

The last and final step in ethnographic data transformation is interpreting the culture-sharing group. In this last step, I was trying to make sense of the data. According to Wolcott, the researcher may employ a variety of techniques in interpreting the culture-sharing group. These techniques include: drawing inferences from the data or utilizing theory to support the researcher's interpretation. A last step Wolcott describes is the personalization of the interpretation. The researcher explains the significance and/or impact of the data on a larger context.

The following steps were utilized from Wolcott for transforming the data.

- i.) Data management: To manage the data, I organized computer files of each of the participants' interviews, interview notes, and observation notes from the field. Each of the computer files was filed under the participant's name.
- ii.) Reading interview transcripts and field notes: The second step in the transformation process was reading through all of the interview transcripts and field notes. I transcribed a total of fourteen interviews: a total of ten teacher interviews and four focus group interviews. The teacher interview transcripts averaged about eighteen pages in length. The focus group interview data averaged about ten pages in length. As I read through the transcripts and notes, I made notes and circled information that I considered important. In addition, I began to highlight and label (form initial codes of) what appeared to be recurring information in an attempt to help me identify emerging patterns in the data. For

example, I would write “early life experience” beside the text that indicated the experience being described occurred early in the participant’s life. I then would write more specific notes, such as “home” or “schooling” to describe at which point the experience occurred.

iii.) Organizing the data: After reading through the data, I organized it according to related patterns and themes for each teacher. The themes were arranged according to topic in a chart form for each teacher. These topics included: salient experiences, philosophies and practices, and recommendations for teacher education. This process was especially helpful in identifying the data that was especially relevant to the study.

iv.) Formulating meanings: Interpretations and meanings were formulated from all of the data I collected including interview transcripts, field notes, and the interviewer’s log. I tried to find consistency among the comments from teachers’ interviews, observations of their practice, and the comments the students made about their practice. In addition, interpretations and meanings of the data were considered in relation to the theoretical framework of critical race theory.

v.) Clustering themes: After formulating meanings and interpretations of the data, I then began to develop themes as they emerged from the patterns within the data. This process helped me identify the following themes: (1) Teachers’ background experiences provoked an awareness of societal influences on race; (2) Teachers’ understanding of the sociocultural factors of race influenced their pedagogical decisions; and (3) Teachers’ critical awareness promoted a comprehensive view of students and their behaviors. A complete discussion of these themes is presented in the analysis chapter.

vi.) Presenting the vignettes: Because the purpose of this study was to identify experiences that were pivotal in facilitating multicultural awareness and culturally responsive dispositions, I thought presenting each teacher's story as a vignette would be a more compelling way to understand the significance of each experience on the teachers' personal and professional development.

Establishing Credibility

Verification

According to Creswell, the term "verification" should be used rather than the term "validity," as in qualitative research; "verification is a distinct strength of qualitative research in that the account is made through extensive time in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness to participants in the study all add to the value of the study" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Guba and Lincoln recommend a variety of techniques for qualitative researchers to utilize in order to produce believable data. The techniques utilized in this study were: triangulation, peer review, writing rich, detailed description, and member checks. In the following sections, each of the techniques will be discussed in its use in the research.

Rich, detailed description

According to Creswell, "rich thick description allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under the study" (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). Thus, the reader is allowed to "transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics" (Creswell, 1998; Erlandson, 1993).

In this research study, data collected from the field journal, interviewer's log, interviews, observations, and documents provided the researcher with the information necessary to provide a detailed description of the participants.

Peer Review

According to Guba and Lincoln, "the peer reviewer (or debriefer) functions as a 'devil's advocate,' an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations" (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Guba and Lincoln also indicate that the reviewer may be a peer and that both the peer and the researcher should keep notes of the sessions (Guba and Lincoln, 1985).

In this research study, the role of a debriefer was necessary in order to prevent the reporting of bias. My advisor and/or committee member(s) functioned as the peer debriefer. The debriefer reviewed the data and interpretations and identified disconfirming evidence that made the data questionable. Notes from the peer debriefing sessions were used in the analysis.

Member checks

Member checking allowed the participants to voice their perceptions of the believability of the researcher's findings and interpretations (Miles and Huberman, 1994). According to Guba and Lincoln, member checking is the "most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Participants review the data, interpretations, and conclusions in order to determine the accuracy of the researcher's account (Creswell, 1998).

In this research, transcripts of interview data were shared with participants in order to verify the accuracy of the interview. In addition, the participants reviewed my

interpretations and conclusions to ensure that my findings were credible. Participants agreed that their background experiences heightened their awareness, which significantly influenced their beliefs and practices.

Triangulation

Qualitative researchers use triangulation, which are a variety of research methods and sources, in order to produce believable evidence (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1984). Researchers employ a variety of methods in collecting data in order to verify that the findings are occurring in more than one form of data. These repeated findings not only provide credible evidence but may also help the researcher identify themes (Creswell, 1998).

In order to provide accuracy in the interpretation of recorded events, triangulation of the data sources was included in this study. The audio recording of and verbatim transcription of teacher and student interviews, in addition to detailed field notes and documents allowed me to make multiple meanings of the data in an attempt to interpret recorded events as accurately as possible. My interpretations and the interpretations of the participants were utilized in the construction of applicable themes for analysis.

Data Presentation

Each teacher's story was told through a series of vignettes. Each individual's experience was presented as a story, depicting the most significant experiences that promoted their sociocultural awareness, which in turn, influenced their teaching philosophy and practice.

After the vignettes were written, they were organized according to emerging patterns and themes. The teachers' background experiences and teaching philosophies

and practices were considered in relation to one another, noting similarities and differences between them.

CHAPTER IV

Introduction:

The two effective teachers of diverse students shared personal accounts from their home and family life, early educational experiences, and teaching careers. In these reflections are the joys and pains of their teaching, the successes and failures of their classrooms, and the lessons they learned along the way. These accounts are organized into three major sections: early life experiences, teaching philosophy and practices, and recommendations for teacher education.

Within each section are vignettes of major occurrences within their lives, which provide a context for understanding significant events that have significantly influenced their worldview making them advocates for change.

VIGNETTES

EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES

Len

Early experiences in a segregated community

Len Smith was born and raised in Rockville, Virginia. She described her early beginnings as humble being raised in a blue-collar, working-class community where her father worked as a traveling salesman and her mother worked in the home. She was the youngest and only daughter with a twelve-year age difference between her and her brother. The neighborhood as Len described was tight-knit. The families knew each other well and would pull together in times of crisis. If someone had a death in the family, then the neighbors would come together to support the family in need- purchasing flowers,

taking food, and visiting the family. As Len stated, “It was just a nice, nice little neighborhood.”

During this time when Len grew up in Rockville the city was segregated according to race and socioeconomic status. The African Americans occupied the northwest area of town, the working class whites the northeast area, and the affluent whites lived in south Rockville. Len remembered her neighborhood being all white until she attended middle school.

Responses to racism

Although Len grew up in a close-knit, supportive community, it was not perfect. She recounts some of the prejudices from some of the people who lived in the neighborhood. As a child, Len bore witness to various forms of racism from ignorant comments to blatant acts of violence.

Now, two blocks over, we had an interracial couple one time move in and that house got bombed. Cherry bombed. I can remember how upset my dad was when that happened, but you know it was like, yeah, that wasn't a very nice thing to do. I can remember thinking that someone must have been really upset to do something like that.

While there were obvious displays of prejudice and bigotry from people in the neighborhood, Len's parents did not succumb to any of these influences in order to fit in or secure a higher social standing. Len recalled, “ I never ever in my home heard anything out of their mouths- ever!” She then recounted an incident in which one of the neighbors talked about colored town. Len explained to the interviewer:

I: What's colored town?

L: Colored town is the area of town where blacks lived.

I: So, where was that?

L: Down off of 10th Street

L: My dad got furious. My dad got furious. And made a comment that there is no such thing. And I remember that...

I: So, it stayed with you...

L: Yeah. They did it right. They really did.

Len's memory of these incidents and her father's responses to each signified that he knew of the existing prejudice and racism in the community in which he lived. His anger toward his community members for making insulting comments about people of color was pivotal to Len's development as she remembered how he and her mother "did it right."

Response to the Civil Rights Movement

While Len came of age during the Civil Rights Movement, she and her family were not caught up in the excitement of it all. They were not active participants on either side of the movement. When Len referenced some of the events that were occurring during this period of time, she discussed it as if she were an observer:

I can remember when Martin Luther King came on the news and my dad said, "I'm not surprised that he made so many enemies he was a good man." My mom said, "You know he sure took more than I could have taken you know they spit on his children?" And that's a memory I have of that discussion.

She and her family discussed the events of the time and what was occurring in the world according to good and bad. There was not an instance during this discussion that she ever used the words “right” or “wrong” to characterize the people or events of this period of time.

The Civil Rights Movement caused big changes in Rockville and the comfortable world in which Len and her neighbors lived was drastically coming to an end. The summer before Len was to return for her second year of junior high school she learned that she and her friends that lived in the neighborhood would not return to their neighborhood school. She explained:

I can remember that summer in the little neighborhood where I lived-- and I can remember this as clear as can be-- we were all going to have to go to different schools. My father and mother were concerned about the fact that, yeah, I was going to have to leave Blair and go somewhere else. I was in the area that was going to be broken off and the choices were Anderson or Reedsburg [the schools located in the African American community]. Some of the parents of the kids that were in the group of peers, friends at Blair [the white neighborhood school] were hot! They did not want their children to go to Anderson. I must have been totally under a rock because it never fazed me. I do not remember any anguish thinking about having to go anywhere. It was like well I'll go wherever they send me. I can remember the only thing my dad saying was that he didn't want me to go as far away as Anderson. There was never any reference to color at all NONE!

According to Len, she and her parents were not upset that she was going to have to possibly attend one of the African American schools. The only concern that her parents

had was that she was not going to be as close to her school. She would now have to possibly go across town to get to school. Again, she emphasized that unlike some of the parents of her friends, her parents did not have any negative feelings about the students of color with whom she would have to go to school.

Trusting the system

In a discussion about why she wasn't afraid of going across town to a new school with children she did not grow up with, Len discussed her faith in the system. She attributed her faith in the system by her parent example:

We weren't in the parent circle, the circle that we were in were just hard working parents that believed in the system, trusted the system, and maybe that's where I get that from. You know thinking about it-- they trusted...they were not rebel rousers that would go out and "RRR...RRR!"

Len described herself as the "the little compliant child with compliant parents that trusted in the system."

Integrating Schools

Len did not have to attend the predominantly African American junior high school. She instead would have to go to Reedsburg, the new junior high school, the newly integrated junior high school where black and white students would be bussed from across the city. Len explained:

But, the line [attendance zone] sent me to Reedsburg and I can remember going into that as green as grass and as innocent as I could be. I thought, okay, I'm going to Reedsburg. I did not realize until I got on that bus and then when I got off of that bus that there would be drama in every part of the city. There was

extreme unhappiness from the African American families because of the move that was taking their children from Anderson to Reedsburg [the new integrated school].

Len's naïveté prevented her from even thinking about how other children may not have wanted to attend a new school:

I was just you know- I was going to middle school- a brand new school. I was so excited. And, as I looked around I saw that there are people here that aren't happy. I was so naïve you know...we're going to a new school...we got us a new school...and I suddenly realized that there was drama that people were not happy. And, I can truthfully say that there was more anger in my perception from the black children.

She assumed that everyone would be like herself and would want to go to a brand new, school. She did not fully understand the pride that the African Americans had in their community and in their own school or why they would resent being taken from their own school and being required to attend a different school.

Neutrality in the midst of turmoil

Heightening tension

As Len stated earlier, from her point of view, the African American students were most resistant to having to integrate the new junior high school. She remembered them not wanting to attend their new school:

They did not want to be there. They didn't want any part of it-- did not want any part of it and it was awful. Some of the things that happened were absolutely terrible. Um, I can remember walking down the hall with some of my friends---

and some of the black girls would take pins and walk down the hall and stick the white girls in the butt with the pins.

Tensions continued to heighten as the African American students to show their contempt and dissatisfaction for their new classmates and their new school. Len remembered being in her own world as she was surrounded by turmoil:

I can remember being encircled by the girls in home economics class. I was so dumb... The black girls encircled me, in this is one memory I have, and wanted to know what I was going to do when the revolution came. I don't remember what I said, but whatever I said must have been okay because they left me alone. I said, "Well, what do I need to do?" I think something along those lines. They told me that I needed to hide under the bed. {Laughing} But whatever my response was, it was okay, because apparently I was accepted. I never had any problems. I never got stuck with pins. I never had my hair pulled. I had the long blonde hair...

Fights

The relationship between the black and white students continued to deteriorate over the course of the year. Len explained:

I remember there was a fight in the cafeteria. One of the girls that was friends with one of the friends in my clique stood up and made this proclamation using the N word and I thought that the cafeteria was going to be totally torn apart. All of my little group just kept eating, just kept eating-- yeah we're in a new school! You know?! We were just oblivious...just oblivious!

According to Len, the first year at the newly integrated junior high school was tumultuous. There were verbal and physical altercations and students being harassed by

other students. Through it all; however, Len somehow managed to avoid the chaos that surrounded her:

I was in my own little cocoon. I did not make any waves. I did not get involved. I can remember being in assemblies and I was never stuck. I was never messed with...and I don't know why. I don't know why I wasn't. I guess that's why I was so stupid...we're at a new school...

Len remained neutral throughout her turbulent junior high years. By staying to herself and not getting into any altercations, she was able to avoid conflict with her new classmates.

Race riots

Unfortunately, the tension between the African American and white students continued throughout the second year at the junior high school and followed them into high school. The loud verbal altercations became physical and the physical altercations turned into riots. As Len explained, it was an extremely frightening time:

There were riots at the high school. I can remember the biggest one that caused the most problems was when several groups of African American boys were going through the halls calling the other African American children out of classes. I can remember the administration locking us in our classrooms. In my newspaper class, there was a young lady who was Miss Black Teenager and she was the most beautiful girl I have ever seen in my life. I really admired and respected her because the day that we had all of the trouble she looked up at the ring leader in our hall and said, "You come in here and give me one reason why I need to get up and leave my classroom and what I'm learning to come walk with you!" That just

left an impression on me because I thought ‘dang,’ you really got yourself together--you really know where your values are. That was the time that one of the administrators was kicked. That was the time that I was told...our class was told, “If you can get home...get home!” They had riot police up there.

As Len reflected on her junior and senior high school experiences, she realized that although she was in the midst of some sort of ongoing conflict or crisis she remained unharmed. According to Len:

I was never bothered and I don’t know why. Maybe it was because I was so dumb and I didn’t respond back-- maybe that’s what it was. I didn’t get into a big theatrical discussion. I just did my thing...

She could not provide an explanation for not being bothered or harassed. Again, she indicated how she just “did her thing” and did not get involved in the conflicts around her.

Marie

Early experiences in a segregated community

Living separately

Marie Thomason was born in Galveston, Virginia. She is the oldest daughter of eight children. Her father was a blue-collar worker and her mother remained home to take care of their home and the children. Marie described her town as being very small and close knit. Because of how the town was divided, the African American community was very close. Marie explained:

I was born in Galveston, VA, which is probably about a one-mile square radius. It was very small...a very small area. The town was pretty much divided by a railroad track. Whites on one side and blacks pretty much on the other side. All the black people knew each other and interacted together. Schools were segregated at the time so we not only went to church together, but we socialized and went to school together, too.

She continued to explain that during her childhood she and the other African American children did not have contact with white children. She also stated that it was very rare for her to see any White person and if she did then it would be an adult. She explained:

Not with the children, we didn't come into contact with each other. Our parents worked together. They worked together at a mill-- Purlington Industries --where most of the people in Galveston worked at the time. There were some people who worked out of town. We also had a few of our black adults who were teachers or other types of professionals, but the majority of the people worked at the factory.

There were three shifts 7-3, 3-11, and 11-7. They were pretty much manual labor. Marie's father worked for Purlington Industries as a chauffer. He chauffeured the businessmen in the company. He would also pick up important clients from the airport or drive them to the airport or hotel. Marie said that he would drive as far north as Maryland and as far south as the northern parts of North Carolina.

While Marie and her family's lives were affected by racism, her parents tried hard to not allow it to impact their day-to-day lives. They worked hard to provide Marie and her brothers and sisters with the things they needed and did not discuss any incidents or frustrations they experienced as African Americans living in a segregated community:

I don't remember him ever saying that he had any kind of run-ins or mishaps with adults but then again he and momma didn't talk about that kind of thing in front of us kids either. No, they didn't share a lot of that. That was adult conversation and we weren't involved in that.

Marie continued to discuss the types of conversation that she and her siblings had with their parents around the dinner table. They discussed what they did that day, homework, upcoming social activities, and game schedules. Neither racial tensions nor any other types of problems were ever discussed in front of the children.

Marie's parents worked hard to give her and her brothers and sisters as happy of a childhood as they could in spite of the hardships they endured living in a segregated community. They pulled close to their community and everyone looked after one another.

Marie talked about this time as a happy experience:

I think that you probably heard people talk about how you grew up in a small community. You worshipped with your teachers and your teachers were friends with the parents. If you did get into some trouble, your parents knew before you made it down the street. We had one teacher that came in from Lewisburg and the other three [teachers] lived right there in the neighborhood-- so they were like second parents to us.

During this period of time, it was Marie's perception that it was the "village" that raised the children. The adults in the lives of the children had only the best intentions. Growing up, many children like Marie had several sets of second parents.

Separate but not equal

While Marie's parents tried hard in their family life to protect her from the ugliness of segregation, she and other African American children were acutely aware of racism and how it impacted their lives. Marie remembered attending schools that were African American because she was not allowed to go to school with White children. She explained:

All of the black kids attended high school together throughout Rock County or throughout the majority of Rock County anyway. We even had people bussed in from Farthing, VA. I guess that must have been Rock County, too. Well it was back then. We went to Wilmont Downs High School this was a black school in Lewisburg. We were bussed 18 miles one way to go to school. The white high school was only about five or six miles away. Because we were segregated at the time, we were not allowed to go. We couldn't go even though it was that close to us. We had to travel 18 miles.

Traveling 18 miles one way to school was not the only injustice Marie had to endure as an African American. She was not allowed to join certain school organizations because at the time they were for white students only:

I was able to join the New Homemakers of America (NHA), which was like the Future Homemakers of America (FHA), but New Homemakers of America was for black or African American students. We weren't allowed to join the FHA because it was a white organization at the time.

Growing up during this time, African Americans had an "African American" version of everything they could not be a part of because of their race.

Integrating Schools

Community response to integration

Marie and her classmates attended separate schools from their white peers from the time they began school in first grade until their ninth grade year. Marie and her peers were happy at their own school and were not happy at the thought of having to leave their school and integrate the white high school. She explained:

I guess it was the end of our ninth grade year that they told us that we would probably be integrating and we would be the last ninth grade class at the school. Our ninth grade class did not like it all so you can imagine what the upper class thought. The class that would have been the senior class was just devastated. They had to finish their last year at the “white high school.”

There were definitely some feelings of resentment of the upperclassmen of having to go to the white high school. Marie remembered feeling uneasy over the summer at the thought of having to go to the white school. She had never interacted with white children before so she did not know what to expect from them or how she would be received in the school:

All summer I remember being so nervous wondering what in the world was going to happen. You know we had been hearing about riots in other areas and things like that and we had had no contact with white children our age, at least, I hadn't. Because the only white adults we would come in contact with would be people in stores. When I say “we”, now, I'm talking about my sisters and brothers and I, we'd see them in stores and every once in a while when we went to my dad's job for some little party that they might be hosting and that was pretty much it.

It was difficult for Marie trying to anticipate what her year would be like in the “all white” school. Having no contact with white children and hearing about the horrible events that were taking place in schools across the country as they tried to integrate, Marie was determined to take care of herself if she had to:

No contact with white children. None. So, we just had no clue as to what was going to happen. I remember telling my mamma and they [her parents] didn't believe in violence, either. I said mamma, I'm taking my metal nail file with me and if one of those kids comes after me, then I'm going to poke them with it. I'm gone get 'em. I thought that she was going to fuss at me, but she didn't. She said, “You just be careful,” but she never told me *not* to use my file. She didn't say anything against it or for it, which to me said a lot by her not saying anything. She was worried and concerned about it, too, just like I was, I believe. Cause our parents didn't know, they didn't know what to expect.

Marie and the other students in her community were trying to prepare themselves for the worst because they didn't know what to expect. As she continued her story, she indicated that they were more readily accepted than she thought they would be. Initially, the black and white students did not know what to make of each other. The tension didn't break until later in the year. She explained:

We were expecting the worse. And it really didn't...It happened at some point but we had been there a while. I remember one small group of white guys started mouthing off I think it was at a football game one night. One called one of our guys the n---- word and then it kind of escalated. It was a pretty bad fight in the school. A couple of boys were suspended for a while. Things didn't calm down

then it kinda got neighborhood people involved especially the young adult males. Supposedly, the white gang (it wasn't a gang but a group of white guys) was going to come up into our neighborhood and kind of put us in our place. The young adult males went down to the edge of the black folks side of town and stayed there all night. They waited. They stayed there. They parked cars there and waited all night and nothing happened. After that, things just started to fizzle down. The white guy that did all this mouthing was beaten up pretty badly so I think that took an edge off of his mouth some, too. He didn't have a whole lot to say anymore. He was one of the ringleaders and nobody stepped up to take his place.

After the tension finally broke, Marie indicated that things at school began to settle down. The black and white students were beginning to learn what to expect from each other and how to interact with one another.

Getting to Know You

It was only natural that the school climate would be tense as two different worlds were forced to blend for the first time. Over time, however, both sides were able to interact and learn from each other. Ironically, the African American students came into this new situation with the upper hand because they knew more about their white peers than they knew about them:

First year, like I said was pretty smooth. I remember one of my girlfriends and I laugh because we knew more about the white people than the white people knew about black people.

Marie attributed her knowledge about white people to popular culture. Products geared toward teenage girls were promoted in magazines for white teenage girls. Marie and her friends knew all about their hair and make up products. She explained:

I think that it was through magazines. You know we liked Teen Magazine and that kind of thing. There were no articles in there [the magazines] that were geared towards black people. It was white hair care, white um; everything was geared around the white girls. But, we liked to read about people our age so we knew about what kinds of hair products they used and that kind of thing... make up, all about the make up and that sort of thing.

Her white peers did not have the same knowledge about her. Through their positive interactions they were able to communicate and learn about one another:

They didn't know anything because they would ask us sometimes how did you get your hair like that? How did you do your hair like that? They just thought our hair was naturally straight and I wasn't about to tell them any different but my girlfriend was like we straighten our hair. So then they wanted to know what that meant. She described the hot comb to them and all of that. You know she got into how hot the 'eyes' [on the stove] would be and they [the white girls] would be like...you do what? Some of them with real long hair said that they tried ironing their hair with a real iron. So, we did share some of our cultural differences and learned from each other that way.

Marie and her friends were able to develop positive relationships with their white peers and learned about their differences as well as the things they have in common.

Integration did provide African American students opportunities they were not afforded while they attended segregated schools. They were finally allowed to join the organizations that were for white students only:

There were a couple of us who really enjoyed home economics and took it all the way through high school. When we integrated, there was just the FHA so we were allowed to join that. By the time we were in 11th grade, I remember them fixing the ballot so that I was running for Vice President against my girlfriend and I thought well that's not good, I don't want to run against her. But later, I realized that they wanted to make sure that they had at least one black officer. They wanted an African American officer so that's why they had set the slate up the way they did to make sure that we did get involved. We were allowed in all of the clubs and the ones that we joined we felt pretty good in.

Marie credited her teachers for trying to make her and the other black students a part of the school.

The impact of the Civil Rights Movement

Although Marie grew up during a period of time that changed the American way of life, she was a typical teenager in that she was oblivious to the world events that were shaping and impacting her world. Marie's understanding and later enlightenment came when Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated:

We were saying that we were unaffected growing up, but I do remember when Martin Luther King died. We heard about it on our way home from...well we hadn't left school yet. We had just heard about it and then school closed. It was time for them to close so we were very upset on the busses. You know thinking,

we didn't know a whole lot being teenagers, but what we did know was that it was a bad thing that had happened and uh, I got home and momma was hanging clothes on the line and I saw her cry. It was the first time I'd ever seen her cry. And, I realized that this is bigger than what I think and everything on the news was about Martin Luther King's death and that's all you saw. You saw news people crying and so I started paying more attention to the news at that time and realized you know that this is going to cause some problems. Something's going to happen.

While she was primarily concerned with her day-to-day activities like any other typical American teenager, King's death was a pivotal moment for Marie. As she watched her mother and the rest of the world responses to King's death, she finally understood what his life meant and what a tragedy his death was not for just African Americans but for the entire nation:

We heard about things in other states but it didn't hit home. It was like a history lesson of some sort. When he died, I can't remember how old I was I think it was right before I had turned 17. It made me much more aware of the prejudices in our world. I started to read more and I started to listen to the television more. I started to feel more in my heart. I started to feel the pain for the people who did have to suffer. I remember our Virginia history book. It talked about slavery and it was only maybe two paragraphs in there and we were taught that slaves were brought over on a boat and they were given a place to live and they were given food and in return they did work for America. It sounded so pleasant so that it was like it was no big deal. There was nothing in the VA history book at the time that talked

about the torture and torment people had to face. How families were just ripped apart. We didn't learn that. It wasn't in our books.

King's death made Marie more aware and she paid more attention to what was happening around her. It also spurred her to read and learn more about her own history as she searched for the history that wasn't in her textbooks. King's death also influenced how the story of Africans and African Americans were told. Marie explained:

You know gradually through our history books we heard bits and pieces of it. But, I started to look for more of this information after Martin Luther King died and more of it started to come out in news and magazines. Books started...schoolbooks started to put more real information in there and it wasn't such a pretty, rosy picture anymore.

Marie and the rest of the world would never be the same after Reverend King's death.

Trailblazer

Marie was so bright, she skipped third grade and moved on to the fourth. Her parents encouraged her to read and placed a strong emphasis on education:

My parents pushed me to skip third grade and I think it was because that I could read so well. I skipped from second to fourth grade. I think a lot of it was my parents pushing me. Homework was the most important part...that was my job...that was the most important thing that I was supposed to do so I was made to study.

Marie and her classmates were considered to be the trailblazers of their time. They were the first class to integrate the high school and, as a result, allowed to join clubs and organizations that African Americans were not allowed to be a part of. In addition, she

and her classmates were the first class to have the most number of African American students to attend a four-year institution. She explained:

Yes, but do remember that when we were called in to discuss college options there were no books in there about historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). None. I think that the counselor may have known about a couple of them and mentioned them. Because my class was the first class to have so many African American students go on to a four-year institution. We had some people ahead of us, maybe one or two may have gone on, but the majority of them that went on for a higher education went to a business school or a community college. We had some people ahead of us, maybe one or two may have gone on, but the majority of them that went on for a higher education went to a business school or a community college.

Marie and her classmates accomplished many “firsts,” endured segregation, and learned a lot about themselves and their white peers through integration. Marie’s life experiences were pivotal in her preparation for the challenges she would encounter as an adult and as a classroom teacher.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES

Len

Philosophy

Len described her teaching philosophy as trying to reach each child. By striving to reach each student, she tried to give students a positive learning experience by making them feel like they could be successful and find something they liked about science. She explained:

My teaching philosophy is that I sincerely try to look at each kid as an individual. I try to find something that that child has of value or worth that they can add and that they can feel good about. I want them to feel like they can contribute to my class and I want them to feel like they can be successful. It's my goal; it's my philosophy to try to find that success rate or that success level for every kid and then build on it--at least, that's what I try to do. My philosophy is that every child can learn. My philosophy is that every child can learn and find something in science that they can like.

In her discussion about her teaching philosophy, Len recognized that all of her students might not be comfortable with science especially the type of science she teaches, physical science. She understood that in order for her students to get the most out of her class and the content that they must feel comfortable with her. Therefore, she was adamant about getting to know her individual students and putting their needs at the center of her classroom practice.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Needs of students at the center of practice

Recognizing the diversity of needs within the classroom

Len recognized the different needs within her classroom. She didn't view these differences as problematic but rather recognized the importance of her understanding the differences in order to better help her students. She explained:

The needs are different. There are different understandings a child is bringing into the situation, into the classroom. The different understandings, the different ways of communicating-- maybe that's what I'm trying to say. When they are at home, you've got to talk loud. There's a lot of people there and you've got to talk loud and you got to talk whenever you want to talk to get what you've got to say said. And, I think that sometimes we need to be reminded that there really truly are differences. I don't know the word I'm searching for but not every child comes into a situation understanding that when you talk you wait your turn. When you talk you wait for someone else to finish before you start. And, loud isn't always loud to everybody.

Rather than labeling her students or accepting mainstream ideas to explain behavior that she hadn't been exposed to, Len tried to understand the environment in which her students came from in an attempt to understand their behavior. She explained:

There's more of an expectation on the part of myself that there's more guidance. There's more of you know... you've got to bring your book. Their needs in the classroom... they don't understand the study skills. Maybe there is no one at home to check to see if they've done their homework or to give 'em their snack

when they reach the door and say now get your homework done and let me hear about your day. There's more of independence with a lot of the children. There's more of an expectation on the part of myself that there's more guidance there's more of you know you've got to bring your book. Yeah, you've got to organize it this way because they're so independent many times they're not used to having someone guide and tell 'em what to do. In their own homes, they're adults and it's hard and to have someone tell you what you've got to do when you're independent.

In order to meet her students organizational and study skill needs, Len tried to guide her students by reminding them to keep up with their textbooks and keeping organized notes in their notebooks. She realized the fact that many of students stepped into adult roles once they left school and rather than patronize them --she tried to respect their positions.

Creating safe zones and establishing trust

Len recognized the diversity of needs within her classroom and worked hard to make her classroom a safe zone where all of her students felt comfortable. Len believed that when students felt safe then they were ready to learn. Len realized that sometimes there were risks involved in learning. One becomes vulnerable when he or she reveals that he or she does not understand. Therefore, Len felt like the classroom must be a safe zone in order for students to feel comfortable enough to take risks in order for them to learn:

I really want my classroom to be a safe zone. I want a situation where a child... where it's almost a home away from home. I want to hear what their experiences are and I want them to feel like they can express what they have to contribute to

whatever it is that we're studying. I also want them to feel comfortable enough to ask a question if they don't understand something. You have to realize that the experiences are not always the same with the kids. They haven't traveled like some of the other kids. And so, you've got to make your room a safe zone so that when their experiences are shared and they don't match with the different levels of the children are in the room that that's okay. You almost have to take on sort of a mother instinct of making sure that the materials are there so that the experiences are expressed.

In addition to making her classroom a safe zone, Len recognized and valued that trust was an essential component between her and her students. She also understood that students must trust their teachers in order to feel comfortable enough to take risks so that they could learn. Therefore, Len strived to make her classroom a safe zone so that she could build and establish trust between her and her students:

Some of them don't trust very much. You know they don't trust that you're going to care enough about them. And once you get that trust once you have that trust factor in the classroom that it's ok then that's part of it, too. To let them realize that....once again it's a safe zone and that they're learning, I'm learning, we're learning together.

As Len continued to discuss the idea of establishing trust and safe zones, she stressed the importance of students feeling safe in the classroom. She described how she wanted her students to feel safe to not only to take risks but also to make mistakes so that they could learn. Thus, the elements of trust and safety were especially important in Len's practice.

Len's students corroborated the importance of trust and feeling safe in the classroom in order to take risks to learn. During the focus group interview, Kim, a white student with a lower socioeconomic status, indicated that she liked Len's class because Len made her feel special. Kim also said, "She makes me feel like I can learn." Also, during this same interview, Morasia, an African American student from New York, said, "She (Len) makes me feel smart like I can do anything...She never makes me feel inferior" (Interviewer's Log, June 2, 2004). The students indicated in this interview that they were willing to try and put forth effort because of how Len made them feel about themselves.

Togetherness

Togetherness was a very important aspect of Len's classroom. She worked hard to build community in her classroom. Through building a strong community based on togetherness rather than competition, Len felt that her students were encouraged to learn:

It's not that division of them and me. It's more us- I think. I don't see it as them and me. I never have I never will. It's me as the teacher with each individual student trying to connect. It's not me and those and that and this one...It's more of um...you've just got to see the individual kid and yeah you see some that are homeless. And you're aware of that but for that period of time big deal, so what. We're in an area where we're together, we're safe, we're warm, we're working on something and for that period of time it's ok.

Len discussed the importance of togetherness in order to bring about unity

within her classroom. While she and her students were together, the focus was on togetherness and not individual differences. Thus, the emphasis was on working and learning together.

During an observation of the science class on a lesson on circuits, I noticed how Len encouraged the students to work together to solve problems. As she asked individual students in the class questions about circuits, if that student was having a hard time answering, she encouraged the other students in the class to “help him out” or to “get [his or] her back” (Field notes, May 21, 2004). The students were engaged throughout the discussion. They were all very eager and excited to answer the questions the teacher “threw” at them as they were allowed to wear a crown when they correctly answered a difficult question.

Awareness of the implications of race

Dumb ‘ole white woman

Len recognized and acknowledged the differences between she and her students. By being able to acknowledge those differences, she came across as more authentic, more true to her students. Therefore, she was able to establish and sustain trusting relationships between her and her students of color.

In a conversation with one of her African American students after class, Len told the student that she knew “growing up was hard.” She also told her, “I’m just a dumb ‘ole white woman and I am here if you need me” (Fieldnotes, April, 2004). In our conversation about the meaning of the ‘dumb ole white woman’ comment, Len explained:

A lot of times when and ...as I get older...it gets better. It makes the kids laugh. It acknowledges that I may not understand everything that they're telling me. That there is a difference in understanding and ground but when I say that and the kids looks at me and laughs it's a connection between the two of us saying I don't understand will you please talk to me and help me understand? And it's an acknowledgement of I'm willing to listen to you if you're willing to talk to me instead of being on that pedestal-- I am the white teacher who knows all come up to my pedestal. I guess in my own dumb way it's a way of acknowledging to them if you'll talk to me I'll listen.

Len's students seemed to respond positively to the 'dumb ole white woman' comment. I noticed how the student relaxed her shoulders and how the frown on her face began to lessen. I watched how her head tilted and how she intently focused on the words Len spoke. It seemed as if the female student she was conferencing with genuinely believed that Len was reaching out to her and cared about her being successful both in and outside of the classroom.

As Len and I discussed how other students respond to this comment, she stated: They laugh at me. I guess I use that to help break the ice a little bit. I do mean it respectfully. I hope it's respectful that you're speaking a foreign language to me...break it down for me and help me understand. I hope they view it as a way of acknowledging differences because there are. There are differences...there's differences in age, in experiences, etc.

Rather than having a long discussion, Len chose to convey her understanding of the differences between her and her students through humor. She indicated later in the

conversation that many of her students did open up and shared personal stories and experiences with her.

Identity

Len was acutely aware of the implications of the social constructs of race on the attitudes of some of her African American students. She realized the struggle that some of them had to endure because they had to choose who they were going to be: white or black. For many students, to study and to do well in school meant to “act white.” Len explained:

Among the African American group because you’re more like white folk-- you’re being like the man. Who do you think you are? So, that’s within the group itself putting pressure upon those that want to achieve.

Len discussed the importance of teachers having trust and safe zones in their classrooms as a way of combating societal definitions of success and who can and can’t be successful. She indicated in her discussion that it was important to her that her students felt safe to be themselves and not have to choose to be “black” or “white.”

She also understood the realities of racism and its impact on how her students saw themselves and others. She explained:

I don’t want someone to think I’m superior because I’m white. I don’t think that anyone should think they’re better. I don’t think anyone should think they’re smarter because of who they are right now. Because who you are right now might not be who you are tomorrow and the scary....it may be an experience that occurs within this building that gives that kid something for the future. You may never know what you’ve done to a kid good or bad. You’ve got to realize that you are

touching that kid and what you've done to that child may not show up today or tomorrow. It may show up several years down the road.

In this comment, Len realized the feelings that her students have by being affiliated or defined by their memberships to certain racial groups. Furthermore, Len recognized the powerful influence of students' racial identity had on their academic outlook and performance. Len also understood that her middle school students were constantly changing; therefore, she recognized her need to be consistent. In addition, she was aware of her influence on students extended beyond the time she would have them as students in eighth grade science.

Critical Awareness

Len's awareness came from the deep understanding she had of her students' backgrounds and needs:

I guess the biggest one for me is the realization that not every child has a safe place to go home to--a safe place to fall when they go home. It may not be a quiet place. It may not be a secure place.

Again, Len emphasized the need for students to feel safe because they were coming from unsafe environments. During our conversation, Len explained how her awareness and understanding of her students' backgrounds and needs deepened:

I think that the biggest thing that came real to me was when everyone gets excited to go home for Christmas. Whatever you got it may not be a Hallmark family and no one has a Hallmark family. I noticed that discipline gets worse right before the holidays. And I firmly believe that the children know and in many cases this is the best thing they've got. They won't admit it --that they want to be here-- but it is a

secure place—it's a structured place. When they go home for 10 days, for 15 days, there's nothing really to go home to. And, that was awareness for me.

Len's understanding of her students' home situations helped her think about why the discipline increased around the holidays. She recognized that many of her students did not come from "ideal" home situations in which they were nurtured and received positive attention from adults. Thus, the holiday season or any other extended time away from school was very difficult for students and many of them were unable to articulate their feelings of frustration and sadness so it was manifested in misbehavior.

Acceptance of responsibility for student success

Len believed that it was her responsibility as the classroom teacher to make certain that each student in her classroom was successful. According to Len, "kids are going to be kids," and it was the professional responsibility of the teacher to make sure that all students learn. She explained:

You're gonna have to be the one who's gonna have to change for the kids because the kids aren't at a point in their lives where they see the relevance of anything at this point. So, you've got to hook them in into understanding that you know that and maybe there will be something better for them later on.

As the professional, Len understood and accepted the responsibility of having to be flexible. As she indicated in her dialogue, without flexibility, teachers were not going to be successful in the classroom:

And I've got to make it through to the end so I've got to be the one that's got to be flexible and I've got to be the one that realizes that when...it's just got to be me. Kids needs are changing their changing every year. How's that impacting

your classroom? You can't go on what you do every year. You got to be able to modify and you've got to watch what's going on and you've got to be flexible enough to...to ...to modify. It's just got ...you've got to be ready to do your job. And your job has got to be with your kids and your job has to be willing to change to meet the needs of those kids.

In addition, Len didn't expect to receive anything from her students. She realized that she was the one who had to give, to motivate, and inspire. Most importantly, when the plan doesn't work out the way the teacher intended, it is the teacher's responsibility to devise a new plan.

You don't go into teaching expecting someone else to make you feel good.

You're the teacher. You're the one that has the control. You're the one that's got the job of making it or breaking it. Sometimes you do make it and sometimes you don't but you've got to reevaluate. You've got to look at the situation and be able to look in the mirror and say either you've succeeded or you're the one that needs to change.

During the close of the conversation about teacher responsibility, Len ended with the following insightful comment:

The reality is that you're going to have every kid in the world with all the baggage in the world, every color, every nationality, etc...and you're going to have interruptions and you're going to have to go with it -- because that's your job.

Since Len takes her job as a teacher very seriously, she takes full responsibility for the successes and failures of her students.

Marie

Philosophy

Marie described her teaching philosophy as believing that all children can learn and that her role in the classroom was to facilitate the learning process. She explained:

I think that I see myself as a facilitator and I want to help the children to become independent thinkers, know how to solve problems for themselves, and make good decisions. It's my job to guide them in a way that they can get it in the best way that they possibly can and as much of it as they possibly can absorb. I need to be a guide. Try to channel their way of thinking into ways that they can be good, independent thinkers.

In Marie's discussion about her philosophy and pedagogy, she emphasized that in order for any teacher to be effective that he or she must first understand the needs of his or her students and then center their instruction around their students' needs.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Needs of students at the center of practice

Positive attention and soft tones

When asked to discuss the specific needs of her diverse students, Marie immediately spoke about her belief that those students needed positive attention. She explained:

I think that one of their major needs is that they need positive attention. They very seldom get that I think. Often times, they are stereotyped; they're talked to in a different tone than other students. They're talked to as if they can accept more criticism than other students. I think they're spoken to in harsher tones than a lot

of the white students are...and they are human beings just like everyone else.

They can benefit from that positive attention, they can benefit from that soft tone and those strokes of encouragement. I think that is one of their major needs outside of the academic realm.

Marie indicated that there was a difference between the types of attention that African American students and White students received from some of the teachers. She also indicated that there was a difference in the tones of voice these teachers used with African American and White students. Recognizing the disparity in how African American and White students were treated, Marie made a concerted effort to give African American students positive attention and was sensitive to how she spoke to them. As Marie indicated in her dialogue, often times, the teacher is a powerful influence in the lives of his or her students.

As an observer in Marie's classroom, I noticed how Marie did not yell at her students- even when they were doing things they should not have been doing. During one of the classes that I observed, I noticed that one of the students seated in the back was not on task and had food in his mouth, which is a "sin" in a lab situation. While she discussed with the class how heat moved, she made her way over to the student in the back. She instructed the class to write down which part of the apple pie burned their mouths: the crust or the filling. She quietly told the young man in the back, "empty your mouth." She then instructed him to write down his stepfather's phone number. She then said, "I really wish I wouldn't have to call and that you would behave without my having to call" (Field notes, February 26, 2004). The student removed the item from his mouth and threw it in the trash and then proceeded to work on the assignment.

During the post observation conference with the teacher, I mentioned to her how I noticed how she didn't raise her voice. In our conversation, she discussed how she had to develop this skill over the past several years. She also indicated that yelling at students didn't guarantee that they would do what she wanted them to do. She further commented that as the professional, it was her responsibility to remain in control of herself (Field notes, February 26, 2004).

Being available to students

In addition to being spoken to soft tones and needing positive attention, Marie also discussed the importance of the teacher being available to his or her students.

Whenever her students needed her to be there, she made herself available:

I needed to be there if they needed me. So, we've had after school clubs at the time. We pick and choose clubs so I started a little crafts club and I got a lot of the African American children to join. While we were sitting there doing our needlework, we would chat about a lot of different things. They would share a lot of things that were really in their heart and I started to realize that yeah they were a lot like my seventh grader at home. And I needed to treat them with more of a mothering attitude. I think before that I had the attitude that you know I've got mine you've got to get yours and you've got to get it through me. I needed to realize that they didn't accept that. That's not what they wanted to hear. They needed somebody to assist them, someone to facilitate their learning.

From making herself available to her students, Marie had the opportunity to get to know her students outside of the classroom. She also learned that her students needed her a lot

more than she realized. They appreciated the attention they received from her when they stayed after school for the crafts club she sponsored.

During her discussion, Marie also indicated that students respond positively when they felt that the teacher cared enough to stay after school to work with them. Marie shared:

I tell my students to stay with me... let me work with you on that. Let's do some one on one or some small group work there. Um, I have a long list of kids who stayed and worked with me on their science projects this year. A lot of those were minority students. Just trying to find some time in the day to let them know that they're special enough that I don't mind giving my time to them.

In this same conversation, Marie described the importance of not only communicating care but demonstrating it, too. According to Marie, her students understood how important they were to her when she stayed after school with them. They realized that she did not receive any extra pay for working with them after school hours. They understood that she was volunteering her time.

Expectations

Marie also believed that the expectations that teachers held for their students were critical to their success. In her discussion about teacher expectations and African American students, she noted the differences between her black and white students in terms of academic achievement:

I still do think that it is very difficult for black students to make their mark in school when it comes so easily for others. You see names in sports but you don't

see names on the honor roll lists. There are some (academic) awards our children just don't receive.

Marie made certain that she holds high expectations for all of her students—especially her African American students. She held them to the same standards as she held her white students. She gave them the same higher-level questions, which let them know that she expected them to answer the same questions as the “smart kids.” She explained:

I try to make sure that I call on them as just as much as I call on the white kids.

The expectation is at least high for them. Call on them for some of those tougher questions even though I know that they may not be able to answer but at least get them used to hearing those questions and that yes you are going to be hit with those tough ones not just those smarties on the back row or on the front row.

She also expected the same for her English Language Learners (ELL) students. By requiring them to participate in class by either answering questions (orally or on the board) or reading the text aloud, she showed her students that she expected them to learn rather than just sit quietly at their desks. She explained:

I try to do it with all of them but I am particularly sensitive to that with my black children and with my ELL students. When I first had some of those students, I would just let them sit in corner and give them a passing grade and just move them on because I didn't really know what to do. I learned though that if you push them they could rise to the challenge a lot of times. I had one that I didn't think could speak any English and she asked me can I go to the bathroom the other day and it floored me--that she could say an entire sentence, that she could ask a

question. So, I've been calling on her to read. And she said, "Oh no, no, no." And, I said "Oh yes, come on, and I'm going to help you and we'll touch each word if we have to", but often times, I don't need to she knows a lot of the words in there already. So, um, you know it's just a matter of expecting—good things from them and they will often times try to please you. They're not expected to so they haven't been pushed to do anything.

Marie highlighted some very significant points in her discussion: when students realize that they're not expected to do anything, then they won't and when students understand that the teachers expect them to learn then they will try to reach those expectations because they want to please the teacher.

Positive adult relationships

Marie also discussed the power of positive adult relationships in the lives of her students. She explained:

They need a parent away from home. They often times don't have an advocate in the building or a role model or somebody that looks like them. So, I try to let them know that if you need to talk to me you know I'm not mamma age anymore but I'm grandma age and that I can still talk to you. It's fine if you'd like to do that. I had a young lady this year that I found out that her mom was real ill. She didn't know at the time that her mom was terminal. She came to me and we talked about that a little bit- what the disease meant, what the doctors had told her meant. So, I continued to talk to her and asked her about her mom and just let her know that I was here for her. Today she said something....I said... I don't remember what it was I said to her but she said, "Ok, mother I hear you." And it let me

know that she does see me as a role model (and her mom did pass). I felt good that she felt comfortable enough saying that to me. It did make me feel real good.

Marie understood that her students were influenced by the perceptions of the adults in their lives. This was why she worked so hard to sustain positive relationships with her students. She realized that the process began with her. She had to make her students believers by believing in them first. She explained:

One of the first things you have to have them do is believe that they can accomplish what you're asking them to do. You have to make some kind of connection. As we've said before, if the child does not like the teacher he is not going to try. That is middle school nature. They aren't going to try to push and do what they should do for themselves if they don't feel that the teacher cares about them.

Marie's students also indicated during their interview the importance of having positive relationships with their teachers. According to the students, this is how the teacher communicates care. According to Walter, a Hispanic student who was currently repeating the 8th grade, "I want a relationship with my teacher." During the interview, he also mentioned how teachers like Marie made him want to come to school because she took an interest in him outside of the school realm (Interviewer's Log, June 1, 2004).

In this dialogue, Marie highlighted another critical point: students are not going to try unless they believe that the teacher cares about them. This is why she worked so hard to establish positive relationships with her students so that they would believe that she believed in them and that they could accomplish any task they set out to do.

Establishing community within the classroom: It's a Family Affair

In addition to positive attention, soft tones, high expectations, and positive adult relationships, Marie noted that establishing community within the classroom was another critical component to effectively educating African American students. Marie was especially sensitive to the needs of her students. During a classroom observation, I noticed how one of the students in Marie's class struggled to answer a question during the class discussion (Field notes, March 29, 2004). After a couple of minutes, Marie asked, "Can we help her out?" "Who knows what I mean?"

During a post observation conference, I asked her reason for doing this and she explained:

I picked that up from a teacher years ago. Just don't let them hang like that. It's embarrassing enough sometimes to be called on and to not know the answer. Marie understood the importance of allowing students to have their dignity and not embarrassing them in front of the class. The students in Marie's class understood that it was all right if they did not know the "correct" answers to questions that she asked during class discussion. She encouraged her students to help one another.

An effective strategy Marie used to create community in her classroom was telling the students in the class that they were family. She encouraged them to help one another and insisted that they take care of one another while they were in class. She explained:

And I'll tell them we're seventh period family. I'll tell any of my classes that we're family. Don't you dare laugh at such and such if they come up here and don't do well. I have a lot of them who don't want to go up to the overhead or to

the board. I'll let them take a buddy up there if they want or I'll stand with them and I'll dare anybody to laugh at them.

Marie wasn't certain that her students really saw one another as real life family members but she did claim that they did indeed help each other. They also understood that she was very serious about them being supportive of one another.

Marie's emphasis on working together as family left an impression on her students. During the focus group interview, one of Marie's students indicated that she made him and his classmates feel like "they were at home" (Interviewer's Log, June 3, 2004). They also indicated that they felt very comfortable with her and with one another.

Awareness of the implications of race

Differences in how students of color are treated

In her dialogue about the treatment of students of color, Marie was keenly aware of the disparities in how the children in her building were treated according to their race and socioeconomic status. Marie discussed how she witnessed some of her colleagues viewed and treated some of the African American students. She explained:

Keep your dignity if you don't know the answer for it that's important. And, it's especially important, I think for the black kids because they don't often get treated with such dignity. I think that they are talked to in harsher tones with short, sharp answers with no explanation. They deserve that same respect regardless of their color.

Marie also understood why some of the African American students may have a negative outlook:

A lot of times minority students come in with a defensive attitude throughout elementary school until they reach us and I think it stems from how they are treated throughout their earlier years of schooling.

Marie acknowledged in her dialogue that a big problem rests in how some teachers communicate with African American students:

I've seen some people come down really hard on kids and I thought that if I were in his shoes or her shoes that I would just want to melt through the floor-- just from the humiliation and embarrassment that they were causing by the way they were talking to the child with the sarcastic remarks they were making.

According to Marie, it was this type of interaction that dehumanized students. She was extremely sensitive to how adults communicated with students and was very purposeful when she spoke in soft, calming tones.

Lowering expectations

Marie also realized that many of her colleagues have lower expectations for the African American students than they did for the white students:

And I don't think that that expectation is always high enough. Whether you're saying expectations, prodding...I don't think that we're pushing them to do their very best often times.

She noticed the differences in academic expectations:

Watering it (the content) down for them, or giving them points if they are able to talk about it.

There were others who expected nothing, therefore required nothing, and as a result, received nothing from their students. Marie explained:

A lot of times I think that they expect them not to have supplies. There are some who do not assign projects because they know that the children do not have markers and poster board. There are others who don't push the kids because they assume that they are not going to do it.

Marie indicated in her conversation that the expectations these teachers held for African American students were not the same they held for their white students. Should one of the white students not have their homework, then these teachers were more inclined to have a conversation with either the student or that student's parent(s) to learn why the student did not have their homework assignment. These same teachers did not water down the curriculum content or assign homework because they didn't think that the students would not complete it. Marie raised a significant question: why should it be any different for African American students?

Critical Awareness

Over time, Marie developed a keen awareness that helped her interact positively with her students. This awareness was brought on by two incidents in which Marie was afforded the opportunity to examine herself and her practice critically:

Well, it wasn't there from day one when I first started teaching. I guess I felt like black kids had to work harder to get what they need and so I am going to have push them harder and I'm going to talk tougher. It wasn't until I realized that that wasn't working. Their grades were still below par. They still didn't want to open up and volunteer the way that a lot of those kids were raising their hands at every question that I asked. The black children weren't doing it that much. I thought that

something needs to change here. I thought something else has to change here in order for them to see education in a more positive light.

Early in her teaching career, Marie had the mindset that her Black students had to work harder in order to be successful in the classroom. She thought that being harder on them by pushing them and talking to them “tougher” would motivate them to perform better in school. It wasn’t until she recognized that her black students weren’t doing much better that she realized perhaps being a “tough” teacher isn’t what they needed her to be. Later, in that same discussion, she mentioned that as she watched her own son scramble through middle school that she realized that her students needed an advocate and not a drill sergeant. More importantly, one did not have to yell in order to be an advocate.

Marie also shared another pivotal moment in her career that impacted how she related to students. She explained:

I was probably a third year teacher when a little boy stole my wallet. We had a home economics department that was kind of chopped off. We had three kitchens but they were three separate kitchens so you could never see everybody all at one time. Other teachers and I were eating lunch in a middle kitchen, there were no classes in there, the principal came in and said he had just chased a boy and that he had found my wallet. The boy threw something and he went over to find it and it was my wallet. He had been in the first kitchen and stole my wallet out of my purse. When I talked to him later about why he had done it, he had said, “Because you had embarrassed me about something in class today.” So that was his way of getting back at me. I couldn’t even remember what I said to him because for me it had just rolled off of my back. It was enough to hurt his feelings to the point that

he thought I'll get back at you and take your wallet. You never know how a child is going to react to something that you say so you don't want to back them in a corner with words or you know with any kinds of physical means as well. That was a big lesson for me that day.

Rather than blame the student for making a poor decision to steal from her, Marie looked inward as to why this student would have resorted to taking her purse. From this experience, Marie learned the importance of having a positive relationship with students and treating them with dignity and respect. She realized how her words affected this student and caused him to want to get back at her.

Acceptance of responsibility for student success

Marie took full responsibility for the successes and failures of the students she taught. She took her job as the teacher very seriously. She understood that she was responsible for their learning. She explained:

I am going to get them to want to learn. If they don't feel comfortable with me, then they aren't going to learn what I'm trying to teach them. I have to hook them first. I have to get them to realize that they want to learn this information and that they are a little interested in it.

Marie understood that she had to make her students want to take part in learning by using the content to pique their interest. She wasn't ashamed to admit that she was prepared to do this "by any means necessary." She insisted that she finds success with her students by establishing positive relationships with them and making herself available to them when they need her. She realized the power of positive relationships in the classroom and

how through those relationships students would reach any expectation the teacher sets out for them.

Marie realized the work in effectively educating diverse students is on the teacher.

She stated:

The work is on us-- a lot of it is-- especially if we are going to get them to reach their fullest potential.

Marie was committed to helping all of her students reach their fullest potential regardless of what it required of her. She believed it was her professional responsibility to teach all students in spite of any challenges that she or her students might have.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Len

Recommendations for Teacher Education

In a discussion about what teacher education must do in order to effectively prepare new teachers for being successful teachers of diverse students, Len advised that teacher education must do the following for their new teachers: address preconceived notions and remove them from their comfort zones.

Addressing preconceived notions

As she reflected upon her own preconceived notions, Len realized that they evolved over time. As a new teacher, she assumed that everyone grew up with parents and lived in nice homes in good, solid-neighborhoods. She thought that kids grew up around people who loved and doted on them just like the people in her community did her when she was growing up. She explained:

My preconceived notions from my life experiences are that you have a mom, you have a dad, and you have a neighborhood. You have people around you who just think that you're wonderful. Well these kids don't. There's yelling, there's screaming, there's fussing in many cases. One of my children said, "We had the police over our house this morning," Mrs. Smith. "Really, well what's going on?" "Oh, it's all settled now we had to get the neighbors straightened out." You know well this is where they're coming from. Here's another one... Well not every child wakes up happy. Momma's not always there to say "I love you" and "have a good day at school, you hear?" They're screaming and yelling and cussing and waiting until the last minute to get out of the door and its not a happy time. Then

they come in and I expect them to be rays of sunshine and ... You've got... a new teacher's got to realize that they're just not knocking down the door to come in and see you.

Len became educated rather quickly when she learned from her students that the 1950s nuclear family unit that she grew up in no longer existed. Her students could not identify with having two parents, living in a nice home, or growing up around "sane, rational adults." Len learned that many of her students lived with aunts, uncles, cousins, or grandparents. Many of them, unfortunately, came from dysfunctional home situations. Len emphasized the only way she came to know these things about her students were through conversations with them about their lives. It was through these conversations that Len was able to gain the trust of her students and establish positive relationships with them.

In regard to preparing pre-service teachers, Len believed that teacher education must find a way to help them address their preconceived notions before they start working in the field. Len believed that the professors working with new teachers needed to provide opportunities for students to identify what their preconceived notions are and then help the new teachers understand that those notions aren't always true. Additionally, she felt that as the professional it was up to the teacher to change if they were truly going to be effective with diverse students. She explained:

I guess what I'm saying in a nutshell is you can't come in with number one preconceived notions about how certain kids act. If we're human and we're breathing we're going to have certain notions about things from our life experiences but when you come into a classroom, yeah, you may have these

notions but you have to be professional enough to realize that those life experiences need to be changed. Might be adjusted. you can't always expect it to be true. That you've got to take each one of those...you've got to get to know your kids. You got get to the point...that's the bottom line. You got to get to a point where you know your kids and find something about them that clicks.

In her dialogue, Len also indicated that it was the responsibility of the teacher to find something positive about their students so they could help those students grow and move beyond what society expected them to be.

Taking pre-service teachers out of their comfort zones

In addition to addressing preconceived notions, Len believed that teacher education needed to take pre-service teachers out of their comfort zones. In her discussion, she indicated that when students remained in environments they were accustomed to then they have very little growth. She explained:

It seems to me that the interns [pre-service teachers] that I have worked with you do gravitate to your comfort zone. After you get to that comfort zone, you've got to work through and realize that there are other kids there.

As Len indicated in her discussion, when the teacher was outside of his or her comfort zone, then he or she was forced to work with children who they were not accustomed to working with. As a result, they had to purposefully strategize how to establish and sustain connections with the students so that they would become a part of the learning experience.

Len remembered how a formal principal forced her out of her comfort zone and how she benefited from the experience:

I can remember Katherine Dunman telling me this (and she did this with me).

You have your comfort zone...and she would give me an assignment that I didn't want to do. I didn't want to do it [a particular assignment], but I did it and it added stress to me but I learned.

In Len's reflection about being taken out of her comfort zone, she admitted that it was painful to have to work in a situation that is unfamiliar. She also stated that when she worked through the stress of it [the situation] she was able to learn and grow from the experience.

Len indicated that being removed from ones comfort zone and being "discomforted" was necessary and critical to growth. She believed that during this time the pre-service teacher should have several support systems in place to help them process their learning experiences:

They need to feel that uncomfortableness.... and if a teacher has it in them then they're going to come back with that security blanket of supervising teachers and people at the college. Being able to have that dialogue back and forth. But, you've got to have someone willing to understand you blew that and don't get defensive, and we all do.

As Len indicated in her conversation, discomfort does not always have to be negative, and, with the proper support, provides wonderful opportunity for growth. The cooperating teacher, supervising teacher, and university faculty should work collectively to help the pre-service teacher process their uncomfortableness so that they do indeed grow.

Marie

Recommendations for Teacher Education

In a discussion about what teacher education must do in order to effectively prepare new teachers for being successful teachers of diverse students, Marie advised that teacher education must do the following for their pre-service teachers: provide more experiences with diverse students; address preconceived notions; and establish awareness.

Providing experiences with diverse students

In Marie's discussion about her work with pre-service teachers and teacher interns, she stated that most students who had been assigned to work with her are white females from middle to upper middle class backgrounds. She also indicated that many of them had little to no interaction with people who were not like themselves:

Most of them are white and have come from privileged backgrounds. Most of them haven't really socialized or spent lots of time with black children. Some of them come in and zero right in on the minority children thinking that these are the kids I really want to help. Others are very timid and very shy about approaching them not knowing what to expect because they are different.

Marie strongly believed that these new teachers needed to work with all types of students so they have a realistic view of what kids and schools are like. Otherwise, they have unrealistic expectations and find themselves easily intimidated and sometimes afraid of students who are different from them. Marie purposely assigned these timid interns with a student who was totally different from them so that new teacher would learn how to establish a rapport:

One of my interns really hit it off with one of my students...this student had been at an alternative placement school at one time. The two of them hit it off just fine. The intern got the young lady help her with a DARE project. It just so happened that the student really enjoyed art and got really involved into it and was upset on the days the intern didn't show up afterwards. She just really enjoyed working with her. She was one of the ones who felt a little intimidated about working with a black child.

In this situation, the pre-service teacher learned how to work with a child who appeared to come from a totally different background from her own and was successful in building a rapport and later developing a relationship with that student.

Marie also indicated that pre-service teachers should be knowledgeable about people from a variety of backgrounds. She gave specific ways that pre-service teachers could learn more about black children:

Its good, too, if the students could learn about the different backgrounds of children whether they are poor, minority, or disabled- I read something not too long ago that said if you really want to know a different side of black children, go to a black church. You're going to see them in the youth choir, you're going to see them in Sunday school classes, and that type of thing...I know that that doesn't happen too often that our interns or seasoned teachers even do that but it would be so nice if they do.

Marie later said that it was important for teachers to try to get to know their students outside of school. She mentioned attending the black church because it was a setting where teachers could see their students being leaders. She discussed how many of them

were in the choir, ushered, played instruments, sang in the choir, or participated in praise dance. It was an opportunity for the teacher to see their students in a different light, actually a more positive light. Marie was hopeful that this would alter the teachers' perception of the abilities of their students and help them be more effective with their students.

Addressing preconceived notions

Marie believed that teacher education needed to assist pre-service teachers in addressing some of their own assumptions about people who were different from themselves. She explained:

New teachers need to be aware of their own assumptions and how that maybe impacts their expectations—do or don't. You know all of us may sometimes find ourselves slipping into some of that same train of thought from time to time.

Another thing that is good for interns is the journal... The interns must use the journal and go back reflect and evaluate what happened when I observed this teacher-student interaction. It is a gage for their own reflection and their levels of comfort and discomfort as they interact with the different students. Maybe they can figure out where that discomfort and comfort comes from... how to work around it, so that they are aware.

Marie stressed the importance of pre-service teachers processing their preconceived notions especially those who will work with diverse students. She also stated in her conversation that those pre-service teachers needed some assistance in understanding where those assumptions came from. She felt like the university faculty should help the

pre-service teacher process this and then assist them in helping them understand how these assumptions affect the expectations they held for their students.

The essentialness of awareness

Marie also indicated in her discussion that when new teachers were able to understand how their expectations were influenced by their beliefs that they could work through their assumptions and become aware of their own bias:

It is awareness you have to be aware before you can make any sort of improvements. If you come in thinking I'm the greatest and that there's nothing wrong with me, it's all them and their parents' fault. You may understand all of the science and history in the world but you're not going to get it across to the students.

As Marie indicated, the teacher's awareness of self is critical otherwise that teacher is not going to make any significant improvements in his or her instruction. Marie makes a good point in her discussion: regardless of the extensiveness of content knowledge, without reflexivity, the teacher will not assume responsibility for student learning- and, as a result, students will not learn.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Both teachers in this research study grew up during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. While both women shared similar experiences as they came of age during this revolutionary period of time, issues of race were manifested in the lives of both women very differently yet making an equally significant impact on their worldview.

Although both women's early life experiences differed, both of their belief systems were shaped by their awareness of societal constructions of race and how it was used as a criterion for determining position and status within the larger society. As a result, these teachers' awareness and understandings as influenced by their experiences were the basis for their instructional decisions. Thus, their instructional focus reflected a comprehensive view of students in which they sought to view them in relationship to external factors that significantly influenced their circumstances. Through identifying these factors, the teachers understood the impact of the environment on their students' growth and success. Thus, these teachers' educational philosophies reflected traits of empathy, advocacy, and responsibility, which will be illustrated in the discussion of their beliefs and practice.

Embedded within the discussion of the teachers' educational philosophies and instructional practices is an awareness of the sociocultural implications of race on themselves as teachers and their students as participants in the process of "schooling." From the data analysis, the following three themes emerged: (1) Teachers' background experiences provoked an awareness of societal influences on race; (2) Teachers' understanding of the sociocultural factors of race influenced their pedagogical decisions;

and (3) Teachers' critical awareness promoted a comprehensive view of students and their behaviors. Each theme will be discussed in relation to each teacher.

The aforementioned themes were used to discuss the following research questions: (1) What are the most salient experiences that teachers say have shaped and/or influenced their philosophies and pedagogies? (2) How are the practices of effective teachers of diverse students manifested in a classroom context?

Theme 1: Teachers' background experiences provoked an awareness of societal influences on race

Background experiences were not only pivotal in shaping teacher beliefs but also in heightening each teacher's sociocultural awareness, which inspired both teachers' empathetic feelings toward their students. In each of the vignettes, there was a clear indication that the teachers' belief systems and emergent teaching philosophies were influenced by their awareness of society's view and treatment of individuals according to their race. This theme will be discussed in relation to each teacher.

Len

Len's early life experiences growing up during the pre Civil Rights era significantly influenced her worldview. As a child, Len was very much aware of societal expectations and treatment of individuals according to their race. While Len was inundated with societal messages, her parents contradicted societal induced norms regarding race throughout her childhood. From rejecting the notion of "colored town" to getting angry about an interracial family's home being cherry bombed, Len's ways of seeing and knowing were shaped at an early age.

Len's parents' actions in the home were pivotal to her development and understanding. While African Americans were negatively characterized within the larger society, Len's parents dispelled these negative characterizations and myths as they identified "good" and "bad" behaviors and individuals within society. For example, when Martin Luther King was mentioned on the news, Len's parents indicated that he was a "good" man because of the restraint he used when someone spit on his children. In this discussion, they helped Len see Reverend King, as a human being- he had children- just like everybody else. They also helped her to see how those individuals were "bad"

for spitting on innocent children for no other reason than the color of their skin. These early life experiences informed her thinking as she was allowed to critically see the “good” and the “bad” within society. Thus, her perspective about people was much more broad, more global rather than one-sided.

Len’s belief systems were further influenced during adolescence, as a result of the integration of the new junior high school. Unlike the parents in the community, Len commented that her parents did not have an issue with her going to the new school. According to Len, the only concern they had was her having to travel so far to attend school. Because her parents did not have an issue with her attending the new, integrated school, Len did not have any initial issues or concerns about going to Reedsburg. She and her parents did not have the same “concerns” as their neighbors about having to go “across town” with “those” kids. Thus, she was open to meeting different people and having new experiencing without being prejudiced.

During the new schooling experience, Len was able to establish and sustain positive relationships with some of the African American students. In Len’s conversation about junior high school, she referenced a meaningful relationship that she had with an African American girl with whom she co-chaired the newspaper. She described how she admired and respected her. She also discussed how one of her friends (in high school) in her circle was involved in an interracial relationship and how it was fine within their peer group. Len’s schooling experiences proved to be as equally significant as it provided her the opportunity to learn the value of relationships. Again, Len’s worldview was broadened by her personal relationships with African Americans. Thus, she knew from

her own experiences what African Americans were like and did not have to rely on societal myths and characterizations for information.

As a result of these background experiences, Len believed that her primary responsibility as the teacher was to know and understand the needs of her students. Len's discussion of the needs of her students illustrated her understanding of the influence of race on herself and her students and how it played out in her classroom. Thus, her teaching philosophy encompassed getting to know her students individually and establishing positive relationships with them as a means of transcending any barriers between them created by race. Clearly, Len's beliefs and emerging teaching philosophies were influenced by her experiences as a youngster and teenager growing up during the Civil Rights era, as this was the period of time when her sociocultural awareness was heightened and when she learned to overcome societal induced racial overtures through positive relationships.

Marie

The background experiences that influenced Marie's beliefs and teaching philosophies occurred within two major periods of her life: early life experiences and early career experiences. Marie's early life experiences growing up in a small, close-knit, segregated community greatly influenced her. Hard work, dedication, and perseverance were key principles she learned from her family and the larger community. These principles were reinforced in school, as they were essential to survival in a segregated world. She also discussed the importance of community and how they worked together to support one another.

Attending segregated schools also left a strong impression upon Marie. She experienced the injustices of segregation first hand as she recalled having to be denied memberships in national organizations such as the Future Homemakers of America (FHA) simply because of the color of her skin. She recalled how she and her classmates were inundated with messages of self-reliance and determination from her parents and teachers. They constantly reiterated the importance of education in overcoming injustice and a means for attaining a better life. She remembered being told that she would have to work twice as hard and she had to be the best in order to get a fair chance. Because of the limited opportunities for African Americans during this period of time, she and the other students in her class were pushed to work harder so that they would be the best. Thus, race created a need for teachers to have higher expectations for their students because their future success depended upon it. Consequently, according to Marie, the teachers' having higher expectations meant being harder on them in order to prepare them for societal injustices they would soon encounter.

In addition to demanding the very best from her and her classmates, Marie discussed how her teachers' involvement in the lives of their students extended beyond the walls of the classroom. According to Marie, they were like "surrogate parents". They were a part of her life as they lived in her neighborhood, were members of her church, and attended the same social events. Together with the parents and the outside community members, the teachers formulated a sustained support network for the children.

It was evident from Marie's discussion about her initial teaching beliefs and philosophies that she was significantly influenced by her early schooling experiences.

She described earlier in her career how she used to be “harder” on her African American students than with her other students because she wanted them to excel. She, like her teachers of the past, emphasized a strong work ethic and did not suffer excuses or laziness well. She mentioned how she spoke to them harshly and how she pushed and pushed them. Unfortunately, this tough demeanor she used to prepare her students for the world was not effective. Through spending time with them after school, she realized that her students did not respond to this tough disposition. They were most responsive when she interacted with them with a mothering attitude. This was a revelation for Marie as she believed that she had to be tough and unyielding as her teachers were when she was a student so that she, too, could prepare her children for the harsh realities of the world. This experience was especially salient as it contradicted what she thought and knew what her role as the teacher should be and it was pivotal in her own understanding of what her students needed from her. Thus, this experience was critical for Marie as it was a paradigm shift in her belief system.

As a result of this shift in Marie’s thinking, the approaches she used to reach her students also changed. Marie’s beliefs and practices continued to evolve as she learned from her fellow colleagues and built relationships with her students. She described how she learned from one of her colleagues how to allow students to work together in order to avoid embarrassing anyone for not knowing the correct answer. Again, this was not a practice Marie was familiar with from her own schooling experiences. As a student, she knew that she would have to come to class prepared so that she could answer the question because the teachers did not allow students to not answer questions. Fortunately from these early teaching experiences, Marie realized that she could not be to her students

what her teachers were to her because of how society had changed. In order to get the best from her students, she learned that she could no longer be like her authoritarian teachers of yesterday. She instead had to change her approach in how she demanded the best from her students, if not, then she was going to lose an entire generation of kids simply because they could not relate to her.

Clearly, Marie's teaching philosophy, which emphasized academic excellence and setting high expectations, came from her own background experiences as a student. The manner in how she communicated her expectations of academic excellence for all changed as a result of her early teaching experiences. While Marie's interactions and communicative patterns changed, her understanding of societal definitions of race and racial identity did not. Thus, like her past teachers, race continued to be a critical factor in Marie's teaching philosophy as she saw it as her personal responsibility to not only prepare them for academics but also for the world.

Theme 2: Teachers' understanding of the sociocultural factors of race influenced their pedagogical decisions

Both teachers' sociocultural awareness of race was provoked by their background experiences, which in turn, guided their pedagogical decisions and practices. Inherent within these teachers' discussion of their teaching practices was their understanding of the issues surrounding race and how those issues were manifested in their classrooms. Both teachers utilized this understanding in their own work with students as they assumed the role of advocate in an attempt to dispel societal myths that their students may have internalized about themselves and their ability to succeed.

Len

Len demonstrated an awareness of the sociocultural implications of race in her discussion of her teaching practices. Embedded within her conversations about her pedagogy was her understanding of how both she and her students were influenced by societal codes and patterns of normalcy according to race and socioeconomic status. Thus, her instructional practices were in response to this awareness.

As a classroom teacher, Len focused her attention to the factor she felt was the most important in her ability to reach her students-- race. Thus, she purposefully addressed race in the context of her classroom. Recognizing that as a white woman she had a certain level of privilege, she understood how she and her students were "set up" to be adversaries because of their race and position within society. In an attempt to help her students recognize that she was aware of the differences between them but she was willing to try to understand if they were willing to talk to her, she would refer to herself as a 'dumb ole white woman'. Len indicated that this not only facilitated a dialogue

between her and her students but also removed some of the tension created by the racial division.

Additionally, this conversation evidenced her understanding of the barrier that exists between white and black people because of societal constructs and definitions of racial groups. This reference was one of Len's attempts to remove the racial barrier between she and her students. Len indicated that she wanted to remove the "pedestal" and that she did not want her students feeling like they had to "come up to her pedestal because she was a white teacher who knew it all." Len understood the damaging effects of racism on the psyche of her students: the feeling of superiority or inferiority that can be communicated by it.

Len's awareness of the sociocultural implications of race was further evidenced in her conversation about the academic achievement of African American students. Len discussed that for many of her students choosing to excel academically was choosing to be "like the man." Len indicated that many of her African American students were in a difficult situation because in the environment in which they lived individuals were not respected for doing well in school. Those students who carried their books and worked hard to make good grades were chastised and labeled as "acting white."

As a result of her sociocultural awareness, Len's pedagogy worked to remove racial barriers that created tension and distrust and open lines of communication with her students in order to establish trust and create safe zones within her classroom. As she indicated in her interview, trust is a critical component in student learning, and students must take risks in order to learn, and, more importantly, students must feel safe in order to take risks. Through gaining the trust of her students and making her students feel safe

in her classroom; Len is disrupting societal assumptions and definitions about her minority students. Therefore, a major part of Len's pedagogy was in building and sustaining relationships with her students. Len sought to establish her classroom as a place where they are not made to feel inferior and where they are encouraged to thrive academically without the fear of being chastised or isolated from their racial group. This further evidenced her advocacy for her students.

Marie

Marie's awareness of the sociocultural implications of race was demonstrated in her discussion about the disparity in the expectations between and in the treatment of African American and White students. Marie's classroom practices and her interactions with students were in response to her understanding of societal dispositions and assertions regarding race and how that influenced her students.

Thus, Marie's pedagogy sought to help all of her students reach their maximum potential through maintaining high expectations for each one of them. She refused to water down content or give points for idle, meaningless tasks. She gave her African American students the same attention in the classroom and asked them the same types of higher order thinking questions as she did her white students.

In this same conversation, Marie recognized how these lower expectations for Black students presented an overarching problem in the area of academic achievement. As Marie indicated, "when you expect nothing, you get nothing." Therefore, it was no surprise to Marie that there weren't as many Black students receiving academic awards at the end of the year because they weren't expected to be successful. She also discussed how Black students would receive awards and recognition for sports but not in the area of academics. Marie maintained that by holding her students to the highest of expectations

they, too, would realize that they could be just as successful academically as they could be on the basketball court.

Marie's pedagogical practices were also influenced by her understanding of the negative characterizations and depictions of African American youth in the media and how they were mistreated as a result of these images. Marie described at length the disparity in how African American and White children were treated in her building. She noted the differences in how they were addressed, as if the African American students could take more criticism. She indicated that she felt that there was an overall lack of dignity and respect for African American students.

More importantly, Marie understood how this unfair treatment was an assault on these students' self esteem. Therefore, she made a concerted effort to make her classroom a place where her students could overcome these societal induced indignities. Thus, dignity and respect, in addition to speaking to students in soft tones, were fundamental components of her classroom practice as she made it her personal responsibility, as an advocate for her students, to begin the process of repairing the damage brought on by society.

Also within the discussion of her pedagogy, Marie discussed the importance of establishing support systems within the classroom, as she felt it was imperative to her students' academic success. She described how she tried to instill "family bonds" within her classroom so that her students would feel like and treat each other as if they were family. She did this not only in hopes that her students would 'get along' but to also build support networks within her classroom. Then, if her students did not have any other support system, they would, at least, have the support of their peers and their

teacher. Marie's reproduction of the extended family within her classroom further evidenced how her pedagogical decisions were influenced by her sociocultural awareness.

Theme 3: Teachers' critical awareness promoted a comprehensive view of students and their behaviors

The teachers' awareness and understanding gained through their background experiences and teaching practices provided them with a comprehensive view of their students. This comprehensive view was reflected in the teachers' descriptions of their students and their behavior in relation to the external factors that manipulate their beliefs about themselves and their academic abilities. Consequently, their instructional decisions and practices were informed by their comprehensive view of their students.

The following discussion evidences the teachers' understanding of the environment on their students' attitudes and behaviors and how they take responsibility for their students' learning by being reflexive about their practice and trying to help their students overcome external factors that negatively characterize them according to their race and socioeconomic status.

Len

Len's discussion about her students' reactions and responses to specific situations according to external factors evidenced her comprehensive view of students. For example, Len discussed the fact that many of her students go to homes where there is no one there to help them with their homework in the afternoon or to ask them about their day. She also spoke about some of her students not having study skills because they did not have the help at home to reinforce what is taught during the school day. She then described how her students were forced to become independent and very adult like because of the lack of stable adults in the home forcing them to communicate as adults instead of teenagers.

Len also raised another pertinent issue regarding the home lives of her students as she discussed the reason for the increase of discipline referrals before the holiday season. She indicated in her discussion, that, for many of her students, school was the best thing they had in their lives because of its consistency and stability. For example, the students' knew the time they would eat breakfast and lunch and when to go to class. During the holidays, which were often a ten to twelve day period of time, they would not have this same consistency. She recognized the angst in the students and understood that they were not mature enough to articulate their worry or frustration so it was manifested in their misbehavior.

Additionally, in her conversation about communicative patterns, Len discussed how in some of her students' homes they speak in louder voices and sometimes they even interrupt each other when they speak. She recognized that some of her students did not understand that one must wait his or her turn in order to speak. In the conversation, she also indicated that 'loud' was relative and what may be loud to one person may not be loud to someone else.

To support her students in managing and overcoming these external factors, Len was careful not to create situations within her classroom that caused her students to behave or respond inappropriately. She recognized and respected her students' independence and was careful not to patronize them. Rather than "tell them what to do" she instead interacted with them as a facilitator as she guided and directed them so they felt like they had ownership in the classroom. Len modified her own behavior as a result of her understanding of the external factors that influenced her students' demeanor. This not only evidences her comprehensive view but also is an indication of how she uses this

understanding to support her students as they transition from home to school environments.

Marie

Marie's comprehensive view of students was demonstrated in her discussion of the various catalysts within the environment that provoke African American students to be "defensive." According to Marie, many minority students come to school with a defensive attitude because of earlier negative experiences. She indicated that this "attitude" was a defense mechanism in response to how they were mistreated during earlier years of schooling and not because they had "bad" attitudes. In addition, she was aware that these "noncompliant," "defensive" behaviors were not always acts of defiance but instead she perceived them as acts of resistance. Because she recognized the tough, defensive exterior as a protective barrier, she devoted her time developing strategies to gain her students' trust in order for them to experience success in the classroom.

Marie further illustrated this point in her reflection about a personal experience in which one of her students stole her wallet. She indicated in her discussion that she believed the reason the child stole her wallet was to "get back at her" for embarrassing him in class earlier that day. Marie commented that she didn't even remember the dialogue between her and the student. According to Marie, the most powerful thing that stood out in her mind was that the student's feelings were so hurt that he felt like he had to do something drastic in order to get back at her. She stated that she learned a powerful lesson that day about "backing students into corners" physically or through use of words. In her recollection of this incident, at no time did Marie ever blame the

student or try to stereotype him. She viewed his behavior as an act of resistance and even accepted partial responsibility for it.

Marie continued to demonstrate her comprehensive view of students, as she explained why some of her students did not complete their assignments. In her conversation, she indicated the essentialness of students' feeling like they are cared for; otherwise, they will not put forth the effort to succeed. Again, Marie contextualized this behavior as an act of resistance rather than laziness. Thus, she understood the reciprocal nature of the student-teacher relationship and recognized the essentialness of positive relationships in order for students to reach their fullest potential. With this understanding, Marie spent a great deal of time trying to establish and sustain positive relationships with her students in hopes that they would put forth the effort to succeed.

Marie's awareness of external factors that influenced students' responses were pivotal in her understanding of the role of the environment on how her students' behaved. Additionally, this understanding clarified the role she needed to assume in the classroom to help her students be successful. Because she understood her students' behavior as acts of resistance to harsh, unfair judgments, she recognized that she needed to be supportive and not adversarial in order for them to overcome societal entrapments. Therefore, she advocated for her students and focused her efforts on building and sustaining positive relationships with them so that her classroom would be a place of acceptance, encouragement, and protection.

Conclusion

The teachers' awareness of the societal implications of race proved to be a critical factor in the effectiveness of the two teachers involved in this study. Awareness of implicit and explicit hegemonic messages regarding race and how it was reinforced within the larger society was pivotal to both teachers' development. This awareness provided both teachers with a different lens from which to view their students. Thus, the teachers' perspectives of their students were in relation to their understanding of how external societal influences shaped how their students viewed themselves, which in turn affected how they participated in the educational process. Consequently, the teachers' pedagogical decisions and practices were guided by their understanding of these interrelated factors and societal influences.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS

Returning to the Literature

Over the past several years, teacher education has embraced multicultural education as a means for trying to develop culturally responsive dispositions in their new teachers (Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Melnick and Zeichner, 1997). Teacher education programs have varied their approaches ranging from the addition of multicultural concepts to the existing curriculum to integrating multicultural courses and field experiences throughout the teacher education program (Irvine, 2003; Goodwin, 1997). Because of the emphasis on cooperation and knowledge of minority group attributes rather than the impact of racism on those groups (Villegas, 1998; Zeichner 1993) in these courses and/or field experiences, many pre-service teachers have a limited understanding of the fundamental principles of multicultural education. In addition, they do not feel prepared to teach nor do they have a desire to teach children who do not look like them or who come from different backgrounds (Gordon, 2000; Martin, 1997; Rodriguez and Sjostorm, 1995). As a result, critical multicultural concepts and practices such as “cultural responsiveness” have been reduced to a mere list of steps on a checklist because emphasis is being placed on “what” and “what not” to do rather than addressing issues of race and society and those influences on themselves and their students.

This study like the ones conducted by Xu (2000), Cruz (1997), and Goodwin (1997) explored experiences that facilitated multicultural understanding. Much of the research on effective teachers of diverse students focuses on the instructional strategies teachers used to help make their students successful. This research differed in that it is an

ethnographic study, which used a critical race theory perspective as a framework for exploring the factors that influenced the teachers' educational philosophies and pedagogical practices.

The review of the literature and the data from this study provide some significant implications for not only teacher education but for multicultural education as well. First, the data from this study boldly revealed the criticalness of teacher knowledge of the social, cultural, economic, and political ramifications of racism in society. Marie and Len's understanding of the sociocultural implications of race facilitated their culturally responsive dispositions. Thus, their effectiveness as classroom teachers was a result of their sociocultural awareness, which stemmed from their knowledge and personal experiences with race and racism. Therefore, multicultural concepts and definitions must not be devoid of the implications of race. Issues of race and racism must be addressed and included in current descriptions and explanations of multiculturalism.

Secondly, the findings of this study vividly illustrated sociocultural awareness, which is a component of culturally responsiveness as defined by Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Gay (2000). Sociocultural awareness translated into the teachers' understanding of society's treatment of race and how these societal definitions of race create and maintain disequilibria in the larger society resulting in racial and cultural dissonance. In other words, Marie and Len recognized how society influenced their students' perceptions about themselves and their academic abilities, school, and their teachers. More importantly, they were cognizant of how they, too, were influenced by society and consequently would have to resist subtle messages depicting acceptable norms and values.

Thirdly, the findings of this study revealed that sociocultural awareness is the crux of culturally responsive pedagogy. The remaining components of culturally responsive qualities as identified by Villegas and Lucas (2002) include: having an affirming view of students; embracing constructivist views about teaching and learning; designing instruction that builds on what students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar; and being familiar with students' prior knowledge. The data in this study indicated that sociocultural awareness influenced the manner in which teachers appropriately adapted these strategies to the needs of their students. In other words, these strategies, which could be considered "best practices" for all students, were implemented in a way that took into account the teachers' knowledge of societal conditions that influence minority students and their learning.

Fourthly, the findings from this study indicated that culturally responsive dispositions such as empathy, advocacy, and responsibility were a result of and inspired by sociocultural awareness. Both Len and Marie explained that their pedagogical decisions and practices were in response to the social and emotional needs of their students. Therefore, they made a concerted effort to make their classrooms places where their students could overcome obstacles and experience success. This finding is especially significant in that Villegas and Lucas (2002) discuss sociocultural awareness as one of the components of culturally responsive qualities. While the remaining qualities having the appearance of instructional practices may be appropriately defined as components or strategies; sociocultural awareness, on the other hand, describes a state of being. Therefore, it may be more accurate to consider sociocultural awareness as a disposition rather than a culturally responsive strategy.

Finally, the findings of this study distinguished sociocultural awareness as a precursor to the other culturally responsive components. Marie and Len's comprehensive view of students clearly demonstrated that their instructional decisions were based upon their knowledge of the external societal factors that served as a catalyst for their students' behaviors. The teachers' instructional strategies took into account the complexities stemming from the diverse needs of the students in their classrooms. Thus, culturally responsive dispositions are a manifestation of sociocultural awareness.

Suggestions for Teacher Education Programs

The insights derived from the teachers' experiences and awareness of the sociocultural implications of race suggested some possible significant implications for teacher education programs. Several issues emerged from the research findings and offered possibilities for future research.

First, teacher preparation programs must not look to "strategies" and "approaches" to foster culturally responsive qualities within their pre-service teachers. The findings of this study indicate that culturally responsive practices were facilitated by sociocultural awareness not multicultural trends and buzzwords. Therefore, teacher educators must help their pre-service teachers understand societal inequity, and, according to Joyce King (1991), "think critically about educational purposes and practice in relation to social justice and to their own identities as teachers" before introducing them to multicultural teaching practices and settings (p.140). Otherwise, teacher educators risk reifying stereotypes and "multi-culturing their pre-service teachers to death" because they lack the understanding of why these practices are needed.

Therefore, pre-service teachers need opportunities to critically examine society and how it uses social constructions of race to normalize and institutionalize inequity and privilege. Pre-service teachers also need to understand how they have been conditioned to “see” others according to societal mechanisms that establish patterns of normalcy based on race and socioeconomic positioning through the construction and perpetuation of stereotypes. Thus, the findings of this study necessitate the incorporation of studies of race and society within teacher education courses in order to heighten pre-service teachers’ sociocultural understandings.

Quite similar to Joyce E. King’s (1991) social and multicultural foundations of education course, teacher preparation programs need to develop courses that “directly address societal oppression and student knowledge and beliefs about inequity and diversity” (p. 134). In Kings’ course, pre-service teachers examined how the process of schooling “reinforces societal inequity and oppression” to broaden their understanding of how society works (p.134). In this course, she posed thought provoking questions requiring students to draw upon the ideas presented from the literature introduced in the class. The students had to consider their own identities when responding to the scenarios. I suggest a merger between sociology and education ideologies would foster pre-service teachers’ understanding of factors influencing schooling including: cultural capital, class and class fractions, privilege, institutional racism, biases in the legislation and media, unequal distribution of resources, and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1993; 1983; 1977).

In addition to having opportunities to critically examine society, it is important for pre-service teachers to understand how these societal constructs influence their beliefs and attitudes about poor and minority people. Len and Marie suggested that teacher

preparation programs needed to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to address their preconceived notions. According to Len and Marie, pre-service teachers needed to first recognize that they have preconceived notions before they could address them. Secondly, and more importantly, Len and Marie indicated that pre-service teachers also needed to recognize that their predetermined beliefs are not always true.

While Len and Marie's recommendations for teacher preparation programs to provide pre-service teachers opportunities to explore and address their preconceived notions coincide with the literature (Canella and Reiff, 1994; King, 1991, Irvine, 2003), these experiences must be contextualized within how their beliefs have been shaped by society. This type of experience is an extension of critiquing society, as they understand societal influences in a very personal way--on themselves and their thinking similar to the experiences provided by King in her multicultural foundations course.

Addressing preconceived notions and critical examinations society's treatment of race in teacher preparation programs may be a "threatening experience" for White students from "economically privileged, culturally homogenous backgrounds" (p. 142). While White students may experience discomfort (Boler, 1995) as they unpack and digest their benefit of privilege in the disenfranchisement and oppression of others, this pedagogy is critical to facilitating pre-service teachers' sociocultural awareness. In addition, these experiences are necessary as pre-service teachers ponder what kind of teachers they want to become (King, 1991). It will also further help them understand the huge responsibility they take on when they decide to become teachers.

The findings from this study raised issues that should be taken into account in this era of standardization. While teacher educators are researching factors that influence pre-

service teacher education, federal and state departments of education are evaluating teacher effectiveness in terms of students' performance on high stakes testing. Therefore, in the area of k-12 education, emphasis is being placed upon curriculum content. As a result of increasing teacher accountability and state standardized testing in public schools, there has been some discussion about removing educational foundation courses in teacher preparation programs and replacing them with additional content courses. The rationale for this change in curriculum is that teachers would become more specialized in the areas they teach, which would then in turn, increase student scores on standardized tests.

Removing foundational courses that address issues of race, class, and society is especially dangerous, as the primarily white teachers who are entering the teaching profession will have to teach students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Without courses that address issues of race and racism, the dissonance between these young white female teachers and their students of color will widen. In addition, minority students will continue to be "left behind" as their teachers continue to view them from a deficit frame of reference and blame their academic failure on their parents and socioeconomic positioning rather than the system that marginalizes them.

Public schools and schools of education are under close scrutiny because poor and minority students are not experiencing academic success. With the pressures from the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation, teacher preparation programs can not afford to dismiss issues of race in the curriculum. As we learned from Len and Marie, effective teachers teach the students *first*, then the content. Therefore, the influence of race cannot be ignored as teacher understanding of its influence is imperative to culturally responsive practices and effective teaching.

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