

**TEACHING AND LEARNING COLOR-CONSCIOUSNESS
IN A COLOR-BLIND SOCIETY**

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ABSTRACT

In this ethnographic study, I draw on interviews, audiorecordings of course meetings, observation notes and student work to explore the experiences of White preservice teachers in two sections of a *Social Contexts of Education* course. The instructors of both sections sought to challenge students' color-blind racial ideologies. Whereas prior research documents prospective teachers resisting learning about race, this study's participants evidenced a willingness to engage with this content. Nevertheless, most participants still remained committed to color-blind ideologies at the end of the course. This research offers insights into two obstacles that hindered most participants from adopting color-conscious ideologies as well as four pedagogical strategies that successfully interrupted, at least temporarily, some participants' color-blind ideologies. The findings lead to pedagogical recommendations for teacher educators, structural suggestions for teacher education programs, and a theoretical contribution about the important role of socio-cultural understandings of identity in the preparation of color-conscious teachers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Many Americans believe that the United States offers equal freedoms and opportunities to all of its inhabitants regardless of race, national origin, gender, sexuality, ability or religion. In fact, however, our society is intensely inequitable, particularly along racial lines. For example, White households have about 20 times the median net worth of Black households and about 18 times the median net worth of Latino households.¹ Surprisingly, many Americans remain unaware of this disparity. A poll released by the Pew Research Center (Taylor, Kochhar, Fry, Velasco & Motel, 2011) found that “about half of all Whites (53%) say the average Black person is about as well off financially or doing better than the average White person.” Perhaps even more astonishing, 36% of Black respondents said that the average Black person is “doing better or about as well off as the average White person” (Morin, 2011). The pervasiveness of dominant American ideologies like “everyone has equal opportunity to succeed” and “this is a post-racial society” ensures that many Americans continue to believe – despite evidence to the contrary - that hard work and ingenuity are the only prerequisites for becoming successful in the U.S. (Fine, 1991; Hochschild, 1996). As Fine explains, “ideologies pull our attention to particular representations of social conditions, even as they deflect from others” (p. 180). In this case, the ideologies of equal opportunity and color-blindness act as blinking neon lights around grand notions of equality, liberty, and freedom while inequitable societal structures, like our education system, remain obscured. These ideologies allow Americans to rationalize away or ignore the fact that

¹ Measured in terms of net assets minus liabilities. The difference between Blacks’ and Whites’ median household wealth¹ was \$84,960 in 2011.

an elite few control a vast majority of our country's wealth while tens of millions of Americans face challenges to their basic well-being like inadequate and expensive health care, impoverished school systems, and a dearth of affordable housing.

Ideologies of equal opportunity and color-blindness are also visible in American schools. Many teachers believe that racism no longer disadvantages some students and privileges others; that students' effort is the primary determiner of their success or failure, that the best way to deal with race is to ignore it (Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001, Ullucci & Battey, 2011). While teachers of all backgrounds may be committed to beliefs like these, White teachers who have grown up in racially homogenous environments are especially likely to believe that color-blindness is the best policy for dealing with issues of race in education (Atwater, 2008; Irvine, 2003; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001). Since White people continue to make up the overwhelming majority of both practicing and pre-service teachers, understanding the ways that White teachers come to form beliefs about race and racism is a crucial part of the process of reforming our education system so that it interrupts, rather than reinforces, racial inequalities (Furman, 2008; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lowenstein, 2009; McAllister and Irvine, 2000).

Research suggests that most American White preservice teachers endorse color-blind racial ideologies that are characterized by a) a belief that the U.S. is a post-racial society in which a person's race no longer shapes his or her experiences or opportunities; and b) a commitment to "not-see" race (Howard, 2006; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001, 2008). As I explain further in Chapter 2, many scholars argue that color-blind racial ideologies are deeply problematic and may lead teachers to unknowingly participate in the reproduction of inequitable patterns of student achievement (Howard, 2006; Milner,

2010). For instance, Lewis (2001) found that the color-blind practices of educators and adults at a mostly White school had profoundly negative consequences for students of all racial backgrounds and ultimately served “as a defense of the currently unequal status quo” (p. 805). In one particularly poignant example, Lewis tells the story of Sylvie, a multiracial student who moved to an almost-entirely White school. When Sylvie tells her teacher that some of the boys are calling her racial slurs at recess, her teacher decides that Sylvie is “playing the race card.” In other words, Sylvie’s teacher believed that Sylvie was acting like a victim and racializing a race-neutral situation. Unsurprisingly, Sylvie grew increasingly uncomfortable at her new school, she was absent more frequently, and her grades slumped. Sylvie’s teacher’s response only makes sense from a perspective of color-blindness, one in which good people strive to not see or notice race. From this perspective, it is impossible to identify or talk about racial injustice.

Wary of the impacts of color-blind ideologies, many researchers contend that teachers must understand the ways that constructs of race, culture, power and privilege are at work in their classrooms (Milner, 2010; Teel & Obidah, 2008). As Ullucci and Howard (2011, p. 1196) explain, “Teachers cannot see racial inequities if they position race as insignificant in schooling and see racism as a historical artifact. Rather, teachers need to be open to the fact that racism still operates in structural and interpersonal ways.” Teel and Obidah (2008, p. 4) agree, maintaining that teachers should possess an “awareness of race, of the possibility of their own racism and the racism of others, and the significance of these perceptions in the teaching and learning process.” The mindset that Teel and Obidah describe is called “critical race consciousness” by some scholars or simply “color-consciousness” by others. The terms “culturally-responsive” and

“culturally-relevant” (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014) and “critical multiculturalist” (Sleeter & Grant, 1987) also signify similar standpoints (Ullucci, 2005). In this research, I use the term “color-consciousness” to refer to an ideological stance that includes the following: a) a belief that racism is still a fundamental characteristic of American culture and society; b) the capacity to critically identify and analyze the role of racism in schools and society and c) a commitment to bring about a more racially-just society.

It is in this context - the rise of the pervasive ideology of color-blindness in the U.S. - that teacher educators concerned with issues of societal (in)equity and social justice have developed courses that aim to teach preservice teachers to confront dominant color-blind racial ideologies and to develop color-consciousness. Although the nature and impact of such courses has been the focus of numerous research studies, many unresolved questions about teacher education for color-consciousness invite further exploration: Why do some individuals develop color-consciousness through these courses while others do not? What are students and teachers actually doing in these classes? How are those actions fostering or inhibiting the growth of color-consciousness? Why is there disagreement among researchers regarding the efficacy of these classes in preparing preservice educators to teach in racially equitable ways?

Statement of the Problem

This research is predicated on the assumption that in order to make our society more just, we need to cultivate color-consciousness in those individuals who are uniquely positioned to interrupt patterns of racial inequality: teachers. To this end, in the words of Giroux and McLaren, “programs need to be developed in which prospective teachers can

be educated as critical intellectuals who are able to affirm and practice the discourse of freedom and democracy" (1987, p. 267). But how do we educate prospective teachers as "critical intellectuals?" Developing programs that can successfully do this work has proved difficult.

Studies of teacher education courses that seek to prepare prospective teachers to effectively teach students of all racial backgrounds have produced mixed results. Some studies suggest that these kinds of courses may have a large impact on students (i.e. Ambe, 2006; Bradley-Levine, 2012; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Gayle-Evans & Michael, 2006; Lea, 2004). However, other studies find just the opposite: many White preservice teachers are just as unable or unwilling to perceive structural forces like institutionalized racism after taking one of these courses as before (Banks, 2001; Brown, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 1995; Vavrus, 2002). How do we make sense of these conflicting findings? I discuss this body of research in more detail in Chapter 2. While previous research has certainly added to our knowledge of how to best nurture color-consciousness in prospective teachers, it leaves some gaps and gray areas that this research seeks to address. In particular, I designed this study to shed light on three distinct but interrelated gaps in the literature on teaching and learning color-consciousness: the role of the local social context, the role of identity production and performance and the role of participant agency.

Gap #1: The Social Context

Most of the academic research about transforming White teachers' racial ideologies has been rooted in psychology with the individual or the intervention as the unit of analysis. Researchers have wanted to know how particular interventions have

shaped individuals' beliefs and attitudes and moved individuals to different stages of critical consciousness, in general, or color-consciousness, in particular (Jupp & Slattery, 2010). This approach assumes a linear, universal trajectory of experience and overlooks the role of the local social context in the cultivation of color-consciousness. As LaDuke (2008, p. 38) explains, "preservice teachers and all individuals construct and negotiate multiple identities in their movement between different communities and contexts...therefore the multicultural identity development of preservice teachers is not viewed as following a linear and monodirectional path." LaDuke highlights the important role of particular communities and contexts in preservice teacher identity development. However, we know little about the precise mechanisms through which the local social context might influence the ways students adopt or reject new racial ideologies. I began this project curious whether factors like the particular culture of a university, the particular racial ideology of an instructor, or the particular cultural mini-universe of a classroom might shape White preservice teachers' experiences in a course about race, power and privilege. I wondered, does the meaning of color-consciousness vary across particular contexts? In other words, how might the local discourses, practices, categories, artifacts and interactions influence the cultivation of color-consciousness in White preservice teachers?

Gap #2: Identity Production and Performance

As I planned this study, I reflected on the development of my own racial ideologies as well as the development of the racial ideologies of the preservice teachers I taught in teacher education courses. I became curious about whether learning course content about race and privilege might have any effect on the ways that participants

thought about themselves. Since Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal book on situated learning, many researchers (including Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Kaplan & Flum, 2012) are finding utility in conceptualizing learning as intertwined with identity production and construction. As Wenger (1998) explains, "because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming" (p. 215). While Wenger's contention may also hold true for algebra or American history, it seemed like a particularly useful way of thinking about what might happen when an individual learns course content about race.

In this case, if White preservice teachers are going to adopt color-conscious ideologies, they may have to move from a position where they did not perceive themselves as having a race, or even a culture, to understanding themselves as raced individuals. What might that experience be like? I found little research that explored whether – or how - such identity work was happening inside the classroom. I wondered, do students experience shifts in the ways they view themselves through participation in these courses? What, if anything, can instructors do to facilitate this identity work? Furthermore, previous research on White preservice teachers seemed to assume that they were a monolithic, homogenous group. What about the differences that exist "within and between" White preservice teachers? (Laughter, 2011, p. 46). How might those differences impact the ways that these young people perform racial identities?

Gap #3: Agency

While the first two gaps regarded the malleable aspect of human identity that is "subject to discursive powers" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5) and influenced by the social context, the final gap that I wanted to address centers on the role of individual learners as

agents in the processes of developing their own racial ideologies. These elements – the power of the social context and the creative, generative, agentic power of the individual – are in tension. Exploring both ought to result in a more complete understanding of the process of shifting ideological positions. Many studies about interventions with White preservice teachers seem to view this group as passive objects in an experiment. In other words, this research implies that if researchers or teacher educators just get the variables right, students will automatically come to believe the right things. Studies like these often look for quantifiable factors that will account for students’ differing experiences in these kinds of interventions. While this line of research is clearly important, it seems at least equally important to consider what individuals choose to *do* in these environments that may impact their learning outcomes.

As I planned this project, I thought about an experience a student in one of my *Foundations of Education* courses students, Laura², had shared with me. Laura, who was White and came from a predominantly White rural area, went home on spring break and made a date to hang out with a person she described to me as her “best friend” from high school, Jade. Jade had been the only Black student at their school. As sort of a fact-check on our course content, Laura asked Jade some questions about her experience as a Black young woman at their high school. Laura was horrified to discover that her best friend had struggled with racism at their school, and Laura had been oblivious to this experience. This was a profound learning experience for Laura. She came back to class and told me she had changed her mind: where she used to believe that we live in a post-racial society, she now believed that racism still did exist. In this case, Laura was a

² All names of people and places are pseudonyms.

powerful agent in her own learning, in effect, conducting her own research about our course content. I wondered how common Laura's experience was.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire saw learning as a necessarily active process. In his words, learners need to be “subjects,” who are doing things, not “objects” who are having things done to them. As Freire explained, “In the learning process, the only person who really *learns* is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby re-invents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriated learning to concrete existential situations” (1974/2013, p. 89, italics in the original). In this study, I follow Hall et al. (2010) and endeavor to understand teachers and students “as active and productive creators of their own identities using the social and interactional resources available to them” (p. 238).

As I discuss in Chapter 2, the studies that address the personal agency of preservice teachers in these kinds of courses focus on the ways that White, middle-class preservice teachers *resist* learning course content that challenges dominant ideologies (for example, Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Yet some preservice teachers, like Laura, engage deeply with this same course content. What is that experience like? How can those experiences inform our teaching of those students who do resist learning course content about race?

By framing participants' experiences as rooted *in* local social contexts, *with* attention to corresponding identity work and *as* an active process, this research adds to current understandings of the ways that White American prospective teachers construct racial ideologies.

Theoretical Framework

In the two sections below, I first situate this research project within the broader world of education research as a critical ethnography that draws on socio-cultural understandings of context and identity as well as critical race theory. Second, I briefly describe the primary theoretical lens that guides this project: Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998) concept of the figured world.

Locating the Study within the World of Education Research

This study is grounded in a critical interpretivist epistemology and utilizes particular conceptions of race, identity, and socio-cultural models of teaching and learning. First, as a critical researcher, I begin with an *a priori* commitment to attend to issues of power. I draw on critical educators such as Freire (1974/2013, 1998, 2000) and Apple (1995, 2008) in theorizing that although our society is unjust, education offers a potential lever of transformation. I draw on Critical Race Theory, which also assumes the existence of inequitable power structures but foregrounds the role of race in the creation and maintenance of those structures (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1999, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005). Rather than a biological reality, I understand race to be a social construct that holds tremendous power in the United States (Tatum, 2003; Wise, 2008, 2013).

I approached this study from an interpretivist perspective that values local knowledge, experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences. In keeping with the qualitative tradition, I did not intend to discover a universal truth through this research. Rather, I value multiple perspectives and foreground the importance of context in the production of knowledge. While the findings from this study will not be able to be

simply applied in a cut-and-paste style to all other contexts, they still contribute to the research conversation about the preparation of a teaching force that can bring about socially-just outcomes for students. Indeed, I agree with Fine that "it is only through particulars that we see the sustained dynamics of the general" (2006, p. 93). I designed this research from the perspective that in-depth understandings of local manifestations of larger problems are invaluable in increasing our knowledge of those problems on a broader scale.

As an ethnographer, I was the data collection instrument of this study and therefore all my data was first filtered through my own lenses and sensibilities (more on this in "Researcher's Role" at the end of the chapter). Throughout this research, I endeavor to make my political and theoretical stance explicit, to describe how my actions and beliefs influence this study, to share the process through which I discerned which story to tell and to describe the other stories that could have been told (paraphrase of Fine, 1994, p. 26).

This study is framed in a socio-cultural view of education that assumes that teaching and learning are always rooted in and influenced by particular socio-historic contexts (i.e., Heath, 1983; Heath & Street, 2008; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

In particular, I take a situated perspective

which proposes that the nature of learning is profoundly shaped by the activity systems within which students learn... that students learn more than facts, concepts and skills in school, that schooling is a constitutive process through which students come to understand the world and define their places within it. From this perspective, learner identity develops through participation in particular practices. (Rubin, 2007, p. 220)

This perspective led me to design this study as a dual-site ethnography. This way, I could observe two different "activity systems" in action and compare the ways that students

came to “understand the world” and “define their places within it” across these two contexts.

Figured Worlds

After exploring the literature on the racial ideologies of White preservice teachers and defining my research interests around three primary gaps, I sought a theory that would help me think about the interconnected relationships among context, identity and agency. I found that the framework offered by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) illuminated these relationships and tied my interests together in a coherent way. As I applied their framework to my research interests I found that I was able to think much more clearly about my research questions, as if my project were a sample on a microscope slide just coming into focus. Below, I briefly describe the theoretical concepts proposed by Holland and her colleagues that I take up in this work. I discuss the adoption of these theoretical concepts as epistemological and methodological choices in more depth in Chapters 2 and 3.

To explore the role of the local social context in shaping students’ racial ideologies, I rely on Holland et al.’s concept of the *figured world*. Figured worlds have much in common with Goffman’s *frame* and Bourdieu’s *field*. They are “socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al., p. 53). All individuals belong to multiple, overlapping figured worlds, and while we can describe the figured world of a particular kindergarten classroom (see Hatt, 2012), for example, different participants (i.e. teachers,

“good students,” “poor students”) might have slightly different interpretations of the characters and rules of that figured world.

Bourdieu’s field – “a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy” (Holland et al., p. 59; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) is a related concept. Holland argues that Bourdieu’s model is less concerned with the “day-to-day aspects of cultural figuring” and so we miss the “everyday construction of actors” (p. 59), which is an important component of figured worlds and is especially important for this study. In addition, Bourdieu also thought of improvisation (when a person devises a new action or response to a specific situation) as an avenue for creating potential change for the next generation; but Holland and her colleagues see it as an opportunity to alter the very next social interaction. The immediate, dynamic nature of Holland’s figured world is more appropriate for understanding the daily interactions that, together, produce a small, local, social universe over the course of a semester.

Holland’s figured worlds are different from Goffman’s frames – “principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” – (Goffman, 1974, p. 10) in that Holland theorizes the creation of the figured world as a dialogic process rather than a merely responsive or reactive one. While figured worlds certainly influence the individuals in them, Holland argues that individuals can also improvise and shape figured worlds in return. Thus, the concept of the figured world can be used to understand how people create social change; how they “figure” a world that does not yet exist. Because I am particularly interested in the role

of participants' agency in producing their racial identities, Holland's theoretical framework is a better fit than Goffman's.

Holland et al.'s framework also offers a particularly useful conception of *identity* as a "dynamic state" that people "produce through participation in cultural activities" (1998, p. 160). In other words, for Holland, identities are "self-understandings - especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller" (p. 1). According to Holland, identities are always "unfinished and in process" (p. vii). This dynamic view of identity is particularly appropriate for understanding conscientization, which is also an "ever-evolving, ongoing process" (Milner, 2003). Understanding the ways that systems of oppression work is "not a one-time awakening;" instead, it is an ongoing "process of multiple avenues of insightful moments" (McDonough, 2009, p. 53).

Holland and her colleagues argue that through participation in figured worlds people may come to assume new identities. As Urrieta (2007a, p. 120) elaborates,

The significance of figured worlds is in how they are recreated by people's social engagement with each other in localized and temporal spaces that give voice to particular landscapes and experiences. Through participation in figured worlds people can reconceptualize who they are, or shift in who they understand themselves to be, as individuals or as members of collectives. Through this figuring, individuals also come to understand their ability to craft their future participation, or agency, in and across figured worlds.

For example, the Chicano activists in Urrieta's study initially cultivated their critical consciousness through attending rallies, taking classes, and participating in activist student groups. Research suggests that by offering individuals chances to participate in a figured world that challenges dominant ideologies, classes like the ones I aim to study may provoke shifts in who some individuals understand themselves to be (Cammarota, 2011; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Diemer & Li, 2011; Osajima, 2007; Urrieta, 2007a,

200b). Holland's figured worlds provide a conceptual tool for understanding how that shift happens. I return to her theory in more detail in Chapter 2.

In order to learn about the figured worlds of these two classes, I studied the class discourses, categories, practices, artifacts and interactions.

- *Discourses:* I draw from scholars like Rogers (2003, 2001), Fairclough (2013), Gee (2014) and Wortham (2011) in maintaining that individuals reveal their positional identities in every speech event. As Hall (2010, p. 237) and her colleagues explain,

Individuals use speech as a way to communicate and understand what it means to be a particular type of person within a specific context. As people learn the characteristics associated with the identities available to them, they can adopt the language and speech patterns connected to them in order to position themselves as a certain type of person.

Through the collection of written work, class observations and audio-recordings, I attended to the form and content of speech events, hoping to answer the following questions: What identities are represented in this classroom's discourse(s)? What is and can be said in this class? What cannot be said? How are issues of race and privilege talked about? How do participants use language to position themselves and one another?

- *Categories of characters:* Holland's figured worlds are peopled by characters. Characters are "a set of agents (in the world of romance: attractive women, boyfriends, lovers, fiancés) who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of states (flirting with, falling in love with, dumping, having sex with) as moved by a specific set of forces (attractiveness, love, lust)" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). I asked, what characters or categories of people (i.e. activist, white-

washed, racist) are referenced explicitly or through allusion in these classes?

How do participants categorize one another? What values do they attach to those categories? What categories are offered by the instructors of these courses and how are these categories negotiated by students?

- *Practices:* The existing literature suggests that several kinds of classroom practices (story-telling, use of reflection, community-building, etc.) may facilitate the cultivation of critical consciousness in general, or color-consciousness, in particular. I attended each course meeting for both courses looking to answer questions such as the following: What are the social norms of this class? Who is included and excluded? What pedagogical practices does the teacher employ and what do students make of these pedagogies? What is happening here?
- *Artifacts:* An artifact can be any object that has meaning within the figured world. Holland describes artifacts as “the means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful” (p. 61). I found that specific readings, videos and classroom interactions became imbued with particular meaning in these classes. I collected and analyzed these artifacts and observed their use, asking questions like, What significance does this object have for the individuals in this class? How does this object open-up or foreclose a figured world? (paraphrase of Holland et al., 2010, p. 61).
- *Interactions:* Student-student interactions and student-teacher interactions were the most direct place to observe positional identities in the making. I observed classroom interactions asking questions like, How do these interactions support or

hinder the performance of particular racialized identities? How do different individuals in this class interact and what can that tell us about their positional identities in various figured worlds?

Purpose

This project seeks to contribute to the research conversation about the ways that universities can best prepare White preservice teachers to teach for social justice. I take an ethnographic perspective in describing the local discourses, practices, categories, artifacts and interactions that make up the figured world of learning color-consciousness in two sections of the same course: *Social Contexts of Education* (henceforth, *Contexts*). Specifically, I explore the ways that two teacher educators at one large, urban Northeastern university sought to interrupt their students' color-blind racial ideologies and move students to color-conscious ways of being and knowing. According to both course syllabi, students enrolled in *Contexts* “explore the ways that racism, classism, sexism, and globalization influence schools” as well as “interrogate dominant beliefs about education” so that they can “position themselves within the complex reality that is education in the United States.” This is the only course in the required preservice teacher sequence at this university that directly deals with issues of race and privilege. The course met for ninety minutes, twice a week, for fourteen weeks. All the students were undergraduates, most were White, female, middle class, and grew up in Northeastern suburbs and small towns.

Research with this population suggests that semester-long courses in teacher education programs typically do not single-handedly prepare White, middle-class teachers to be successful teachers of racially and linguistically diverse populations

(Castro, 2010; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; LaDuke, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Markowitz & Puchner, 2014; Picower, 2013; Sleeter, 2001). Simultaneously, however, many teacher educators claim that these kinds of courses are both successful in raising students' critical consciousness as well as imperative for preparing teachers for urban environments (Ambe, 2006; Bradley-Levine, 2012; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Gayle-Evans & Michael, 2006; Lea, 2004). By bringing the lenses of context, identity and agency to the study of preservice teachers, I hope to respond directly to previous findings about this population as well as attempt to answer Gorski's (2009) question about these kinds of courses: "What happens when the classroom door is closed?" (p. 317).

Significance

This research has implications for theory, practice and policy. I share these in detail in Chapter 7. First, in terms of theory, applying Holland's figured worlds to the learning of color-consciousness contributes to the growing body of educational research that conceptualizes identity as central to understanding teaching and learning. Specifically, this study responds to Urrieta's call for studies that expose "the complexity of coming to form and re-form the self in various social contexts (time/place/space) in education" (2007a, p. 115). My data suggest that, for White prospective teachers, learning course content about race is intertwined with learning about oneself.

In terms of practice, I build on the findings from this study to make specific recommendations regarding the policies surrounding and pedagogies used in social-justice oriented classes, especially those for prospective teachers. While previous research has tended to focus on the resistance of this population, and therefore

recommends strategies to lower that resistance, I find that most participants in this study were willing to engage in learning course content about race. However, despite this willingness, most participants still retained color-blind understandings at the end of the course. This research suggests that participants' confusions about color-conscious ideologies as well as their commitments to retaining understandings of themselves as good, not-racist people hindered their adoption of color-conscious ideologies and practices. I share specific recommendations for how teacher educators could help prospective teachers surmount these obstacles in Chapter 7.

Finally, this study contributes new understandings to a current debate in education policy: Of what value are teacher-education courses with social justice goals? In the current political discourse of high-stakes testing and accountability, courses with goals related to diversity and equity are often seen as expendable. While this study was not designed to measure the efficacy of these courses in preparing teachers to teach in diverse settings, this study's findings still bear on this debate by illuminating what *is* happening in two such classes.

Research Question

This study is guided by the following research question: How, if at all, does participation in a teacher education course focused on race influence the racial ideologies of White preservice teachers?

A Few Notes about Language

Many of the terms that I draw on throughout this study are polysemous and socially-contested. Reasonable people may take issue with the ways that I choose to use some of these words. In this short section, I provide brief definitions of some of the most

contested terms that I rely on in this study as a way of taking the reader through my decision-making process. In addition, I offer a more detailed explanation of several of these concepts in Chapter 2.

Race: In this research, I define race as a socially-constructed category loosely based on physical characteristics that has profound social consequences (Tatum, 2003).

Terminology for macro-racial categories: Affixing labels to racial and ethnic groups is a difficult task. Not only are the connotations of each of these terms constantly changing, but as Ullucci (2005) explains, “no single label fits the social, political, and cultural realities of every person who might fit into a particular racial or cultural category” (p. 8). In this study, I adopt terms for macro-level racial categories most commonly used in the academic literature: White, Black, Latino/a³, Asian-American and Native American (Tatum, 2003, p. 15). I choose to capitalize “White” (and, subsequently, “Black”) primarily as a way of marking whiteness as a distinct category rather than a neutral state. To refer to the collective experience of Blacks, Latino/as, Asian Americans and Native Americans, I use the term “people of color.” The phrase is less than ideal as it suggests that White people have no color; however, I find it preferable to the terms “minority” (which not only seems diminishing but is often inaccurate in the context of urban

³ In the education literature, *Latino/a* is an ethnic, rather than a racial, label. However, since the instructors of the courses that I studied used it as an equivalent and parallel category to “White,” “Black,” or “Asian,” I include it here as a macro-racial category referring to people who live in the United States who emigrated (or whose family emigrated) from Central or South America.

education where many schools are “majority-minority”) or “non-white” (which defines people of color by what they are not).

In the two classes that I studied, race relations were often talked about and portrayed as dichotomous White/Black issues – the experiences of other racial groups were only occasionally brought up. Therefore, when I discuss an event that happened in class, I sometimes use the term *Black* to offer an emic perspective when it might otherwise seem more appropriate to refer to *people of color* more generally.

Color-Blindness: An ideological stance characterized by the following characteristics:

- the belief that the U.S. is a post-racial society in which a person’s race no longer shapes his or her experiences or opportunities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006)
- a resulting commitment to “not-see” race (Howard, 2006; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001, 2008; Ullucci and Battey, 2011).

Bonilla-Silva calls this ideology “color-blind racism.” In this study, I adopt the slightly more neutral term “color-blindness” to refer to the same positionality. While I agree with Bonilla-Silva that color-blindness is a form of racism in that it perpetuates an inequitable racial hierarchy, I was also very interested in the ways that the participants in my study defined racism. Therefore, as I sought a little separation between the ideological commitment described above and its result, I decided to use the shorter term “color-blindness” for this study. I retain the hyphen as a way of differentiating “color-blind” as an ideological stance from “colorblind” as the medical condition when a person cannot distinguish between colors such as green and red.

Meritocracy: *Meritocracy* refers to a system in which people are rewarded based purely on their merit. Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes meritocracy as the Jeffersonian idea that

“the cream rises to the top” (p. 33). American color-blind ideologies rely on a foundational belief that the US is a meritocratic society where anyone who works hard enough will be successful. From a color-blind perspective, our society is the epitome of equal opportunity; therefore, any policies that account for race are either unnecessary or work to tip the supposedly level playing field in favor of people of color.

Color-Consciousness: In this research, I use the term *color-consciousness* as a stance that explicitly reacts to and contradicts color-blindness. Specifically, this ideology includes the following:

- a belief that racism is a fundamental characteristic of American culture and society
- the capacity to critically identify and analyze the role of racism in schools and society
- a commitment to bring about a more racially-just society.

Following the lead of scholars Appiah and Gutmann (1996), I choose to use the term “color-consciousness” instead of “race consciousness” or “critical race consciousness.” Appiah and Gutmann (p. 15) explain that their use of “color” rather than “race” symbolizes their “rejection of the claim that race should play a central role in individual identity.” It is a way of continuing to allude to race as an invented social construct based on a superficial trait – skin color.

Role of the Researcher

Whether acknowledged or not, the researcher’s epistemology, ontology, purpose, background, and position in society play a central role in every research project. Perhaps even more than some others, the present study is guided by my own experiences and beliefs. In this section, I share some of these experiences not to bracket them and put

them aside but rather to guide the reader in understanding what has led me to design this research in this particular way. While I do not fully narrate the development of my own racial ideology, I do describe a few key moments were often in my thoughts as I designed and conducted this research.

My Color-Blind and Race-Visible Figured Worlds

I grew up in a densely-populated metropolitan area in Southern California that was diversifying quickly during the 1980s and 90s when I attended public schools. I am White; the schools I attended had large populations of Latino and Asian-American students. My Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) and honors classes were especially ethnically diverse, including first generation immigrants from places like the Philippines, Afghanistan, India, and Korea. Due to inequitable tracking systems that favored White and Asian students, however, the classes for gifted students did not reflect the overall demographics of the school. For example, while the majority of students at my high school were Latino/a, only two Latinas (and no Latino young men) were in my high school honors classes.

My two Black GATE elementary school classmates, Darren and Jake, were both exceptional athletes. I often pestered them to let me play touch football with them and some of the other boys, but they only occasionally allowed me to play. Once, in fourth grade, I came in third place in a school-wide, mile-long running race – Darren and Jake took first and second. I was proud of my accomplishment. In my figured world (influenced by both the media and my limited anecdotal experience), Black people and boys were better athletes than White people and girls. I figured that, as a White girl, I had done as well in the race as could possibly be expected of me. I came home and

proudly announced to my mom that I came in third in the race, behind Darren and Jake, who did not count because they were both boys and, besides, they were Black. My mom quickly reprimanded me: “We don’t talk about people like that!” I was confused and hurt – uncertain why using the word Black was so bad. In my figured world, of course race mattered. Since I believed that Black people were obviously better athletes, I felt that I was sharing a relevant part of the story.

I remember this experience as a sort of formal introduction to a figured world of color-blindness. This figured world was peopled by two sorts of characters: racists, and everyone else. In this figured world, a racist was any person - White, Black or Brown - who talked about, or even noticed, race. Conversely, to be a good, not-racist person, an individual could not notice what color skin people had, and, even more importantly, she could never talk about race. This figured world had particular artifacts like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech which I was chosen to read over the intercom during Black History Month: “I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” As I grew older, I would hear this sentence in my head when grappling with a fact that I could not quite fit into my world, like how there were only a few Latino students in my advanced classes while Latinos made up the majority of my high school. To feel secure about my identity and position in this color-blind figured world, I knew that I was not supposed to notice what race people were. But I did notice. In fact, race was often the first thing I noticed about a person, (unless s/he was White, and then I hardly noticed race at all).

In high school, I had several experiences (I studied abroad, I had a long conversation with a favorite teacher about affirmative action) that made me more critical

and simultaneously less comfortable in my color-blind figured world. Slowly, it was becoming clear to me that race mattered - a lot. I became less certain of my place within this color-blind figured world, but I did not develop a critique of racial hierarchies.

It was not until I got to college that I was invited into a new race-visible⁴ figured world. I attended UC Berkeley, which, while not as liberal at the turn of the millennium as its reputation might suggest, still fostered some of the radicalism, dissent and counterhegemonic practices that had made it famous decades before. Through taking classes in ethnic studies, education and anthropology, as well as participating in the cooperative housing system, I gradually transitioned into being a participant of a race-visible figured world. In this new figured world, people used words like oppression and appropriation and even reparations. Roles were defined differently; for example, in the new figured world, Black people could not be racist, and it was not racist to describe someone as Black. In this new figured world, there were new activities to engage in, protests to attend, African dances to learn, political t-shirts to wear, dumpsters to dive.

Through participation in this figured world, I began to try on a new identity. I joined the vegan co-op. I dated a Black, vegan, bisexual Buddhist and repeated these signifying characteristics to my friends. I studied abroad in Ghana. I began to see the world differently, categorizing observations in new ways. Where I had used to believe that I earned my admission to UC Berkeley based purely on my own merit, I started to recognize some of the privileges that had paved that path for me – college-educated parents; a match between my family's language and values and the language and values

⁴ I use "race-visible" here rather color-conscious to denote a sort of intermediate ideology between colorblindness and color-consciousness in which I knew that race mattered but I lacked an understanding of systemic racism.

of my schools; my teachers' unfailing expectations that I would excel. Realizing my privilege made me see myself differently. In the language of this study, it made me shift my positional identity (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). No longer was I a success story on my own merit – I was a product of advantage. I felt guilty; I felt I needed to make up for being White but I did not know how.

I spent a lot of time participating in and co-constructing this figured world on my continuing path of cultivating my own critical consciousness. Although it permitted me to see and think about race, this particular race-visible figured world did not offer many anti-racist actions I could take. It also did not have real anti-racist characters or roles.

I was twenty-two and idealistic when I got my first real teaching job. To at least some degree, I recognized the privileges I experienced as White, although I spent more time thinking about the ways that I was oppressed as a queer woman. I had chosen my credentialing program because of its intentional focus on developing teachers who would accelerate the learning of students who were traditionally underserved in American public schools.

I accepted the first job that I was offered: English teacher and advisor at an alternative high school in Silicon Valley. The school was small: one hundred students, perhaps eight-five of whom were White; three White teachers, and one do-everything-else support staff/administrator, who was a Black woman. When we were not teaching, which was a large part of the day, the four of us shared a small office in a temporary building. In the second year that I taught at this school, my relationship with the administrator, Crystal, became tense. I felt like no matter what I did around Crystal, it was wrong. As a perky young woman with a big smile who felt like one of my strengths

was getting along with everyone, this was bewildering and hurtful. I finally decided that Crystal had a problem with my being gay and gave up trying to fix our relationship. Crystal and I stopped speaking to one another, an unsatisfactory and awkward strategy given that we co-inhabited a tiny space for six hours a day. Towards the end of the year the drama and tension had escalated to such a degree that a professional mediator was called in to help us work out our conflict. In my one-on-one meeting with the mediator, she shared that Crystal thought that I was racist; specifically, that I neither liked nor respected Black people. Crystal felt like I was rude to her and said that I treated our Black students unfairly.

I remember feeling as though I had been punched in the stomach. As one of the participants in this research, Lucas, later stated, I had been given the “ultimate insult” - I had been accused of being racist. I remember falling back into my out-grown color-blind ideology as I protested, “But I don’t even see those students as Black!” I do not remember many of the details of what followed, except that I protested that I was not racist, and that I felt deeply hurt.

Because I was unable or unwilling to have a productive conversation about this issue, I never learned the details of Crystal’s accusation. I will always wonder what she saw - from her perspective, how was I treating our Black students? How did I treat her?

Although I loved everything else about this job and school, I quit at the end of that year. I got a job teaching in Oakland Unified School District, where all my students were Black or Latino or both. I felt that I needed to prove to myself that I was not racist by being an exceptional teacher of students of color.

I tell this story both to introduce and locate myself within a particular social world as well as to preview some of the dangers of color-blind philosophies that will surface in this research project. When I began teaching, although I had some basic understandings of racism and privilege, I still believed that the best way to handle racial differences and discrimination was to look beyond race and strive to not see my students as racialized human beings. Additionally, like many of the students who participated in this research project, I was deeply invested in a strong desire to not be a racist. Because I held these beliefs so deeply, I rejected an important opportunity to have an open conversation about the ways that I may have been treating my students of color - who I genuinely wanted to support.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I wonder what, if anything, might have accelerated my acquisition of color-consciousness. As a gawky tomboy who resisted the gender binary and then as a queer woman, I have long been attuned to issues of equity, difference and privilege. Yet it has taken me years of study to be able to critically identify and analyze racist sociopolitical structures and my own role in maintaining them. I designed this study curious about what learning opportunities might have accelerated my own growth. Rather than view my struggle to become color-conscious as the exclusive result of my shortcomings (although they are many, and are certainly relevant), I am primarily interested in better understanding the underlying socio-cultural reasons for that struggle. Fine asks researchers to look beyond individuals and into the systems that shape them: “The task of social researchers is to theorize across levels and resist the common sense explanations by which individuals are the site for analysis, blame, responsibility and data collection” (2006, p. 94). Rather than blame White teachers for

struggling to learn about race, what can we learn from a careful analysis of those struggles? It is from a very personal place, then, that I begin this project.

Roadmap of the Dissertation

In this chapter, I have outlined the guiding principles and assumptions behind this study and situated this research project within a particular academic context.

In Chapter 2, Review of the Literature, I define key terms; I review previous research regarding the racial ideologies of White preservice teachers and I describe Holland et al.'s theoretical framework in more detail.

In Chapter 3, Methods, I describe the design of this research and how I collected and analyzed my data. I try to both explain the theory behind my decisions as well as provide enough specific detail so that this study could be replicated in other contexts.

In Chapter 4, The Actors and Ideologies of *Contexts*, I describe the figured worlds of the two courses that I studied. Specifically, I describe the key characters - the instructors - and their racial ideologies as well as their approaches to the course. Second, I offer a brief snapshot of each of the focal participants so that the reader gets a sense of these young people as real human beings. Finally, I describe the participants' beliefs when they began the course.

In Chapter 5, Teaching Color-Consciousness, and Chapter 6, Struggles in Learning Color-Consciousness, I attempt to answer my overarching research question. In Chapter 5, I first outline each instructor's pedagogical goals regarding issues of race. Second, I describe four instructional strategies the instructors used to try to move students from color-blindness to color-consciousness. In Chapter 6, I illustrate the ways that participants responded to these methods. I offer three main categories of response: those

participants who worked hard to retain their previous color-blind beliefs and who rejected color-conscious ways of being and knowing; those participants who embraced the offered color-conscious figured worlds; and, finally, the majority of participants who vacillated between these two poles. I explore the factors that seemed to influence participants' actions.

In Chapter 7, *A Return to Context, Identity and Agency*, I explain how the findings from this study speak to current teacher education policy and practice. I offer specific suggestions to teacher-educators and colleges of teacher education that are trying to move White prospective teachers from positions of color-blindness to stances of color-consciousness. I also discuss the benefits and limitations of using Holland's framework to explore the relationship between identity performance and learning.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study is situated within and responds to literature in three fields that share over-lapping foci but do not always communicate with one another: whiteness studies, teacher education and socio-cultural studies of identity. I plait together concepts from each of these areas to create the theoretical foundation for this research. In this chapter, I first offer definitional and theoretical background on whiteness, White racial identities and ideologies. Second, I outline current understandings from studies in teacher education about how we can best prepare color-conscious White teachers. Specifically, I review relevant findings about the impacts of teacher education coursework on the racial identities and racial ideologies of White preservice teachers. Finally, I shift to an overview of recent socio-cultural educational research that uses Holland et al.'s theoretical framework to explore identity and agency in educational settings. Woven together, these three fields provided a strong footing from which I could explore the challenge of preparing White teachers who can skillfully engage issues of race and racism in their classrooms.

Whiteness

I originally intended to study the experiences of both White prospective teachers as well as prospective teachers of color. Urban University seemed like an excellent place to conduct this sort of research since, while it is predominantly White, it also has a larger percentage of students of color than other comparable universities. However, as I explain in more detail in Chapter 3, the two sections that I was able to study in this particular semester consisted almost entirely of White students. I decided to modify my research design and focus exclusively on White students' experiences in these courses. From my

perspective as a critical researcher with an interest in issues of power, this decision seemed not only practical but justified. As Fine points out, in addition to continuing research with oppressed communities, critical researchers must extend lines of inquiry into the experiences of people with privilege as well (Fine, 2006). Indeed, throughout the 20th century, education research often left the White experience unexamined (McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 2003). In the last two decades, however, a new field has emerged: critical whiteness studies. As this study explores White prospective teachers' racial identities and ideologies, I drew theory from whiteness studies to approach this phenomenon.

In order to understand how White people experience and think about race, we first need a basic working understanding of whiteness (Ullucci, 2005). This is not a straightforward task as *whiteness* is a contested term and concept. As Frankenberg explains, "whiteness is contingent, historically produced, and transformable through collective and individual human endeavor (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 233). In other words, whiteness is a social construct that has taken on different meanings, relied on different criteria and afforded different privileges throughout American history. Even without the historical perspective, many different meanings are ascribed to whiteness in contemporary research literature. I find it helpful to think about these multiple meanings of whiteness as distinct but interrelated layers (Lawrence, 1997).

At the outermost superficial layer, what Lawrence (1997, p. 108) calls "whiteness as description," whiteness is a particular human phenotype. Being white means having typical Western European physical features, in particular, relatively light-colored skin. This phenotype may also include a certain hair type and particular facial features. Membership in the phenotypically-White group is socially-negotiated and can be

contested. For example Horvat (1997) describes a high school student who thought that her high school teacher was Black - despite his blonde hair and blue eyes - because of his “beliefs about race and society” (p. 18). In the present study, I relied on my own conceptions of which participants appeared White when I first decided that there were few students of color in the room and again when I selected focal participants to interview. Similarly, I believe that I was raced as White by participants, which may have influenced their level of comfort with me as I asked them questions about race.

Another layer of whiteness is whiteness as experience, or “the state of being race-privileged, the daily experience of receiving unearned privileges from which Whites benefit” (Lawrence, 1998, p. 108). Closely related is White culture, which is characterized by elements like rugged individualism, a Protestant work ethic, and a future orientation (Heinze, 2008). Bonilla-Silva (2006, p. 124) explains that “Whites, young and adult, live a fundamentally segregated life that has attitudinal, emotional, and political implications.” A key pedagogical project in courses like *Contexts* is to push White students to become aware of their own experiences and culture as just one of many, rather than a neutral norm (McIntosh, 1988; Milner, 2010, Tatum, 2003).

A third layer, whiteness as ideology, encompasses the hegemonic “beliefs, policies and practices...that enable Whites to maintain power and control in society” (Lawrence, 1997, paragraph 2). This layer includes whiteness as a racial discourse that is supported by material practices and institutions (Leonardo, 2002, p. 31). This ideology is characterized by an “unwillingness to name the contours of racism” and White privilege; an “avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group” which serves to make whiteness seem “normal” while ethnically identified peoples become “other”; and,

finally, a minimization of racist legacy (quoted from Leonardo, 2002, p. 32; see also Frankenberg, 1993; Ullucci and Battey, 2011).

Leonardo (2002) explains that it is theoretically possible and, indeed, crucial, to distinguish between whiteness as an ideological system and White people, who are a “heterogeneous group of participants in race relations” (p. 32). He suggests furthermore that teacher educators must make this distinction clear when discussing issues of race with White pre-service teachers. As Crowley and Smith (2015, paragraph 2), explain, “While whiteness bestows advantages upon all those racially identified as White, not all White people participate in or benefit from race relations in the same way.” A further instructional task for critical teacher educators, therefore, is to guide White students in recognizing whiteness and taking action to reduce racial hierarchy.

Racial Identity

This study explores the impact of a particular course on White teachers’ racial identities. By *racial identity*, I refer to “the meaning each of us has constructed or is constructing about what it means to be a White person or a person of color in a race-conscious society” (Tatum, 2003). Our understandings of what it means to be a particular race are interwoven with our beliefs about what race *is* (i.e., a biological reality, a social construct) and our beliefs about the role of race in our society (i.e., to what degree does race still matter).

Many scholars have theorized the existence of different stages or levels of White racial identity (Banks, 2001; Helms, 1997; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Marx, 2006; Tatum, 2003.) The precise number and definitions of these stages vary, but they share a general progression that I will briefly summarize in the paragraphs below. I am reluctant to adopt

one of these theoretical frameworks for use in this study for several reasons that I will explain; however, a basic understanding of these theories of racial identity development is necessary in contextualizing the present study within the current research conversation.

In the first stage of White racial identity development, social psychologists contend, White people are unaware of themselves as having a race (or even a class or culture); they minimize the role of race in our society. Helms (1997) and Tatum (2003) call this the “contact” stage; Hill-Jackson (2007) calls it the “unconscious stage.” In this stage, White people understand their own race and culture to be “normal” and “neutral,” while often simultaneously fearing or having negative beliefs about people of color. They believe racism to be an individual evil act that has little to do with them. Research indicates that most White preservice teachers seem to begin their coursework in this stage (Assaf & Dooley; 2006; Clark & Medina, 2000; Hill-Jackson, 2007; LaDuke, 2009; Markowitz & Puchner, 2014). Hill-Jackson’s (2007) summary of her White students’ racial identities is typical of these research studies: “The predominant narrative of the White pre-service teachers in my course was that they did not have a culture, did not belong to a racial group, were immune to stereotyping, and ethnicity was something that belonged to “others.””

In the middle stages of White racial identity development, depending on the author you favor, White people pass through a number of intermediate steps. As they are confronted with the reality of racial inequality in the U.S.; they may begin to acknowledge (or deny) their own privilege as White people; they may feel guilty or helpless; they may blame or feel angry at people of color. In these middle stages it is difficult for White people to maintain a positive sense of themselves as White, and they

may struggle to imagine ways to take effective anti-racist actions. Tatum (2003) and Helms (1997) call these in-between stages “disintegration,” “reintegration” and “pseudo-independent.” Hill-Jackson (2007) collapses these stages into two, which she calls “responsive” and “multicultural purgatory.”

In the final stages of White racial identity development, which Helms (1997) and Tatum (2003) call “immersion/emersion” and “autonomy” and Hill-Jackson (2007) calls “critical consciousness,” White people come to develop positive racial identities. They acknowledge their own privilege and find ways to fight for all people to share those privileges. They may form alliances with people of color.

Hill-Jackson (2007), who conducted pre- and post- course assessments with a hundred White preservice teachers, summarized their development through her four-stage model in a way that is typical of research that draw on stages of identity development:

First, in the *unconscious* stage, one is unaware of one's racial self and others. As pre-service teachers become more aware in the *responsive* stage, and more exposed to multicultural issues, they may flip-flop between acceptance and denial, which causes a state of suspended consciousness or *multicultural purgatory*: an unstable state full of promise or peril for the White pre-service teacher. And in the *critical consciousness* echelon, White pre-service teachers have a novice sense of the realities of others, and themselves, and have embraced a new lens by which to see the world. By the end of our one-course mandate, 63 percent of students were in the wrestling phase, *multicultural purgatory*.

I began data analysis open to the possibility that I might see evidence that would support a stage model of White racial identity development. At the same time, however, I was also interested in the fact that many of these models contain an “unstable” stage full of “promise or peril” like Hill-Jackson’s “multicultural purgatory” in which students “flip-flop” between two different models. I wondered about the appropriateness of a stage

model given that some of the stages themselves appear unstable or internally contradictory.

Lensmire and Snaza (2010) offer a critique of current conceptions of White teachers' racial identities including stage models like those discussed above. They contend that researchers seem to think that these identities are static. Instead, Lensmire and Snaza argue that at the core of White racial identities is a deep ambivalence. They do not use ambivalence as it is sometimes used nowadays to mean *not caring*. Instead, they use it in the *ambi* (both) + *valent* (strength) sense of being pulled between two strong poles; we define ourselves as White in dialectic relation to our understanding of what it means to be Black, and our understandings of Blackness are multiple, complicated and rife with contradiction. Lensmire and Snaza argue that White people simultaneously feel strong opposite emotions toward Blackness: attraction/repulsion; fear/sympathy; desire/shame. Moreover, they suggest that teacher education tends to play just to the negative sides of these paired dualities. In other words, Lensmire and Snaza theorize that teacher educators tend to treat White preservice teachers as though they were simply afraid of, repulsed by and shamed by their desire for Blackness; rather than see other, more positive, emotions as possible educational assets. They contend that future research on White racial identity should “assume an ambivalent self” (p. 420). Said another way, rather than assume that White teachers have a completely coherent racial identity, Lensmire and Snaza suggest that researchers should at least allow the possibility of multiple and contradictory impulses, understandings and performances. As they explain, if researchers assume a unified self and are then faced with contradictory data, they are forced a) into viewing participants as though they are lying or, b) assuming the existence

of some deeper, underlying “truly cohesive” truth. Instead, Lensmire and Snaza argue, we should “entertain the possibility” that White people are complex and may, in fact, embody contradiction “all the way down” (p. 420).

For this study, then, I adopted the following understandings from theories of racial identity development: a) as people’s beliefs about race change, their understandings of themselves as raced individuals may change and b) there is, indeed, a general trajectory that many students seem to proceed through that moves from more color-blind to more color-conscious ideologies. However, I resisted the temptation to code data in a way that would label individual students as in a particular level at a particular point in time. Instead, I drew on a socio-cultural understanding of identity (discussed further below) that allows the possibility that White prospective teachers may perform various White identities that draw on different sets of (often contradictory) beliefs about race at different points throughout the semester. I discuss these beliefs in the following section.

White Racial Ideology

Ideologies are deep, underlying, often subconscious beliefs that help us interpret the world. As Stuart Hall explains, “We all constantly make use of a whole set of frameworks of interpretation and understanding, often in a very practical unconscious way, and [those] things alone enable us to make sense of what is going on around us, what our position is, and what we are likely to do” (1984, p. 8). In this research project, I am particularly concerned with *racial ideologies*, or peoples’ beliefs about and rationalizations for current racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). I understand these ideologies to be loose, flexible, and accommodating of internal contradictions. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe the history and variety of American racial

ideologies; instead, I focus on the two contrasting ideologies that are particularly relevant for my study: color-blindness and color-consciousness.

Color-Blindness

A prevailing racial ideology in the United States is that of color-blindness. *Color-blindness* is way of thinking about race built on an effort to not see or acknowledge race differences (paraphrase of Frankenberg, 1993). Helms (1997, p. 54) explains that in order to be socially accepted as a White person, White people must learn to not talk about race. They are taught this by other people who are significant to them, like parents and teachers. Color-blindness is considered neutral, polite, politically correct (Marx, 2006, p. 17). Research suggests that most White preservice and inservice teachers endorse color-blind philosophies and believe that color-blind approaches are aligned with their ideals of fairness and equity (Irvine, 2003; Milner, 2003, 2010; Sleeter, 1995, 2001; Ullucci & Battey, 2011).

Color-blindness has been much-theorized in the last two decades. The most prominent scholar on color-blindness - or “color-blind racism,” as he calls it, is Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, author of the influential 2006 book *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. In this book, Bonilla-Silva draws on survey data from about 800 people (college students and adult residents of an urban area) and interview data with about 120 of these participants. In the interviews, Bonilla-Silva and his colleagues asked questions designed to reveal participants’ racial ideologies both through their stated opinions on several racial topics as well as the ways that participants offered those opinions. Because his work has been

so influential and because it influenced how I coded my data, I explain Bonilla-Silva's conception of the workings of color-blind racism below.

One of the ways that participants reveal and use color-blind ideologies is through the use of what Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls ideological frames. A *frame* is "a set path for interpreting information" (p. 26), in this case, these frames are ways of accounting for racial inequality in the U.S. In Bonilla-Silva's study, participants used frames "in combination rather than in pure form...together, these frames form an impregnable yet elastic wall that barricades whites from the United States' racial reality" (p. 47). I explain Bonilla-Silva's four frames of color-blind racism below.

The frame of *abstract liberalism* explains racial matters by abstractly implementing ideas associated with political liberalism (for example, equal opportunity) and economic liberalism (for example, consumer choice) (p. 28). This frame allows White people to seem as though they are reasonable or moral while they still stand firmly against "all practical approaches" that would address "racial inequality" (p. 28). This frame is ahistoric. For example, a White person using this frame might argue that affirmative action is unfair because it gives some people opportunities while denying opportunity to others. This argument ignores the legacy of oppression that policies of affirmative action seek to address. From the frame of abstract liberalism, everyone should have equal opportunity *today* regardless of past circumstances. As Rosenberg (2004, p. 259) explains, "the ideology of equal opportunity and access obscures the actual unequal distribution of resources and outcomes for a variety of individuals based on social categories."

The second frame, *naturalism* “allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences” (p. 28). A White person invoking this frame might suggest that racialized tracking systems are normal because it is just natural for people to want to hang out with other people who look like them.

The third frame, *cultural racism* explains racial inequalities by focusing on the cultures of racial minorities. Rather than biological differences, cultural differences are seen as the underlying determining factor in explaining racialized patterns of inequality. For example, a White person might invoke Black people’s supposed “lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 41) as an explanation for their lack of success. As a further example, previous research has found that White people often rely on this frame to explain the existence of the achievement gap by claiming that some families just do not care about education (see, for example, Delpit, 2012).

Minimization of racism, the final frame, “suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 28). In fact, some White people argue that they are the victims of so-called “reverse racism” - that people of color actually have an easier time in the United States because they are supposedly preferred by colleges and employers. This frame includes both statements like, “I don’t think race matters much in the United States anymore” as well as, “Minorities make things look racial when they are not” (p. 44).

In addition to these frames, Bonilla-Silva also outlines the style of color-blind racism. The style of an ideology is its “peculiar linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies” (p. 53) or “the technical tools that allow users to articulate its frames and story

lines” (p. 101). Bonilla-Silva identifies and illustrates five characteristics of the style of color-blind racism:

- **Avoidance:** “avoidance of direct racial language” to express “racial views” (p. 102). For example, saying “some people” instead of using a racial label like White.
- **Semantic escape moves:** Discursive strategies that White people use as “verbal parachutes” to “avoid dangerous discussions” or to “save face.” For example, before respondents articulated strong opinions on racial topics, many of them said something like, “I’m not black so I don’t know” (p. 106). Another move is the “yes and no” strategy. “After respondents insert this phrase and, apparently taking or examining all sides, they proceed to take a stand on the issue at hand.” (p. 108). This takes other forms like, “I kind of support and oppose it.” Another semantic move is a direct declaration that race is not a factor, even when the person’s statements often made it obvious that race was a factor. In this way, White people can “explain the product of racialized life (segregated neighborhoods, schools, and friendship networks) as nonracial outcomes” (p. 111).
- **Projection:** When White people “project racism or racial motivations onto black and other minorities as a way of avoiding responsibility and feeling good about themselves” (p. 112). For example, some of Bonilla-Silva’s White interviewees said that they opposed affirmative action because they can imagine that if they were Black, they would feel terrible about getting a particular job or getting into a particular school “just because” of their race (p. 113).

- **Diminutives and qualifications:** Use of a phrase like “a little bit” to diminish the importance of a racial issue or make a partial admission. For example, Bonilla-Silva’s participants said things like, “It makes me a little angry” and “I am just a bit concerned” about the children of an interracial marriage.
- **Total incoherence:** The sudden and extreme presence of grammatical mistakes, lengthy pauses, digressions, self-corrections, repetition.

Bonilla-Silva’s work has had a far-reaching impact, influencing both the academy (his 2006 book has been cited more than 3000 times) as well as the public discourse on race. While his data left little doubt that the participants in his study cohered to a clear (if internally contradictory) color-blind ideology, I began this project wondering about the degree to which the participants in my study would endorse the same ideas. The most recent of Bonilla-Silva’s data were collected more than a decade before I began this research project, when the participants in my study were children. During much of the intervening time, Obama has been president, which may have influenced the dominant racial ideologies in the United States. Since we know that racial ideologies are fluid and adapt easily to new situations, it seemed possible that the participants in my study, most of whom were born after 1995 and are part of Generation Z, might adhere to a slightly modified or updated version. I began this project eager to explore whether or not – or how - participants employed Bonilla-Silva’s color-blind racism’s frames and styles.

Color-Consciousness

Since this study explores how (or whether) participants revise their use of color-blindness and adopt the color-conscious philosophies their instructors endorse, I am also interested in the ideology of color-consciousness (also referred to in the academic

literature as race-consciousness, or critical race-consciousness). What makes up a color-conscious ideology? What frames and styles make-up color-conscious discourses?

Compared to color-blindness, color-consciousness has received relatively little academic attention.

Put simply, by color-consciousness, I refer to the belief that “race matters, racism exists, and issues around race and racism affect schooling” (Ullucci & Battey, 2011, p. 1206). This belief is supported by a number of related beliefs and characteristics, each of which contrasts directly with the color-blind ideology described above. People who are color-conscious recognize that whiteness is not neutral. This includes recognizing White privilege, White culture, and whiteness as property or power. Additionally, the color-conscious perspective views racism as systemic and structural, rather than personal. In direct contrast with color-blind discourses, color-conscious discourses are characterized by concrete and specific talk about race, including the use of explicit racial markers like White and Black (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

As stated above, most White preservice teachers, like most White Americans, whether implicitly or explicitly, endorse color-blind ideologies. A goal of some teacher education courses, therefore, is to push students to reject color-blindness and embrace color-consciousness. In the following section I summarize answers to these questions: What have researchers learned about this process? To what extent and under what conditions are courses in subjects like Multicultural Education successful in moving students from positions of color-blindness toward positions of color-consciousness?

The Impact of Teacher Education Classes

The racial identities and ideologies of predominantly White, middle class, female preservice teachers has been the subject of considerable study in the last twenty years. Most of this literature is framed within an ongoing research conversation about the need to prepare White teachers to teach students from a variety of backgrounds in an increasingly diverse society. These studies are situated within research communities located in fields such as multicultural teacher education, multicultural psychology, Critical Whiteness studies, and critical pedagogy. This research project is most in dialogue with the multicultural teacher education research conversation. At least seven major analyses of research studies in multicultural teacher education have been conducted in the last two decades (see Castro, 2010; Furman, 2008; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lowenstein, 2009; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). I summarize the primary relevant findings from this body of literature below.

Single Courses Tend to Be Ineffective

Single courses in topics like Multicultural Education tend to be ineffective at single-handedly changing White teachers' attitudes, beliefs, dispositions; increasing their critical consciousness; or in preparing teachers to work with diverse youth (Castro, 2010; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; LaDuke, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Markowitz & Puchner, 2014; Picower, 2013; Sleeter, 2001). In fact, some researchers suggest that a single course that deals with issues of race may even frustrate and confuse preservice teachers to such a degree that it may do more harm than good (Hill-Jackson, 2007). As Hill-Jackson (2007) explains,

The research indicates that one multicultural course, as mandated by national teacher preparation standards, cannot assist White pre-service

teachers in getting to the Social Action level so they can become future equity pedagogues...It may be that we are doing more of a disservice to teachers by supplying one course to impart knowledge, skills, and refined attitudes upon prospective teachers.

Researchers disagree as to why these courses tend not to be as effective as they are intended to be. Markowitz and Puchner (2014, p. 77), for example, argue that the task of changing preservice teachers' ideologies is so difficult, in part, because "the new racism and the seamless ideological web that justifies the new racism exist beyond the university...in our families, in the economy, inside political systems, and in our religious institutions." Similarly, LaDuke (2009) and others contend that such big and important topics must be interwoven through teacher education curriculum, and not isolated to particular classes that seem to be tacked on as an afterthought to the rest of preservice teachers' coursework.

Practitioner Studies Report Success

On the other hand, many small-scale, practitioner studies report some success in the outcomes above (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2004; Lea, 2004; Lawrence, 1998; Sleeter, Torres & Laughlin, 2004; Ukpokodu, 2002). It is unclear how variables such as the local context, teacher-education program components, pedagogy, curriculum or other factors may influence the outcomes of these courses (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). In two recent studies that draw on substantial data, Bradley-Levine (2012) and Picower (2014) found that some White students did begin to develop political and/or racial consciousness through participation in semester-long education courses that had a strong focus on race. These findings are at direct variance with those described in the section above. This results in something of a research puzzle: why do studies conducted by teacher educators tend to suggest that these courses are effective and valuable while studies by outside

researchers suggest these same courses are ineffective? This is one of the gray areas in the literature that I hoped my research would address.

Pedagogical Factors Influencing Course Efficacy

Pedagogical practices that have shown promise in influencing White American preservice teachers' racial ideologies are autobiography, narrative and story-telling (Clark & Medina, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Laughter, 2011; Zamudio, Bridgeman, Russell & Rios, 2009); problem-posing pedagogy (Sleeter, Torres & Laughlin, 2004;); critical inquiry (Jennings & Potter Smith, 2002); cross-cultural tutoring or mentoring programs (Bell, Horn & Roxas, 2007); reducing participant resistance and creating a safe, risk-free environment (Brown, 2004) and experiential field work (Brown, 2004; Lowenstein, 2009).

Participant Factors Influencing Course Efficacy

Many studies have found that White preservice teachers resist learning the intended content of teacher education courses that focus on race (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Irvine, 2003; LaDuke, 2009; Marx, 2006; Milner, 2010; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). In fact, the ways that White teachers resist course content has become something of a hot topic in the multicultural teacher education literature. According to this literature, this resistance may take on many forms, for example; resistance through silence or non-participation (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Heinze, 2008; LaDuke, 2009); resistance through verbal protest (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Heinze, 2008; LaDuke, 2009); resistance through misdirection, for example, changing the subject or insisting on the role of class, rather than race (Heinze, 2008; LaDuke, 2009); resistance by focusing on guilt rather than action (Levine-Rasky, 2000).

On the other hand, White students who have themselves experienced discrimination or who have had significant experiences with people who are racially or culturally different than them may be less likely to resist course content and more likely to meet course learning objectives. In an extensive review of the literature, Castro (2010) found that numerous studies suggest that preservice teachers who grew up in racially diverse neighborhoods, attended racially diverse schools, or who have strong inter-racial friendships or relationships may be more likely to develop critical consciousness or what he calls socio-cultural consciousness. However, these findings have often been tangential, rather than the primary focus of a study, and much remains to be explored here. What is the nature of the relationship between previous experience with diversity and color-consciousness? Castro argues that “future studies ought to explore the influence of prior experiences and social interactions with culturally diverse others on preservice teachers’ openness to diversity” (p. 207). I took this call up as one of the starting points for my research.

Implications for this Study: Impact of Teacher Education Coursework

This abbreviated review of the literature suggests several questions. Why do some studies find that these courses are ineffective, while others note large gains in student learning? Are we conflating content learning, identity change, and attitudinal change? Is the discrepancy in course outcomes due to real differences in the pedagogy, student population or university context of individual courses or does it depend instead on the perspectives and methodologies of the researchers? What *is* really going on in these classes? (Gorski, 2008).

As mentioned above, much of the recent research on preparing White teachers to teach diverse learners has focused on the resistance these teachers offer and on their limited experiences with people other than themselves. In the last few years, however, some researchers have suggested that perhaps the pendulum has swung so far that many teacher educators may now view White preservice teachers through a deficit lens that assumes that they will not be able to develop the attitudes, beliefs, dispositions and skills that will allow them to provide educational opportunity to all children (Lowenstein, 2009; McDonough, 2009). These scholars invite us to view White preservice teachers as learners who enter teaching programs with their own diverse “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) that might be put to service in developing color-conscious philosophies and practices. To this end, I have designed this study as an exploration of what resources White preservice teachers bring with them to a teacher education course, what learning opportunities they are offered, and what individuals make of those opportunities.

Identity in Figured Worlds

In addition to being situated within the bodies of literature on whiteness and critical teacher education, this study also draws on recent research and theory on sociocultural notions of identity, particularly on the framework proposed by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998). Since this study relies on this framework, I offer some description and illustration of their work below.

Although published relatively recently, Holland et al.’s theories – particularly that of the *figured world* - have been applied in research in many educational settings in the

last decade. Specifically, Holland et al.'s approach has been adopted by a variety of researchers who are answering the call for an "analytic focus on moments of liberation, agency and justice" (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013, p. 64). Holland's theory lends itself to this undertaking because it allows for a focus on both the socio-historical context as well as on an individual's agency in responding to and shaping that context. In 2007, a special edition of *Urban Review* collected studies that used Holland's et al.'s framework. Both Urrieta (2007a), who wrote the forward to that edition, and Rubin (2007), who authored one of the articles, provide excellent reviews of Holland's theory and the ways it has been employed by education researchers. Therefore, rather than review all the studies that build on Holland's work, in this section, I describe the four components of the theory and offer examples from recent studies to illustrate each component. Specifically, I try to show how Holland et al.'s framework offers explanatory power particularly in understanding situations in which individuals are challenging dominant ideologies and finding ways of taking action for social justice.

A Sociocultural Understanding of Identity

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) theorize identity in a very specific way that is quite different from the way it is traditionally used by researchers in fields like educational psychology. Naming intellectual antecedents like Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Mead, sociocultural scholars like Holland and her colleagues conceive of identities as contextualized, emergent, multiple and dynamic (Hall et al. 2010, Holland et al. 1998; Holland and Lachicotte, 2007). For these researchers, identity is defined as "a self-understanding to which one is emotionally attached and that informs one's behavior and interpretations" (Holland and Lachicotte, p. 105). Individuals can have multiple

identities (public school teacher, roller derby aficionado); they can even have multiple identities with conflicting values (like the hunter-environmentalists in Holland, van Meijl and Driessen, 2003). Our identities are recognizable to people outside ourselves, but they are not exact replicas of simple types. We produce personal variants of identities in relation to collectively produced identities (Holland and Lachicotte, 2007). As Holland and Lachicotte put it, "We develop identities in the manner of jazz musicians rather than player pianos" (p. 135). Holland et al. reject the theoretical dichotomy between psychological and sociological perspectives and instead see the self and society as interlocking constructs. These authors understand shifts in identity as "a new figuration of the world that involves a change in how people view and act in the world... People in identity production take up the forms of the figured world as devices for mediating not only their conception of themselves, but of their new view of the world" (Urrieta, 2007b, p. 127-128). They see identities as most theoretically useful when viewed in relationship to the four contexts that I explain below. Individuals work *with* and *in* each of these four contexts to produce and perform particular identities (Blackburn, 2002).

Context #1: The Figured World

The *figured world* is the most portable concept from Holland et al.'s book – it is used widely, often without reference to the other three contexts of identity. A figured world is at once both collective and individual; it is a stable, shared, idealized way of interpreting the surrounding world (Robinson, 2007; Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007). Figured worlds are located in particular historical and social settings and they are recreated through the interactions of the people who inhabit them. In Holland et al.'s words, a figured world is "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in

which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p. 52). For example, the figured world of the No Child Left Behind law recognizes characters such as the *basic* and *below basic student* as well as the *under-performing teacher*. Significance is assigned to certain acts, for example, intelligence comes to be defined by standardized test scores. Particular outcomes, like *adequate yearly progress* in English and math, come to be valued over others, like student satisfaction, bilingualism or moral education (Robinson, 2007).

Identities are formed through participation in the activities of particular figured worlds. In other words, people do the work of figuring out who they are in particular contexts, and the idiosyncrasies of those contexts matter (Robinson, 2007). For example, Michael, Andrade and Bartlett (2007) describe the way that the figured world of a New York high school influenced students’ perceptions of themselves as successful students. In the figured world of this high school, being “successful” meant being able to draw on Spanish linguistic and cultural resources. As the students were all immigrants who came to school with Spanish-language skills, “many students learned to identify with the figured world of success...and to position themselves securely within it” (p. 186). Staff and students co-created this figured world of success by valuing Spanish and relying on a particular cultural artifact – a narrative of first generation immigrant opportunity. In Holland’s framework, a cultural artifact is any shared object within a figured world that participants use to make meaning or perform an identity. Vagan (2011, p. 45) explains that cultural artifacts “provide people with tools of agency and identity” as well as “mediate, expand, and limit action.” Michael, Andrade and Bartlett demonstrate that the students used this narrative of opportunity to motivate themselves to

continue striving as well as to manage their feelings of longing for their native country. The narrative of opportunity was a semiotic tool for identity- making in the figured world of this high school.

Figured worlds are multiple and overlapping. In the case of the high school described above, although the local figured world of the high school supported many students in viewing themselves as successful, this local figured world was permeable to outside figured worlds and beliefs. For instance, students were compelled to take standardized tests in English that were part of the discourse of a different figured world, one in which being successful meant obtaining a high score on a multiple choice test written in English. The authors acknowledge that this larger discourse “hampered local efforts to positively value students’ cultural and linguistic resources” (p. 186). Local figured worlds, therefore, are influenced by larger sociohistoric phenomena, which can in turn be conceptualized as larger figured worlds. Therefore, figured worlds can be ideological or geographical; the Democratic National Party or a particular high school history class.

Context #2: Positionality

The second context of identity production and performance is *positionality*. An important component of performing an identity is positioning oneself, or constructing a positional identity within a figured world. Not only do we figure out who we are within a particular world, we figure out who we are in relationship to other characters in that figured world. According to Holland et al. (1998), “positional identities have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance—with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the

lived world” (p. 127). Some aspects of our identities, for example, race and gender, may carry position and power with them across multiple figured worlds. But even these more durable characteristics are figured differently in different worlds. Said differently, the same aspect of our identity may have different significance in different worlds.⁵ For example, being a woman means one particular thing in the figured world of my family but something quite different in the figured world of my graduate program. So, in addition to having multiple possible characters like teachers, principals, and instructional coaches, a figured world also suggests the relationships of power between those characters. Even among individuals who play the same general characters, like the students in a classroom, there exist relationships of power.

We use the available semiotic materials, generally language, to position ourselves in these figured worlds. In addition to positioning ourselves, we also position one another. We do this most often through discourse. We use language to communicate what it means to possess a certain identity as well as to signal who does and does not have it (Hall et al. 2010). Holland et al. place positionality in relationship with the first context of identity, figured worlds, in this way: "figurative identities are about signs that evoke story lines or plots among generic characters; positional identities are about facts that constitute relations of hierarchy, distance, or perhaps affiliation" (p. 128). While Holland et al. see positional identities as interconnected with figured identities, they view these concepts as analytically separable.

⁵ This part of Holland et al.'s framework overlaps with those of Goffman and, in particular, Bourdieu. I think that Holland is the best fit for this particular research project, however, since her 3rd and 4th contexts of identity production (explained below) extend the work of these theorists by theorizing the role of individual agency in identity production as well as in creating broader social change.

A 2002 article by Mollie Blackburn offers an example of the distinction between figured identities and positional identities. Blackburn studied the identity production and performance of queer youth in an LGBTQ youth center, the Loft. She relates the story of Justine, a lesbian high school student who engages in identity work in multiple contexts. Blackburn describes the figured world of “Story Time” at the Loft as one that she and the participants co-constructed. By reading some of her own poetry, Justine stretched the group’s conception of the typically male-dominated Story Time as a figured world where lesbians could also be powerful contributors. In this figured world, Justine is a lesbian, an author, and a participant in Story Time. In addition to this figured identity, Justine also had to negotiate her positional identity. As a queer person, she was included in the figured world of the youth center. As a lesbian, however, Justine was excluded since the culture of the Loft was strongly male and tended to be sexist. Blackburn explains that Justine used her own literacy performances to challenge the sexist culture of the loft and, therefore, positively shift her positional identity within that particular figured world.

In this study, I use the concept of positional identity to explore the ways that some experiences and orientations became more highly valued than others in each of the courses I studied, and, therefore, created a sort of hierarchy among students that influenced the way students thought about themselves as future teachers as well as their likelihood of success in teaching students from backgrounds different than themselves.

Context #3: Space of Authoring

In the *space of authoring*, which Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) attribute to Bakhtin, a person can write herself into the world in a particular way.

Holland and her colleagues explain that the world “must be answered – authorship is not

a choice – but the form of the answer is not predetermined” (p. 272). The concepts of agency and improvisation are especially important in the space of authoring – this is where humans act to create their own identities, like Justine did above when she shared poetry about lesbian sexual experiences at the Loft.

To illustrate improvisation, Holland et al. describe an anecdote from a trip to Nepal. One of the researchers was conducting interviews in her home in a small community with a strict caste system. In that community, it was forbidden for people of lower castes to enter the houses, and especially the kitchens, of people of higher castes. Because the researcher was American and not part of the caste society, different rules seemed to apply to her, and most participants came into the researcher’s home for their interviews regardless of their caste. One day, however, a woman of a low caste named Gyanumaya approached the researcher’s home for her interview and noticed a woman of a higher caste in the kitchen, waiting for her own interview. From a second story window, the researcher saw Gyanumaya approach and called out to her to come upstairs. This presented a conundrum for Gyanumaya since she risked offending the higher-caste visitor if she entered the house, but there was no other obvious way of getting upstairs for her interview. So Gyanumaya improvised. Instead of entering through the front door and into the kitchen, she somehow clambered up the side of the house to enter the second floor room where the interview would happen (scaling houses is not a normal practice in this community). Holland et al. relate this incident to exemplify personal agency. Although Gyanumaya did not make up the rules of this society, she did have the freedom to creatively author her own response. In other words, rather than choose between existing options (for instance, returning home or walking through the house and

potentially offending the other visitor), Gyanumaya invented her own alternative. This freedom is called the *space of authoring* and is the third context through which Holland and her colleagues theorize that identities are produced.

The concept of the space of authoring lends itself especially to studies of social change in which people invent actions and strategies to fit ever-evolving situations. As students challenge dominant ideologies, many of them will need to create ways of acting and being that they have not seen modeled. I began this project with the assumption that some classroom communities create more space for authoring than others by allowing students encouragement, freedom and space to reflect, create, invent, and engage in dialogue. I was curious about the degree to which the teacher educators I studied prescribed particular figured and positional identities, or, alternatively, the degree to which they allowed space for authoring new and original identities.

Rogers and Wetzel (2013) offer an example of identity production in a particular space of authoring – a social justice teaching conference. The authors draw on three layers of discourse analysis (narrative analysis, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal discourse analyses) to illustrate the ways a new teacher demonstrated agency and engaged in identity work in a thirty-minute workshop. Rogers and Wetzel maintain that during the workshop, Leslie, the focal participant, actively positioned herself within three different figured worlds: in the figured world of being an educator, of being an educator of educators, and of being a change agent. In each of these figured worlds, Leslie situated herself within a particular positional identity, for example, in the figured world of being an educator, she positioned herself as a culturally relevant teacher rather than a traditional teacher. Although she is a student teacher and has only been

experimenting with culturally relevant teaching for a semester, Leslie found great success with it. By presenting herself as already a culturally relevant teacher in front of an audience, she tried on a new positional identity. Rogers and Wetzel maintain that "talking possible selves into being is an important discursive resource for educators working toward social change" (p. 88). This workshop provided an important space of authoring in which Leslie could do this identity work.

Context #4: Making Worlds

The final context of identity production is *making worlds*. Through what Vygotsky (1967) called "serious play," collectively, humans can create new figured worlds. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain explain that it is through "arts and rituals created on the margins of regulated space and time" that people can develop "new social competencies in newly imagined communities" (Holland et al., p. 272). While some researchers who have used Holland's theoretical framework posit that some classroom environments allow people to engage in making worlds, other researchers see this sort of identity production as happening solely in flexible and unregulated times and spaces. Through this study, I hope to learn how (or if) preservice teachers engage in *making worlds* in official class time and/or on the peripheries of official class time.

Robinson (2007) describes how an excellent teacher educator guided her preservice history teachers in making a new figured world of history teaching. Robinson describes the traditional figured world of history learning as the memorization of a particular perspective. The characters in this figured world are good and bad students who are figured by their abilities to memorize dates and places. As Robinson explains, "traditional history learning sorts students according to students' ability to follow

directions, obey classroom rules, and memorize and recall dates, facts, people and places that are often meaningless to students, except perhaps to pass the class” (p. 198). In this article, the author describes how the teacher and students co-constructed a different figured world in which revisionist history and skills like critical thinking were valued over assimilationist narratives and memorization. Central to this construction were cultural artifacts, elements from the course texts and class discussions (i.e. “stinky Pilgrims”) that came to take on symbolic meaning. Many of the preservice teachers constructed identities as history teachers and learners in the context of this new revisionist figured world, rather than in the context of the traditional figured world. Robinson’s study offers an example of how Holland’s figured worlds have been used to explore the ways that formal educational settings can create openings for individual, and therefore, societal change.

Summary and Application of Figured Worlds Framework

Since its publication in 1998, researchers have used Holland et al.’s *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* to explore identity performance and production in many educational settings. Figured worlds help us understand how individuals are both constrained by their local context as well as have agency to improvise and shape their own personalized identities within these local contexts.

In this research, I theorized each of the classes to be as a distinct, though overlapping figured world. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I describe not only the characters, rules, beliefs, norms, artifacts, and discourses that make up these figured worlds but also the ways that individual students used these elements to dialogically produce new identities.

First, however, I turn to a discussion of the methods I employed to learn about these figured worlds.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This ethnographic study draws from critical and constructivist epistemologies in the study of the experiences of White prospective teachers enrolled in one of two sections of a teacher education course that has a strong focus on race. To explore that ways that participation in this course might influence participants' racial identities and racial ideologies, I employed the ethnographic methods of participant observation, interview and document analysis to interpret the local cultural meanings made from classroom discourses, categories, practices, artifacts and interactions. In addition, I audiorecorded class meetings to collect data that would provide a finer-grained look at the ways that the classroom discourse revealed and influenced the enactment and performance of particular racial ideologies and racial identities within each class.

Why Ethnography?

As this research project investigates the meanings made by humans within a particular social context, it warrants ethnographic methods. The term *ethnography* has been borrowed from anthropology and used across disciplines to refer to a variety of methodologies with varying degrees of fidelity to the original anthropological practice. For the purposes of this project, I understand ethnography to be a qualitative research methodology characterized by the researcher's immersion in a social setting in order to study a group's culture and interactions (Lichtman, 2012). In particular, this study relies on the ethnographic methods of participant observation, document analysis and interviews (each discussed in more depth below) to interpret the local cultural meanings made from two sets of classroom discourses, practices, categories, artifacts and interactions.

The primary critique of qualitative methodologies like ethnography is that the findings are so local as to be inert. In other words, some scholars argue that ethnographic findings cannot be transferred or generalized to other settings. Indeed, variations of this argument have even been made by some scholars *within* the paradigm of qualitative research, like Weis and Fine, who argue that rather than focus entirely on the local setting, "ethnographic research on the daily lives of people must be theorized and researched in relation to deep structural constraints" (2012, p. 174). Weis and Fine call this dual approach to both the local and the global "critical bifocality" – a "braiding" between structures and lives.

Weis and Fine define critical bifocality as "a dedicated theoretical and methodological commitment to a bifocal design documenting at once the linkages and capillaries of structural arrangements and the discursive and lived-out practices by which privileged and marginalized youth and adults make sense of their circumstances" (2012, p. 176). Critical bifocality curbs ethnography's tendency to focus exclusively on the local by pushing the researcher to examine the local context "as linked to larger social structural arrangements" and as it "simultaneously refract[s] back on such arrangements" (p. 182). For this study, although I view each class as its own figured world, I also bring attention to the larger figured world in which it is nested. For example, as I explained in Chapter 2, the racial ideology of color-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) is part of the larger figured world of contemporary mainstream American society. Although the instructors might have preferred a different reality, the two classes I studied were not insular bubbles in which instructors could simply transfer new racial ideologies into the heads of their students. Rather, instructors had to contend with what Weis and Fine call a "larger social

structural arrangement” – the color-blind ideologies students were exposed to outside of class. In this research project, therefore, I strove to practice Weis and Fine’s recommendations and use an exploration of a local phenomenon in order to inform our understanding of a larger societal force.

Why Study Two Sections of the Same Class?

Why, in an ethnographic study that focuses on the role of the local context in conscientization, would a researcher choose to study *two* local contexts? And why *these* two classes? Here I review the principle tenets of multi-site ethnography and answer these two questions.

Since George Marcus published a review of the emerging trend in 1995, multi-site ethnography has gained traction as a research methodology. In particular, multi-site designs have been employed for the deep study of specific issues that manifest in multiple spaces. Hannerz (2003) stipulates the primary requirement for multi-site design as follows: multilocal projects must “draw on some problem, some formulation of a topic, which is significantly translocal, not to be confined within some single place” (p. 206). As the conscientization of preservice teachers is an educational project that extends far beyond each of my sites, a multi-site design is appropriate. Additionally, attention to two local contexts provides a firmer base for generalizing to a broader context, creating more sound conditions from which to employ critical bifocality.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that figured worlds can be overlapping or nested. I am approaching the two classes I am studying as smaller, micro-level figured worlds that are at least partly nested within a shared larger figured world of dominant American hegemonic ideologies. As Marcus (1995) explains, multi-sited projects can help us

“examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus, 1995, p. 1). Said another way, a multi-site study can illuminate the relationship between the local and global; it can push the researcher towards Weis and Fine’s critical bifocality. In this case, studying two classes contributed to understanding what about the students’ experiences was shaped macro-level ideological social structures and what, on the other hand, was influenced by micro-level class discourses, practices, artifacts categories and interactions. Marcus elaborates, “Just as this mode investigates and ethnographically constructs the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects, it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites” (p. 96). Studying two sections of the same class for this research project affords insights into the broader systems at work.

The primary contention against multi-site studies is this: if a researcher divides his or her allotted research time among two or three sites, will she not necessarily have a more shallow and superficial understanding of each? (Hannerz, 2003). This contention is derived from a traditional view of an anthropologist’s work: a single ethnography produced through decades in the field with one community. Anthropologists in the early and mid-twentieth century were often interested in the all-compassing *culture* of a community: language, daily life, kinship, gender roles, religious beliefs - everything. With this enormous task in mind, certainly, multi-site ethnographies detract from the level of detail an ethnographer can assemble. However, Hannerz argues that when an ethnographer is focused on a narrower topic, multi-site designs can actually offer a deeper understanding of that topic. In this study, I am interested in the very specific ways that the local social context influences the production and performance of

critically conscious identities of preservice teachers. This question requires a multisite approach in order to illuminate what, exactly, is context-dependent. Furthermore, since the courses I studied met at different times, I was able to attend every class for both courses – I was not missing one class to study the other.

What is *Critical* About this Ethnographic Study?

Critical research is done with an activist purpose; it assumes that the status quo is not acceptable and that research can play a role in reform. I designed this study as a response to Weis and Fine’s call for studies that “interrogate how deficit and privilege are made, sustained, justified, and reified over time and space, with a keen eye toward their unmaking” (2012, p. 177). Consistent with a major tenet of Critical Race Theory, I began this research project with the assumption that race matters, specifically that White people are systematically advantaged in our society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). Therefore, I posed research questions that explore the ways that individuals’ racial ideologies mediate their experiences in a particular class that challenges commonly-held beliefs about race.

When designing this study, I was at first uncertain whether I should focus on the experience of White students, students of color, or both. Whose experience should I foreground with my research? Unable to decide, I began this project with a sampling design that proposed that I would study four people of color and four White students from each class. The classes that I was able to observe, however, were overwhelmingly White. Racial demographics for each class are reported in the table below.

Table 3.1 Student Racial Demographics by Section					
Instructor	White	Black	Asian	Latino	Total
Nakia	27	3	2	1	33
Andre	25	1	1	0	27

Of the 60 students in the two classes I studied, only eight appeared to be students of color, and these were from dissimilar ethnic and racial groups. Additionally, they were primarily enrolled in just one of the courses. I decided that there were too few potential participants of color for me to really be able to comment on their experiences.⁶ As I shifted my research design to focus exclusively on the experiences of White students, I adopted a new goal. I began to think about this study as an exploration of power. As Fine explains, critical researchers must “think through the conditions under which relatively privileged people are willing to hear and act on oppression” (Fine, 2006, p. 87). The racial demographics of the two sections of this class seemed to lend themselves to this project.

In addition to assuming unequal distributions of power and foregrounding the role of race, this ethnography is *critical* in that I acknowledge that I, as the research instrument, am not a completely neutral, unbiased, completely objective tool of science. Rather, I explicitly interrogate my research decisions, processes and findings to

⁶ I did, however, build relationships with several of the students of color and often asked for their thoughts on particular course incidents as a way of obtaining another perspective.

better understand as well as to challenge the ways in which they are as much a representation of myself as they are a representation of the phenomena I studied.

Throughout this project, I kept a journal where I documented and reflected on my own standpoints as a White person, a queer woman, a colleague to the course instructors, a teacher of similar courses, and as a researcher. Conversation with colleagues, member-checks with participants, and as well as dialogue with my writing group provided further opportunities to explore my own role in this research project. As I describe my findings in the upcoming chapters, I strive to make clear the ways that my own positionality influenced the study.

Why Audio-Record Classes?

In addition to audio-recording the interviews, I audiorecorded each class session so that I could explore how participants positioned themselves and others in classroom interactions. My belief that language reflects and refracts back on larger societal institutions, power structures, cultural values and social relations guided me in designing this study with a focus on the classroom discourse. By refract, I mean that in addition to revealing aspects of society, language can create, amplify, constitute or challenge those same aspects. A focus on what is communicated and how it is communicated offers the researcher rich, nuanced data that can then provide a deeper and more complete insight about larger-scale phenomena.

Branches of social science research like linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication offer examples of how a close study of language and discourse can inform broader research questions. For example, in the following excerpt,

Rebecca Rogers (2003, p. 31) explains how critical discourse analysis (CDA) can complement ethnography:

CDA promises two things. First, it promises an analytic framework for explaining the relationship between ways of interacting, ways of representing, and ways of being – a framework that provides considerable empirical leverage. Second, it provides a more fine-grained analysis of the intersection of the individual and the larger context of texts, institutions, and subjectivities.

As Rogers explains, attending to what is communicated offers a researcher a detailed, zoomed-in focus on a speech event. Ethnography, on the other hand, helps the researcher situate that speech event in its social, historical and cultural context. These approaches support one another. An analysis of classroom discourse can be an especially effective tool for understanding people's positioning of themselves and others within their (figured) worlds. As Vagan (2011) asserts, "To produce an utterance inevitably indexes a social position because the words used are refracted by how members of particular social groups use them" (p. 46). In this study, for example, careful analysis of classroom talk helped reveal how participants worked to position themselves as anti-racist; as color-blind; as similar or different to other students in the classroom. As Bonilla-Silva (2006, p. 11) explains, racial ideologies are "produced and reproduced in communicative interaction." Audio-recording class allowed me to preserve this communicative interaction for later analysis.

In addition to *revealing* aspects of who participants believe themselves to be, participants' speech also *influences* who they believe themselves to be. Individuals can talk "possible selves into being" (Rogers and Wetzel, p. 88). Hall et al. concur: "The social acts that people accomplish with language play a central role in making students

and teachers the types of people they are” (2010, p. 235). Hall and her colleagues elaborate:

As students' approaches to the literacy practices demanded in schools develop, a look at the social functions of language can trace their emerging identities as different kinds of literate people. Tracing the social functions of language, then, can help us understand how these literate identities emerge dialogically in relation to individuals' contexts. That is to say, examining the social functions of language entails scrutinizing how identities emerge through engagement with talk, texts, and other forms of semiotic interaction (e.g., gesture) within specific social settings.

While Hall et al. studied the development of literate identities, I hypothesized that the same process might hold true for the development of color-conscious identities. Discourse analysis offers the tools to analyze these “social functions of language” and how they might influence identity production and performance.

As well as providing discursive data, audio-recording class sessions allowed me to take a different sort of fieldnotes. Since I was less concerned with writing down what people said, verbatim, I had a little more freedom and attention available to take note of participants' facial expressions, body language and gestures.

In my fieldnotes, I described class events and interactions while keeping a corresponding time record so that I could easily go back to the recordings and listen to the corresponding interactions again. I listened to each recording as I wrote up my fieldnotes directly after each class. Because my research questions are focused on racial ideology and racial identity, I transcribed each part of class where race was discussed (or even just mentioned) and inserted those transcriptions directly into my fieldnotes.

Research Site and Participants

The proposed study took place at Urban University (UU), a large research university in the northeastern United States. UU offers students the opportunity to earn

their teaching credential as part of an undergraduate major in education. Although this public university is predominantly White, it is more racially diverse than many other institutions of similar size and prestige. In interviews, many participants shared that they chose to come to this university in part because of its reputation for being racially diverse.

I studied two sections of a required course for all education majors called *Social Contexts of Education*. This is the only course in the required preservice teacher sequence at UU that directly addresses issues of race and privilege. Students generally take this class within the first three semesters of declaring a major in education. The majority of students in *Contexts* are White, female, middle class freshmen and sophomores. The course is heterogeneous in terms of the teachers' intended subjects and grade levels of instruction. The course meets for two and a half hours each week for fourteen weeks, and additionally requires that students complete four-six hours of fieldwork in the neighborhoods of two different schools.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

In this section I briefly describe the teachers and students who participated in this study. I mention the two teacher educators who taught the courses I studied; although I describe these individuals in more depth in Chapters 4 and 5. Here, I focus on the ways that I recruited and selected focal participants who, in addition to allowing me to observe them and read the work they submitted for class, also consented to be interviewed at the beginning and the end of the semester.

Teacher Participants

The course instructors, Andre and Nakia, are both Black doctoral students in Education at the same university. Both instructors taught math in public high schools before beginning graduate school, Andre also taught college-level English as an adjunct. Nakia is in her mid-twenties, Andre is in his early thirties. In the semester I observed their classes, Andre was in his fourth semester of teaching *Contexts*, Nakia was in her second. I had collegial relationships with both instructors before beginning the research project; they both readily agreed to participate in the study. I describe each of the teacher participants in more detail in Chapter 4.

Student Participants

On the first day of class, I arrived early and sat towards the back of the classroom. I chatted with the students around me and generally acted like a student. Partway through each class, as pre-arranged, the instructor introduced me and I went up to the front of the class. I introduced myself, read my recruitment script (see Appendix A), and distributed consent forms. I told students that I had previously taught a similar course and that I was really interested in figuring out what, if anything, students learned in the class, particularly about “difficult issues like race, class and gender.” I noticed that I purposefully smiled wide, tried to make eye contact with as many students as possible and tried to appear relaxed and friendly.

The consent form offered students three options: students could a) decline to participate; b) be a “regular” participant (as regular participants, students agreed that I could observe them in class, write notes about them, audio-record their voices during classtime and read the assignments they submitted for class); or c) be a focal participant

(which meant that in addition to the above, students consented to be interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the semester and once at the end of the semester). In one class, all of the students agreed to be either regular or focal participants. In the other class, three students declined to participate. I sent those three an email stating that my biggest priority was that they felt comfortable in class and offered to either a) study another section of the course or b) stay in their class but not take notes about them or read what they turned in. I also promised to discretely pause the audio-recorder when they spoke. Finally, I explained that if I did not hear from them, I would gladly find a different section of the course to study. All three replied to the email saying they were fine with my presence in class. I double-checked that with them in person, and then decided to proceed with the study in their course. The three participants seemed comfortable with my presence, sometimes choosing to sit next to me and voicing their opinions frequently in class discussion. As promised, I did pause the audio-recorder whenever a student who was a non-participant raised his/her hand or looked as though s/he might speak aloud in class. This seemed a workable solution, although on occasion I forgot to turn the recorder back on and missed recording a later exchange that I would have liked to have caught.

Selecting Focal Participants

Desiring as big a sample as possible yet also needing to balance feasibility with sample size, I decided that eight focal participants from each class, for a total of 16 focal participants, would be the ideal number for this study. Sixteen seemed like the largest number of students that I could reasonably interview within a two-week span at both the end and the beginning of the semester. Since the literature review suggested that White

students' previous experiences with racially diverse environments might be a relevant factor in forming their racial ideologies and racial identities (Castro, 2010; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner and Christ, 2011), I also wanted to ensure that I had focal participants with a range of experiences interacting with people of different races. As a quick way of quantifying students' experiences with people of different races, I decided to use the racial demographics of the high schools that students attended as a proxy for their previous experiences with racial diversity (Tyson, 2011). Later, attention to the racial diversity of students' high school experiences seemed justified as students continually and explicitly drew on their own high school experiences as they made meaning from course content.

During the second course meeting, I passed a clipboard around the class and asked students to write down the name and city of the high school they attended. I researched the racial demographics of all the high schools, and sorted them from those with the highest percentages of White students to those with the lowest percentages of White students. Then I used the following criteria to select focal participants:

- Students who had agreed to be focal participants (I chose from a pool of 12 in one class, 22 in the other)
- Students that I identified as White
- Students who either attended very White high schools (schools that were more than 85% White) or attended the most racially diverse schools (schools that were less than 65% White).

In one class, the criteria above left exactly eight participants, five who attended predominantly White schools and three who attended racially diverse high schools. Of these eight participants, three were young men (37%). As there were only six males in the class (6 out of 32 = 19%), this meant that I over-sampled men in this study. Although not ideal, I decided that this over-sampling was workable, particularly given that the

literature review did not suggest that White preservice teachers' racial ideologies and identities are influenced by their gender identification.

In the other class, the three criteria above left fifteen possible focal participants. I chose eight of them in a rough attempt to match them with the eight focal participants from the other class section. In matching, I considered students' majors (what grades/subjects they intend to teach), how much they seemed to participate in class, and some general types (i.e. student athlete, older student). I was unable to completely match participants by gender. A brief table summarizing the basic characteristics of the focal participants follows.

Instructor	Name	Age	Intended Subject of Instruction	% of White students at high school 2013-2014	% of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch at high school 2013-2014
Nakia	Lucas	30	HS English	19% White	57%
	Ashli	19	Elementary	39% White	19%
	Naomi	18	HS Art	54% White	32%
	Pam	19	Elementary	84% White	11%
	Ava	24	Elementary	85% White	18%
	Tiffani	19	HS History	91% White	5%
	Steve	19	HS History	94% White	15%
	Nick	19	6-8 Math	96% White	n/a
Andre	Charlotte	18	Elementary	33% White	31%
	Ben	23	HS English	62% White	23%
	Diana	20	Elementary	63% White	12%
	Dylan	32	HS History	83% White	12%
	Abigail	19	HS Spanish	89% White	17%
	Noreen	20	HS Art	91% White	n/a
	Hannah	18	HS Science	91% White	n/a
	Jessica	27	HS English	94% White	n/a

Data Collection

In this section, I describe the ways that I collected three primary sources of data: fieldnotes from participant observations, interviews, and the student work submitted for each course.

Participant Observation

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain maintain that identities are formed through participation and action in particular social spaces (1998). As my research questions explore the enactment of particular racial identities, I needed to observe my participants in action in class time. I attended every class meeting of each course for a total of 73 hours of observation. I rotated through different seats in the room, sitting next to different students each session. I carried a small laptop and took copious field notes in class, often with my chair slightly pushed back from the table and my computer on my lap for a little more privacy. On most days, more than half of the students were also using a laptop or tablet during class, so typing seemed like an appropriate (and efficient) way of taking notes.

My fieldnotes began with a basic recording of the agenda, the assigned reading, notes about who was present, and a statement about the general tone or feeling in the room. Once class began, my observations focused on what participants said about themselves, one another and their learning; and participants' engagement with, interactions around and reactions to course materials about race.

In addition to taking notes, I audio-recorded each class; occasionally pausing the recorder for a film (which I could watch again later) or group project (when many students were talking at once, the sound quality was poor) or on the occasion when a

student who had not consented to participate in class raised his/her hand or looked ready to speak. In total, between both classes, I recorded about 50 hours of class time. I kept a time log on my notes that corresponded to the time on the audio recorder, and I made a notation in my notes when I knew I would want to return and transcribe a section of class. As mentioned above, I transcribed any section of class in which issues of race or privilege were mentioned. According to the syllabi for both sections of *Contexts*, race was only intended to be an explicit topic of discussion for a few week-long sections of each class; however, racialized topics came up throughout the semester.

I concluded each day's notes with a bracketed mini-memo about general themes I was noticing or possible relevance particular events might have to my research questions. Finally, I took note of what further data I might need to collect (for example, "ask for copy of PowerPoint"). I kept each day's notes as part of a long running document for each class, so these data-collection follow-up notes were the first thing I would read when I next opened the file to begin the next course meeting's data collection.

Directly after each class, I typed up my rough notes into more comprehensive field notes. I also downloaded and catalogued the day's audiorecording and transcribed any relevant sections first into transcription software and then cut and pasted them into my field notes at the appropriate points. I found that I had to transcribe the recordings directly after they happened; if I waited more than a couple of hours, I was less likely to remember who had made which comment and found them, generally, more difficult to understand.

Participant-Observer-Researcher-Teacher-Student

In addition to observing the classes, I also participated in them. While I was quiet and watchful in whole-class discussions, I generally participated in group or pair discussions or activities. This was an easy way of building relationships with students, and occasionally, to get students to elaborate on a point that seemed especially interesting or relevant. Occasionally, in Andre's class, I took on the occasional role of expert or co-teacher when Andre would ask me if I remembered the name of a particular author or ask me to add any additional ideas to the discussion. This seemed to happen most often when he would be curious about a particular expression on my face (one thing I certainly need to work on as a researcher is the ability to maintain a neutral expression!). I felt conflicted in these moments. On one hand, I felt pleased to support the instructors by contributing an answer or idea, but I also felt that it was important to seem open enough to other viewpoints that participants would feel comfortable sharing opinions that might differ from my own.

Also, as a teacher educator who has taught a similar course, I often found myself interpreting the classroom events from more of a pedagogue's perspective than a researcher's. I tried to limit this tendency by allowing myself to have an open memo that contained notes to myself to consider when I teach a similar course. When I noticed that I was reflecting more on the efficacy of a particular pedagogical technique or use of a course reading than I was on student engagement with that piece of instruction, I made a quick note in my teaching memo and then tried to direct my thoughts and observations back to my research questions.

Interviews

The second primary method of data collection employed in this study was the interview. Ethnographic interviews are a way of following up on observations and exploring emerging themes. As the unit of analysis for this research was the individual student, interviews were particularly important since they offered me an opportunity to understand and situate an individual's experiences within the larger context. For this project, I formally interviewed the 16 focal participants and the two instructors at the beginning and end of the semester.

As I was also interested in counter-narratives and alternative perspectives, I additionally interviewed three students who were not focal participants. Through informal conversations with these students, I suspected that these students' experiences of the class contrasted with those of most of the focal participants. Two of these additional informants were Black women who attended urban high schools (one of these high schools was 99% Black, the other was racially diverse), one was a White man who attended a predominately White suburban high school who was more openly politically-conservative than his classmates.

Finally, during the last week of classes I facilitated one round of group interviews with students in each class who were not focal participants as a way of gauging the degree to which some of the trends I was noticing among my focal participants were representative of the experiences of the rest of the class.

I audiorecorded and transcribed all 41 interviews which totaled about 22 hours of interview data. All interviews were conducted in public cafés on campus chosen by the interviewees, with the exception of the group interviews, which were held in empty

classrooms, and two focal participant interviews who requested to meet in my office for greater privacy. Interview protocols can be found in Appendix B. I describe the interviews in the sections below.

First Interviews - Instructors

At the close of the previous semester (Fall 2014), I conducted a first interview with each course instructor. These interviews lasted about an hour. I asked the instructors questions that were intended to gather information about the following:

- a brief biography
- what their own educational experiences were like, briefly
- their racial and class identities
- their preparation for and feelings about teaching *Contexts*
- their thoughts about the kinds of experiences students have in *Contexts*
- their thoughts about the upcoming semester in which I would be studying their class.

This first interview also served as an opportunity to talk through what my role would be in their classroom and how we could best support one another in our roles as teacher and researcher.

First Interviews - Students

During the second and third week of the classes, I interviewed the sixteen focal participants. These interviews lasted about thirty minutes, and were all conducted in public coffee shops, except two that were conducted in my office upon the participants' requests for a more private setting. During these first interviews, my primary goals were to begin to build rapport with the student as well as collect some initial data about the students' racial identities and ideologies at the beginning of the semester so that I would be able to determine if there was a change or shift in those identities or ideologies over the course of the semester. I soon found that there was a tension between these two

goals, as many of the participants used discursive tactics to deflect questions about race.

Forced to choose, I decided that I was more concerned with creating trusting relationships during the first interviews rather than pushing participants on topics they found uncomfortable. In the interview, I asked questions designed to elicit information about the following:

- basic demographics: age, intended major, year at UU
- racial identity
- the kind of high school they attended
- racial ideology
- their social class
- what they believe to be the “purpose of education”
- initial thoughts about *Contexts*

I noticed that participants warmed to me after the first interview; many of them began to smile and wave when I entered the classroom, some chose to sit next to me or asked follow-up questions about things we had chatted about. Some students started forwarding me emails that they thought I would be interested in; others asked me for help with particular assignments or projects. I gladly proof-read students’ assignments for other classes, offered advice about getting started with projects, and/or helped students interpret the instructions for other assignments. I relied on these growing relationships as I collected data throughout the rest of the semester.

Group Interviews

In the last two weeks of class, each instructor decided independently to cancel a class meeting. I decided to take advantage of this and invited all the students in the class to come eat pizza and participate in a group interview about what I vaguely called “their experience in this class” during the canceled class time. I had seven students (including one focal participant) show up from one course and ten (including two focal participants)

from the other. I did a large group interview with the seven students, and I recruited a colleague to help with the second group; we each simultaneously led interviews with five students. My primary motivation for conducting these group interviews was to do a general member check of my findings without over-taxing the focal participants. I was also curious to observe how a fairly random sample of students would respond to my initial hypotheses about the performance of racial identities and ideologies in their section of *Contexts*.

In these group interviews, I asked students questions including the following:

- Would you say that your ideas about race, privilege or power have mostly changed or mostly stayed the same this semester? How/Why?
- Do you think that teachers should consider the role of race in the way they teach or in what they teach? How or why?
- Do you think that the racial dynamics of this class – specifically the fact that the instructor is Black and the students are mostly White – influenced the kinds of conversations or the particular kinds of teaching and learning that happened here? How?
- Who do you think got the most out of this class? How do you know?

These group interviews were high-energy. Students were excited to share their thoughts and took the conversations in different directions. While the students confirmed some of my initial thoughts about the role of race in their class, they also often surprised me with their answers which led me to add some additional questions to my final interviews with the focal participants.

Final Interviews - Students

Before interviewing each focal participant for the final time, I re-read my first interview with him/her, I searched my fieldnotes for his/her name and read through all my notes that were specifically about him/her. Finally, I re-read each assignment that student had submitted. I looked for markers of participants' racial identities and

ideologies, possible changes in the performance of those identities and ideologies and general points that I wanted to clarify or follow-up on with each student. In addition to asking particular follow-up questions tailored to each student, I asked questions about the following:

- Whether or not the participant felt his/her views about the class and about race had changed since the first interview
- How s/he positioned his/her ideas about the class and about race relative to his/her classmates
- How s/he positioned his/her ideas about the class and about race relative to his/her instructor
- Whether s/he remembered any anecdotes the instructor told and what interpretations/meanings the student was taking away from those anecdotes
- His/her opinion on color-blindness versus color-consciousness. Specifically, I asked, “Should teachers consider the role of race in the way they teach and in what they teach? Or should they be color-blind and try to avoid seeing or thinking about race?”

I felt – and the students seemed - much more comfortable in the second interview. These interviews tended to be a little longer than the first interviews (about thirty-five minutes), often because we chatted about other things and also because the students asked me more questions about my own thoughts and this research project.

With the exception of one student, Ashli, who seemed particularly keen on articulating the right answer both with me and in her assignments, students seemed to be comfortable and, I thought, fairly truthful with me. (I share some examples that illustrate how Ashli’s responses differed from those of her classmates in Chapters 4 and 6.) Although I was concerned that some of my comments in class might have revealed my own racial ideology, the focal participants seemed either unaware or unconcerned that the opinions they articulated in interviews often clashed strongly with mine. Perhaps

because we shared a racial background as White, participants seemed to assume (often wrongly) that we shared similar beliefs about race.

Final Interviews - Instructors

I interviewed each instructor again at the end of the semester. These were friendly conversations, as we had built a warm, collegial rapport over the semester. I asked them about how my presence influenced what went on in class; about how they think that this class shaped, or did not shape, the way that students think about the role of race in American education. I was particularly curious about the degree to which the instructors felt they had been explicit with their students about their goals regarding students' racial ideologies. Finally, I brought transcribed copies of two each of the anecdotes that the instructors had told during the semester that the focal participants had re-told or discussed as meaningful in their final interviews. I asked the instructors to re-read these anecdotes and then comment on what they were trying to communicate with those stories.

Student Work

In both sections of *Contexts*, students were required to submit a variety of written reflective assignments through an online platform. I received access to the online platform from the instructors, so I was able to easily view each piece of work that focal students submitted. Both instructors had students complete several written assignments in groups. As the unit of analysis for this study was the individual student and as it was not clear which student did which part of the group assignments, I focused my analysis on individual rather than group assignments. I collected every individual assignment that each focal participant submitted. These assignments are summarized in Appendix C.

In addition to adding nuance and richness to my data, analyzing student writing allowed me to triangulate my findings to explore areas of alignment and disjunction between what students said about themselves in interviews, how I observed them behave in class, and what they wrote. It was also an unobtrusive way of gaining insight into how they were engaging with the course content.

As these were all assignments submitted for a grade, an important question is the degree to which these documents represent the participants' real views as opposed to the degree to which they represent what participants thought the instructors wanted to hear. As with the interview data, I would be more concerned about this point had there been more alignment between the instructors' goals and the students' responses. Indeed, as I will explain in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 most of the students' responses sharply contradict the instructors' personal views and pedagogical goals. I will try to account for some of these discrepancies in the upcoming chapters.

Data Analysis

The first steps of data analysis occurred during the data collection phase of this project. When I typed up my fieldnotes after each observation, I often added an analytic note including my preliminary thoughts and theories as well as my ideas about emerging patterns in the data and my observations. These memos fueled my subsequent interviews and data collection. For example, when I became curious about the instructor anecdotes, I began taking more detailed field notes of students' facial expressions and body language when the instructors told stories. I found that transcribing interview and class audio-recordings was also a fruitful time for analysis. I kept several memos open while I was transcribing and took notes about patterns I noticed and questions that arose.

I entered all the documents, field notes and transcripts into Dedoose, an online platform for qualitative data analysis. I gave each document a series of descriptors so that I could easily group data by student, course, diversity/homogeneity of high school, gender, kind of assignment or point (early, mid-, end) of the semester.

In the tenth week of the fourteen-week semester, as I prepared for my final round of interviews, I engaged in a next step of analysis. I read each document each focal participant had submitted for the course, the transcripts from my first interview with each participant and, finally, each time I had mentioned him/her in my fieldnotes. I wrote myself a memo for each participant describing what these initial data seemed to indicate about each participant's racial ideology. I made a list of questions to follow-up on with each participant, and, for most participants, selected either an excerpt of an assignment s/he had submitted or an excerpt of a transcription of a classroom interaction that seemed particularly revealing of the students' beliefs about race. I asked participants to respond to those excerpts during our final interviews, and then participants' responses became part of the data set as I transcribed those interviews.

When I finished collecting data, I coded about a third of the data using the code categories that I share below. After this preliminary round of coding, I shared my codebook and coded data with my committee chair. We refined the codebook somewhat, combining those codes that seemed to overlap and adding a few sub-codes. I also revised the rules for some of the coding. For instance, although I had begun coding examples of reverse racism (for example, *It's harder for White people to get jobs*) as color-conscious since participants were making the argument that race matters; I later decided that since these sorts of examples are inconsistent with the tenets of color-consciousness they

therefore required a different code. After refining my codebook, I re-coded the first third of the data and coded the rest of the data set.

I began to create my codebook deductively with general categories drawn from Holland’s framework. Then, I inductively developed codes for each category as I saw them in the data. For example, I began with an a priori code *actors* and developed sub-codes for relevant particular actors that participants brought up in conversation and in relationship to whom they seemed to be developing their identity. For instance, Andre told so many stories about his wife that students often brought her up in conversation. Therefore, *Andre’s wife* became a sub-code in my *actors* category. I share an overview of the major categories of codes in Table 3.5 below.

Category of Holland’s theory	Guiding Question	Example Codes	Examples of Discursive Markers
Actors	Who are the people here? Who do participants describe themselves in relationship to?	classmates, each instructor, me	“Andre says...” “Louis is so smart....”
Artifacts	What objects take on special meaning here? What are participants using to construct identity in relation to?	particular course readings (i.e. “McIntosh”), particular media (i.e Humans of New York”), particular stories the instructors told (i.e. “Geometry anecdote”)	“According to Noguera...” “It’s just like the blonde haired blue-eyed lady...” “Like that Montessori video...”
Significant acts	What acts take on special significance in this figured world?	Race Talk <i>See Table 3.4</i>	<i>See Table 3.4</i>

Table 3.3, continued			
Enacting identity	How are participants enacting particular identities? What identities are they interacting?	self-description changes in self “good teaching” future teaching	Phrases that begin with discursive moves like “I am,” “I was,” “I’m very,” “I always,” “I never,” or “I used to” (Vorndran, 2014).
This figured world	What is this social space like? What are the categories, values, rules?	<i>Contexts</i>	“This class...”
Other figured worlds	What other realms of interpretation are students applying as they engage with the course material?	high school family	“At my high school...”; “My mom taught me...”

In addition to the categories above, I created a group of sub-codes about racialized discourse under the category *significant acts*. At least three times in each section of the course, each instructor spoke about how difficult it can be to talk about race. For example, on the second day of class, Nakia told her students,

We’re going to talk a lot about race this semester. This can be really awkward. You’re going to hear the words WHITE and BLACK and WHITE PRIVILEGE [*she says the all-caps words loudly and a little harshly, as if they were bad words*]. I just want you to know that it’s hard to have conversations about race and it’s okay for you to not know what to say.

This pattern of referring to talk about race as a special activity to which specialized rules might apply, along with the instructors’ pedagogical goals related to changing students’ racial ideologies, seemed to suggest that talking about race (or not-talking about race) was an act that took on special significance in the two figured worlds of these courses, and could therefore be considered a significant act in Holland et al.’s theoretical framework (Holland et al., 1998; Pollock, 2009).

In Table 3.4, below, I share the codes I used to categorize and think about the way that race was talked about – or avoided – in these classes. I deductively drew the sub-codes for color-blindness discourse directly from Bonilla-Silva (2006). I also inductively created other categories to mark recurring patterns and themes that seemed interesting and relevant.

Table 3.4 <i>Coding Racial Ideologies</i>		
Code Category Code <i>Sub-Code</i>	Description	Example
Significant Acts: Race Talk	Any mention of race or racism	“It feels kind of surreal that like racism would exist.”
Color-Blindness	Any talk about how race does not matter or any intention to not see race	“I never see anybody for the problem of their race.”
<i>Naturalism</i>	Any talk that makes inequitable racial conditions seem natural or normal	“I observed that certain races are just more inclined to go to certain schools.”
<i>Minimization of Racism</i>	Minimizing the existence of racism or racial inequity	“There's some really successful people that are Black and that are White. And some people in poverty that are Black and that are White.”
<i>Cultural Racism</i>	Attributing racial inequity to the cultures / behaviors of people of color	Fieldnotes excerpt: <i>Nakia says that she should not see anyone saying that ‘parents don’t care’ or ‘students are lazy’ unless they talked to at least a few students or parents.</i>
<i>Abstract Liberalism</i>	Employing abstract principles of equality and liberalism to counter proposals that would benefit people of color (like affirmative action)	“Like I see myself as egalitarian, like I don't care what color somebody is.”

Table 3.4, continued		
<i>Not-talking about race</i>	Any avoidance of talking about race (including not mentioning race when answering questions about the racial achievement gap, etc.)	Karen: When someone asks you what race you are or when you have to check a box on a form, what do you say? Noreen: Normally I don't put it, because I think it's interesting to leave that unsaid.
Color-Consciousness	Any talk about how race does matter or explicit use of racial markers	Fieldnotes excerpt: <i>Andre says, So if you're White it might be a little less important for you to speak correctly than if you're Black or Latino.</i>
Meta-Race Talk	Talk about the act of talking about race	"Talking about race makes some people in this class uncomfortable"
Whiteness	Any talk about White people, what it is like to be White	Fieldnotes excerpt: <i>Jessica talks about how people see her and say, Oh you have red hair, blue eyes and pale skin, you must be Irish! You must like potatoes and like to get drunk.</i>
Blackness	Any talk about Black people, what it is like to be Black (included here were the limited mentions of people of other racial groups)	Fieldnotes excerpt: <i>Andre laughs when a Black student in the video calls herself an "oreo" – no one else laughs.</i>
Racism	Talk about racism or racist behavior	"During the school day, people make like racist jokes, or whatever... And like, you just kind of go through school hearing that and nobody acts like it's a big deal in my school, because there was no one there that would really get offended."

After coding all the data, I read through the data by code asking questions like, What patterns are present here? What is missing from this picture? How do these themes reflect my own biases? Where are the counter-examples? How do the counter-examples

offer a more complex (or conflicting) understanding of what is happening here? I wrote memos about the ways the data seemed to answer these questions.

I also used the features of the data analysis software I was using, Dedoose, to get some initial general understandings of the data. Since I added a date-of-collection descriptor to each piece of data, I was able to quickly create graphs that showed the change in the occurrence of color-conscious and color-blind codes over each week of the semester. I checked for patterns in the data by sorting coded excerpts by characteristics like the diversity of the speaker's high school or which course section the data was collected in. I also made frequent use of Dedoose's word cloud function in order to get a general understanding of a particular chunk of data. To make a word cloud, the user first creates a custom data set (for example, all the data from Nakia's class in the first three weeks of the semester from participants who attended racially diverse high schools). Then, the software produces a word cloud: a visual representation of the relative frequency of all the words (or, alternatively, codes) in the data. Through strategies like these, I was able to gain an understanding of general patterns in the data.

Next, I looked much deeper at the data by code, asking more granular questions that, together, built toward an answer to my overarching research question. For example, I looked through all the data I coded as color-blind and looked for the presence or absence of Bonilla-Silva's (2006) styles of color-blindness. On another occasion, I looked through all the data coded as color-conscious to see whether participants were invoking discursive frames parallel to Bonilla-Silva's color-blind frames. Each time I asked a question of the data like this, I annotated the coded data set and wrote a memo about my findings. At the end of each memo, I looked back at the overarching research

question and added a note about what this narrower analysis contributed to the larger question. As many pieces of data were at least double- and triple-coded, I saw many data excerpts multiple times.

When I felt like my analyses were no longer producing new understandings related to my central question, I re-read and analyzed my memos and developed an outline of my findings. I then paused and tried to ensure that I was preparing to tell a story that accurately represented the data and that had the potential to contribute meaningfully to the conversation on how best to prepare teachers to be, in Hill-Jackson's (2007) words, "equity pedagogues." I spent a few days trying to find examples in the data that countered the findings I was preparing to share. I found a few of these counter-examples, but as they seemed like isolated and unique incidents compared to, in some cases, dozens of examples supporting my findings, I felt confirmed in my analysis and decided to simply share these counter-examples with the reader to add more nuance to the larger narrative.

Limitations and Delimitations

For most White Americans, becoming color-conscious is a long process that has no precise endpoint. In this study, I was not evaluating the effectiveness of this course in preparing teachers to work in diverse environments, nor was I quantitatively measuring the growth of individuals' color-consciousness. Instead, I attempt to depict a single semester-long slice of participants' experiences in two sections of a course intended to develop their color-consciousness.

The biggest limitation of this research is that I, a single person, am the designer, data collector, data analyzer, and writer of this study. My own beliefs, experiences,

education and background guide this research. Through self-reflection, member checks, conversations with my committee members and writing group, I endeavored to minimize the influence of my own biases. A collaborative or participatory design might have further mitigated these effects. However, as this project was designed as a doctoral dissertation in which independent work is valued over collaboration, I leave those projects for the future.

Generalizability

My findings about how the White preservice teachers in my study experienced these two courses will not provide a framework for how all individuals everywhere become color-conscious. They may, however, offer another sort of generalizability. Fine (2006) postulates two kinds of generalizability that critical, qualitative research can offer. First, *theoretical generalizability* is the "the extent to which theoretical notions or dynamics move from one context to another" (p. 97). By building on other researchers' applications of Holland's figured worlds framework to understand the production and performance of identity in educational settings, and by employing critical bifocality, I hope to offer an understanding of education for color-consciousness that can inform the way practitioners and researchers think about this work in a variety of contexts. Second, Fine's *provocative generalizability* is "a measure of the extent to which a piece of research *provokes* readers, across contexts, to generalize to 'worlds not yet,' ... to rethink and reimagine current arrangements" (p. 97, italics in the original). While I cannot claim that this study will have provocative generalizability, this project is designed to help imagine what could be. Becoming aware that race matters involves believing that society can be more just and that our actions can hinder or promote that social justice. Maxine

Greene (1995, p. 5) charges each of us to consider what we can do to “repair” the world. Education for conscientization is one answer to that question. By focusing on the ways that people “forge alternative ways of representing, being, and interacting in the world with the goal of creating a society free of oppression and domination” (Rogers & Wetzel, p. 90), this study contributes to the construction of Greene’s (figured) “worlds not yet.”

CHAPTER 4: THE ACTORS AND IDEOLOGIES OF *CONTEXTS*

As I explained in Chapter 2, figured worlds are mini-universes with their own values, categories, characters, discourses and ideologies (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). People develop and perform new self-understandings through participation in these figured worlds (paraphrase of Urrieta, 2007a, p. 108). In this chapter, I first contextualize the figured worlds of two undergraduate education courses as discrete social spaces nested within a larger figured world of a particular university. Then I describe the most salient characters of these figured worlds: the instructors of each course. Third, I briefly describe each focal participant so the reader can better visualize these various actors at work in the classroom. In particular, I try to highlight those parts of their backgrounds and histories that participants drew on in making sense of the course material. In other words, I try to suggest some of the other figured worlds these prospective teachers participated in. Finally, I outline three of the beliefs about race that formed the core of most participants' racial ideologies at the beginning of the course. These three beliefs are consistent with the tenets of color-blind racism as outlined by Bonilla-Silva (2006). In Chapter 5, I will describe the ways that the course instructors sought to challenge those color-blind beliefs.

Contexts at Urban University

In what he calls a “meta-meta analysis” of research on multicultural education courses, Furman (2008) rails against researchers who assume a “best practices” stance and assume that any particular pedagogical strategy can be neatly imported from one context to another. He argues, “The practices of teacher education, like the practices of

K-12 education, cannot be decontextualized” (p. 71). In this spirit, I first describe the particular context of the course that I studied in order to frame the findings that follow.

At Urban University, all students majoring in education are required to take *Social Contexts of Education*. *Contexts* is a prerequisite for more advanced courses that require fieldwork in K-12 schools and, eventually, student-teaching; it is often the first or second Education course that undergraduates take. Additionally, *Contexts* is the only course in the required preservice teacher sequence that explicitly focuses on topics like race, diversity, power and privilege.

Contexts instructors are given considerable flexibility in the design of their course. Minimally, they must include a particular set of required readings, they must assign a project in which students complete fieldwork in the neighborhoods of two schools, and they must conclude the course with having students write a statement of their Philosophy of Education. Other instructional decisions, such as supplemental readings, assessments, grading, other assignments and the daily routine of the class are all left up to the instructor. Finally, the overall mission - what students are supposed to get out of this course - is interpreted in various ways by different instructors.

Although the syllabi for the two sections of *Contexts* that I studied looked very similar, in practice, these two classes were quite different. To some extent, as I describe in Chapters 5 and 6, these differences influenced the performance of racialized identities and ideologies in these social spaces. In this chapter, I first describe the commonalities of the two courses and then the important ways in which they differed.

The syllabi for each section look very similar. They both begin with a quote from James Baldwin (1963) that reads, “Education does not and cannot occur in a vacuum. It

occurs in a social context and it has social ends.” A paragraph declaring that this class will be a study of the ways that “societal forces” impact public education follows. In both syllabi, one of the course objectives states that students will be able to “describe the crucial ways issues of class, race and gender shape students’ educational experiences.” It is important to note that this class was not designed to be solely about race. In fact, the role of race was scheduled to be the focus for only one week in Andre’s class and four weeks in Nakia’s class. In practice, however, race was talked about directly or obliquely throughout most of both courses, while other topics like social class remained more confined to their designated weeks. Other topics on both syllabi included the history of education, the role of social class in education, politics of education and philosophy of education. In Nakia’s class, these topics often still included a focus on race. For example, for her week on politics of education, students watched the film *Waiting for Superman* and discussed the implications of the movie for people of different races. In Andre’s class, there were more course sessions when only a comment or two were made about race-related issues. In his week focusing on politics of education, for example, students read and discussed a chapter from a textbook that compared progressive, conservative and neo-liberal approaches to education reform, and issues of race rarely surfaced.

In both courses, students were assigned readings for each class meeting; they studied one or two local public schools both by researching the schools on the internet as well as visiting their neighborhoods; and small groups of students took turns presenting the various readings for the class. Both classes read articles by John Dewey, Jonathan Kozol, Pedro Noguera, Lisa Delpit, Beverly Tatum, Peggy McIntosh, and William Julius

Wilson. When they did not read precisely the same readings, the instructors usually covered the same general themes. For example, in order to introduce his students to culturally relevant pedagogy, Andre used an article by Geneva Gay while Nakia other assigned one by Gloria Ladson-Billings.

Contexts with Andre

Andre's Background

Andre was born in what he described in our first interview as a “comfortable, middle-class” family in Haiti where he attended an elite school in Port-Au-Prince. He pronounced himself a “terrible student” who “just didn’t understand the point of” education until he got to college. Andre immigrated to the U.S. with his mother when he was fourteen and he began public high school in New York. Embarrassed about his lack of fluency in English, throughout high school Andre rarely spoke; instead, he keenly observed his peers. As he is now an outgoing, gregarious thirty-something, it is hard to imagine him as the silent teenager that he describes who “didn’t have any friends” and “didn’t have any interactions with most people.” College was a transformative time for Andre as he began to experiment with self-expression through different media. Although Andre began college as a computer engineering major, he fell in love first with the theater program and then creative writing. He began to read broadly, including James Baldwin, who became a major influence: “one of the voices that kind of answered a lot of the questions I didn’t know how to ask or have someone to talk to about.” Before becoming an instructor for *Contexts*, Andre taught in a variety of settings including as a math specialist in a charter elementary school; as a regular public high school math teacher, and as an adjunct for a university writing department.

In Class with Andre

Andre has warm brown skin, lively brown eyes, and an inch or two of short black hair. For most of the semester, he had a short, sparse beard. He dressed in slacks, collared shirts, and sweaters, often in bright, contrasting colors. An animated instructor, Andre stood throughout class, occasionally turning to the whiteboard to jot a few notes. His gestures were expansive, and he often rose onto the balls of his feet to accentuate a point. Although students often remarked about how much talk-time students were given in Andre's class, Andre was also an active lecturer, generally speaking for more than half of each class meeting. When he explained an author's ideas, he often got excited, broke a light sweat and spoke with an enthusiasm that many students mentioned appreciatively in their interviews.

Andre was also an intent listener. When listening to a student contribute to a discussion, he frequently clasped both hands together and put them under his chin, bowed his head slightly and made eye contact with the speaker. Smiling broadly, Andre often followed-up students' comments with challenging probing questions. His smile seemed to indicate that he knew the question was challenging, and that it was meant to push the thinking of the whole class. If a student was unable to answer the question, Andre's smile would widen into a pleased chuckle, and he would look to the rest of the class for a response.

Andre's students loved him and loved his class. In interviews, they described him as "talented," "good at what he does," "great with relationships," "the ideal teacher," "so smart," "down-to-earth," and, simply, "amazing." In fact, even though I asked questions

like, *What would you change about this class?* I never heard a student voice a critique of Andre or his teaching style.

Although Andre shared many anecdotes from his own teaching as well as his wife's experiences teaching, he did not mention that he was born in Haiti and immigrated to the United States. His students understood him to be a Black American who had a deep understanding of race relations in the U.S. because of his own lived experiences. In her final interview, Abigail, a student in Andre's class, explained:

I think it's more authentic [having a Black instructor instead of a White instructor]. We're getting, like, a firsthand...experience, on what's happened. Like when he talked about, like, going somewhere and a police officer, like, stopped him and was looking for someone that robbed a local store... You wouldn't get that, maybe, with a White teacher? Not to say that they would be a bad teacher or anything, but...we're getting like the firsthand part of it.

As Abigail indicates, for her, Andre's blackness made him a more trustworthy source of knowledge on issues of race.

The desks in Andre's tiny assigned classroom were arranged in a cramped square. Each class meeting, two or three students were assigned to teach the course reading. In Andre's class, this meant that the students verbally responded to specific questions that he posed about the reading. These questions often followed the same general pattern: What was the author's major argument? What did s/he mean by x, y, and z (particular terms)? How are these ideas related to a particular previous reading? As a preservice teacher, what are the most important things you are taking away from this reading? While the student-presenters answered these questions first, Andre also frequently randomly chose a student (he carried a stack of index card with students' names on them) and asked him/her to contribute. After this portion of class, which often lasted about an

hour, the student teachers were responsible for presenting an activity to help their classmates understand the material. The most common activity was watching and discussing a short video, although other activities were also attempted. The class ended with Andre reviewing his own instructor's notes about the reading, often at an extremely rapid pace, in the few remaining minutes of class. Perhaps because the students had written assignments that required that they draw specifically from these readings, most students attentively took notes throughout class. Three of Andre's 27 students were absent frequently; the remaining students had a very high attendance rate.

Andre's Racial Identity and Ideology

In his early 20s, Andre did not want to be seen as a Black person. As he said in his first interview,

I didn't want to walk into a room and the first thing that someone sees is that I'm quote-unquote "Black." [*Makes air quotes.*] And that's something that I remember, you know, I was pretty adamant about that. Not being seen as a race at first...And I think a lot of it came from reading Baldwin, too...and reading research in terms of race doesn't exist.

Andre explains that he used to feel strongly about not wanting to be initially categorized as Black, but now he is, as he said later, "more flexible." Andre continued to explain, that, unfortunately, one of the first things Americans notice about people is their race. However, Andre believes that the more we interact with people who are different from ourselves, the less we see their race. Using his fingers to mark quotes in the air, Andre explained in an interview,

Because that's the thing with race...to me, being married to someone who is quote-unquote "White," after a week of spending time together, she was no longer "White," and I hope that I was no longer "Black" to her. I think you really just realize okay, we're just two people. So I guess in my early 20s, I was hoping to take that initial step out of the equation. But

you can't. And we know that in the society we have, we'd all have to be blind for that to happen.

For Andre, the “initial step” is the period of time when people first meet when they see each other as racialized people. After this first step, people move on to what he considers a better way of seeing in which they do not see or notice one another’s races - the other person becomes race-less. Because race is not real in a biological sense, Andre thinks we should not see race at all.

Andre wants his students to acknowledge that they, too, have this initial step of prejudice of people based on race and that each of us has racial biases. During a class discussion about the social (rather than biological) significance of race during the seventh week, he told his class the following:

We all have stereotypes. We all have racist tendencies. We are all, in this room, and beyond the walls of this room, **racist** at some level...We see people, based on their races and we **do** make assumptions about them...So if you don't take time to check that stuff and you don't understand where that's coming from, as a teacher, it's very very easy for it to just manifest and come out of you without you thinking about it...So these stereotypes live with us and it's easy for us to go around with them unchecked. So I think of it like that.

Andre believes that true color-blindness does not exist; Americans notice race. This, along with the fact that many Americans grow up in racially homogenous environments, leads to pre-judgement and stereotypes about others. He wants his students to evaluate themselves and “check” these assumptions that they are making about other people, so that they can move on and see *beyond* race.

As I explain in the next chapter, students struggled with the tension inherent in this stance: that they must, first notice race and then, second, look *past* race. Also in tension with Andre’s stance is the idea promoted by many of his course readings, that a

student's race is a determiner of the kind of educational and life experience s/he has - and, therefore, is not something that a teacher should look *beyond*. Rather, authors like Delpit, Noguera, and Tatum contend that a student's race and racial identity are relevant factors in their experiences of the world and should be acknowledged and carefully considered by teachers rather than simply looked past.

Andre's Teaching Goals

Andre's primary goal for *Contexts* is that his students leave with a mission and vision for their own teaching; that they know why they want to teach and what they want to accomplish with their teaching. As he told his students during the last week of class:

If anything at all happened in this course, I hope a couple of things are clear to you. It's not enough to step into a classroom and teach whatever to whomever. It has to be clear, what you are doing and why.

Andre is not overly concerned with the particulars of the educational philosophies that students create; the important thing is that they have them. He believes that teachers – and teacher educators - should never force particular beliefs onto students. He strives to be neutral and accepting of different ideas, often playing devil's advocate in class in order to present a neglected viewpoint or explore a tension between two different perspectives. Indeed, many of his students remained ignorant of (or deluded about) his opinions and political beliefs. As I explain later, however, he did make some of his beliefs about teaching exceptionally clear and students were quick to pick up on those elements of his philosophy that he made explicit.

Contexts with Nakia

Nakia's Background

The other *Contexts* instructor in my study, Nakia, was raised in a city in the Northeastern United States as an only child. As she told her class early in the semester, her dad, a police officer, “didn’t graduate from high school” and her mom “is a normal, regular person, she works at Target.” In a written autobiography that was offered as a sample for a class assignment, Nakia shared with her students that growing up, she “experienced two social classes, poor and lower middle-class.” When her parents split up and her mom lost her job, Nakia’s family struggled financially. In our first interview, Nakia explained, “I was really poor. Like there were, like, many many times where we like, had to go to the store to buy water because there was not water in the house.”

Nakia was a precocious elementary school student whose boredom in class, combined with her teachers’ expectations for appropriate behavior for Black girls, led to her being labeled as a “wild child.” She was kicked out of several Catholic and public elementary and middle schools for disruptive behavior and fighting. As she explained in her autobiography, “In 7th grade, I had accumulated a total of 32 suspensions that year. I hated school so suspensions were actually grand rewards that gave me time to draw pictures, write poems and raps and watch Maury!”

Nakia’s academic life improved dramatically when a school counselor helped her get into an elite public high school where she was respected as a person and challenged as a scholar. Nakia went on to attend a prestigious university for her BA and MA, and taught elementary school math in a charter school for two years before returning to graduate school to pursue a doctorate in education. In his second interview, one of

Nakia's students, Lucas, summarized Nakia's life in this way: "Well when I think about her, I think, I see her as someone who was going one way and realized what she was doing and said 'Stop!' and then she went the other way and clearly she's, you know, she has her shit together, for lack of a better word."

In Class with Nakia

With her carefully styled hair and chic outfits, Nakia always appeared calm, polished, and professional. She has impeccable penmanship; some students were entranced by the perfection of her lettering when she wrote on the board. Nakia always had a polished PowerPoint ready for class, usually with carefully-chosen pictures and tasteful color templates.

In Nakia's assigned classroom, the tables were arranged in a series of groups in a long, narrow room facing a projector screen at one of the narrow ends. In the first half of the semester, the only occupied seats among the twelve empty chairs in the two groups closest to the front of the classroom were claimed by two of the three Black students in class. In the second half of the semester, these two young Black women were joined by three White classmates. With the exception of these five women, the rest of the students sat quite far, at least twenty-five feet from where Nakia stood at the front of the room so she could advance her PowerPoint slides. Most students sat in the same table groups each class meeting.

In interviews, students described Nakia as a "flexible," "easy to relate to," "nice," "easy-going," "understanding" teacher who "goes about it the right way." Nakia explained to the class that she understood that they were all busy individuals and that it was fine with her if they turned some assignments in late. Compared to Andre's class,

the assignments were fairly easy; often requiring a short personal reflection rather than the application of a course reading to answer a complex question. Students saw this relaxed environment as aligned with the course content. As Ava explained:

Ava: I feel like because...Nakia teaches a subject where we're talking about privilege and all students don't have it, she's very, like flexible with things. And knows that people work.

Karen: So you think that there's a relationship between -

Ava: Yeah! ...it would be REALLY strange if a teacher who taught that class...was just, like, You have to get everything in on time!

While this easy-going attitude was appreciated by students, it also had unintended consequences. Although Nakia assigned readings for each class session, students were not held accountable for doing those readings. With the exception of a handful of dedicated students, Nakia's students did not read the assigned articles. I was surprised at the openness with which students freely admitted that they had not read when I sat with them in their small group or asked them during interviews. I later accounted for this openness in the following way: it seemed as though in this figured world, there was an implicit pact between Nakia and her students. Nakia believed they would not read, and so she did not force the issue. Students observed that she did not believe they would read, and performed according to her expectations. According to my attendance records, only about 70% of Nakia's class was present for each course meeting. Finally, compared to Andre's class, the atmosphere in Nakia's class was much more laid back. My field notes contain many instances of students doing work for other classes or surfing the internet during class time, even when I was sitting right next to them.

Like Andre, Nakia had two or three students sign-up to teach each reading to the class. Nakia, however, had a more hands-off approach with this assignment. Whereas

Andre's student-presenters remained seated while he asked them questions about the reading, when Nakia's students presented, she sat with the class - often with the two Black students at the front of the room - and let the presenters lead the class so that they would get practice teaching.

Generally, the student presenters created a PowerPoint that summarized the main points of the article and then engaged the class in an activity about the reading. As in Andre's class, these activities were often designed to reinforce the most general point of the articles. For example, after a reading about the role of structural forces in the creation of areas of concentrated poverty by William Julius Wilson, the student teachers gave groups of their classmates different amounts of popsicle sticks and instructed them to build the tallest houses they could with the resources provided. The presenters then made the point that students with more resources can build taller houses. After students presented, Nakia usually engaged the whole class in discussion about important points she felt deserved more attention. In contrast with Andre's class which rarely deviated from its routine, Nakia's class also spent whole class periods watching documentaries, doing fieldwork in the neighborhoods of particular schools, and working on projects like interactive maps of their schools' neighborhoods in the computer lab.

Students liked Nakia's class. As one student, Tiffani, said in an interview at the end of the semester, the course was not only an "easy A" but also a place to talk about "real" things that often went undiscussed in other classes. Pam's comments from her end-of-semester interview seemed representative of most of her classmates' opinions:

We're obviously not putting in 100% in what we're doing all the time, but most college kids aren't doing that in their college classes anyway. So, um, like the fact that she's so open, we're taking what she says into

consideration...I'm definitely listening, and I definitely know what she's saying. I get the concepts.

Indeed, as I explain in the next chapter, many of Nakia's students' opinions about the role of race in education did seem to change throughout the semester despite the comparatively low rigor of Nakia's version of *Contexts*.

Nakia's Racial Identity and Ideology

In contrast with Andre, being Black is a central part of Nakia's identity, something she has "to think about every day." She explains, "Being Black is something that I feel like I always have to consider. Especially when I'm...the only one in a group. Because I'm wondering if people will attribute what I'm requesting or what I'm asking to me being Black." On the other hand, Nakia says, being Black is also a "source of pride" because she's a "Black girl that's made it." For her, being Black is a "mix of positive and negative" because she still has so much racial oppression to contend with in her daily life. In both the classes she took as a graduate student and the classes she taught, Nakia felt the heavy responsibility of being "the voice of Black people."

During a whole-class discussion about code-switching during the ninth week of class, Nakia explained one aspect of what it means to be Black, for her.

My family and I, when we talk about things, there's always this... discussion of ... 'Please don't be the Black person!' And like, that has a meaning of like, 'Don't be ghetto, don't be loud, don't try to stand out too much.' And these are maybe conversations that kids are having, that maybe you haven't had to have. And that's okay, but just be aware of them? And be open to kids when they're kind of challenging you? ... But also, try to find other ways to build bridges. In order to build a bridge, you kind of need to know what's on both sides. To help kids make that connection. Are there any questions about this?

In this excerpt, Nakia shares a phrase that her family uses, "Please don't be the Black person!" Taking on what she calls the "voice" of Black people, Nakia interprets the

meaning this phrase had in her family for her students: “Don’t be ghetto, don’t be loud, don’t try to stand out too much.” Nakia tries to make her students aware of the stereotypes that Black people contend with. She tries to assuage her students’ guilt that they did not have to have these same kinds of conversations growing up (“that’s okay”) but she urges her students to “be aware” that their students may have discussions like this with their families. She concludes this mini-lesson with an explanation of why she is telling the story: she wants these preservice teachers to know what it is like to be Black so that they can “build bridges” between students’ home cultures and the classroom.

Nakia’s Teaching Goals

Like Andre’s, Nakia’s syllabus states that a primary goal of the course is that students will learn to “describe crucial ways issues of class, race, and gender shape students’ educational experiences.” However, Nakia seemed to intend something slightly - but importantly - different with this statement. Specifically, Nakia wanted her students to a) admit that they were not colorblind, b) understand how race is one factor that influences students’ educational experiences and c) develop an asset-based approach toward working with students of color. Whereas Andre wanted his students to learn to look *beyond* race, Nakia wanted her students to carefully consider the role that race and racism might play in their students’ lives and also begin to recognize the cultural resources and assets of students from racially-oppressed communities.

As I explain in Chapter 5, like Andre’s students, however, many of Nakia’s students also struggled with a tension between Nakia’s race-related course goals. While most of the resources of the class were devoted to moving students toward understanding how people of color are oppressed through our education system, Nakia also wanted her

students to see people of color not as victims, but as powerful personal agents full of cultural resources. This double-sided view - people of color as victims of discrimination but also as possessors of strong assets – proved difficult for many students to fully grasp during the fourteen-week course. I'll return to this idea in Chapter 6.

Student Participants

The focal participants in this study share some basic characteristics. First, they were willing to participate in this study and be interviewed twice by me. Since I explained at the beginning of the course that I was primarily interested in how this class impacted the ways that students thought about race, class and gender, these students may share some fearlessness in talking about potentially controversial subjects. All the participants were beginning a teacher education program at UU, and they ranged in age from 18 to 30. I identified these students as White when I selected them as possible focal participants and I confirmed this label in our first interview when I asked them how they identified racially. All of the students used the word “middle” when defining their social class (i.e. “upper-middle”, “lower-middle,” “solid-middle”), though I suspect that there was actually quite a range in students’ family’s financial situations. Although the students appeared to me as an extremely varied group, as I explain below, I was surprised by the high degree to which their views on race at the beginning of the semester cohered with one another as well as with Bonilla-Silva’s (2006) description of color-blind racism. As I discuss in Chapter 6, I believe that this coherence may suggest the existence of a figured world of White hegemonic understandings that is far more entrenched than I originally suspected. In the section below, I briefly describe each focal participant to accomplish two primary goals. First, I want the reader to get a sense of the participants

as individuals with unique histories, personalities and perspectives (rather than faceless members of a homogenous group of White preservice teachers) (Laughter, 2011).

Second, I attempt to preview some of the aspects of participants' other field worlds and identities that became salient when they engaged with course content about race. In each class section, I discuss participants in order from those who attended the most White high schools to those who attended the least White high schools. I chose a pseudonym for each participant that generally seemed to match the origin of their name (i.e. Irish, Hebrew Scripture), the popularity of their name for their peer group and whether their name was traditionally- or alternatively- spelled.

From Andre's Class:

Jessica (high school = 94% White). Jessica describes herself as typically Irish-looking, with strawberry-blonde hair and blue eyes. Growing up, Jessica moved among a few different rural, mostly White communities. She began college for the first time directly after finishing high school. However, a combination of life factors led her to drop out of college and begin a series of jobs in food service and childcare. In her early twenties, Jessica returned to community colleges and pursued her AA, one or two classes at a time. During the time of the study, she had just transferred to UU. Rather than share her own opinion in class or in her writing assignments, Jessica often contributed by sharing the opinion of an author that she had read for another class. Jessica seemed to hold the printed word at high value: if she had read something for a class, it could not be disputed.

Hannah (high school = 91% White). Hannah is a tall young woman with straight, shoulder-length pale blonde hair. She often wore pastel-colored, new-looking sweaters

with coordinated scarfs to class. Hannah brought a tiny laptop with her, and sat up straight on the edge of her chair and took copious notes with wrists delicately lifted above the keys and arched fingers. When Hannah's classmates talked to me about her in their interviews, if they did not know her name they mimicked her upright posture with her shoulder blades drawn together and proper typing form. Hannah attended an elite all-girls Catholic school in the suburbs. She is in the honors program at UU and often spoke about how much she enjoyed being challenged academically. She frequently offered critical analyses of the course texts and quickly made connections between readings and among her various classes. Hannah was a strong contributor to class discussions, and was well-liked and respected by her classmates.

Noreen (high school = 91% White). Noreen has bright red hair and cheeks that blush almost as bright red when she speaks in class. She attended a prestigious Catholic school that she loved. She has a learning disability and found her strength and self-expression through art; she hopes to become an art teacher like her mother. Noreen often referred to her experiences as a person with a learning disability in class; these seemed to provide an access point for her to build her understanding how systems of oppression operate. Noreen was an eager student who told me that she loved the class and felt herself to be profoundly changed because of her participation in *Contexts*.

Abigail (high school = 89% White). Abigail has light-brown hair, a heart-shaped face, and blue eyes. She grew up in a rural area in an upper-middle class family. Abigail is the only student I interviewed who estimated that the racial demographics of her high school were Whiter than they actually were; all the other students offered estimates that their high schools were more racially diverse than they actually are. She says that she

had little interaction with people racially, economically or culturally different from herself until she came to UU. At UU, she felt like a lot of her ideas about the world began to change, which she described in her first interview as a “really cool” process. She loved *Contexts* and felt like she discovered her vocation to be a teacher through taking the course. Throughout the class she had an air of genuine surprise, on more than one occasion exclaiming, “I just couldn’t believe it!” about an idea from an assigned article, for example, on the existence of segregated schools.

Dylan (high school – 83% White). Like Jessica, Dylan was older than his classmates. Unlike Jessica, however, he often referred to his age (32) and called himself the “old guy.” Dylan has the broad shoulders and athletic stance of an athlete; he coached a high school lacrosse team at the time of the study. He often mentioned his Welsh roots in class, pointing at his thick red hair and beard as evidence of his heritage. Dylan sees the world from a politically-conservative perspective and began class with much stronger, fully-formed opinions than many of his younger classmates.

Diana (high school - 63% White). Diana was exceptionally quiet in class, only speaking when Andre called on her directly by name. She is a petite young woman who, to me, often looked as though she came to class after horseback riding: she wore skinny jeans tucked into tall boots, plaid shirts and had her hair in a long, straight, no-nonsense ponytail. In class she often leaned back in her chair with her knees pulled up to her chest. Diana has a learning disability, and, like Noreen, she seemed to rely on her experiences in special education when working to understand the course content. Reserved in class; one-on-one Diana had a giggly, enthusiastic manner.

Ben (high school = 62% White). I found it difficult to read Ben's facial expressions behind his floppy red hair, thick red beard, and glasses. He dressed casually for class, in t-shirts or sweaters and jeans. He commuted from a suburb where he lived with his dad, and said ruefully that he did not really talk to any of his classmates at UU, but he would like to start trying to make friends. Ben took a year off school and worked his way around Europe as a temporary farm-worker before beginning community college and then transferring to UU. Although he did not often participate voluntarily in class, Ben seemed to engage deeply with the course readings on his own time. In fact, his written assignments differ markedly from those of many of his classmates as they demonstrate a passion for educational philosophy and a deep engagement with the finer points of the readings. Ben plans to be an English teacher but his real dream is to be a writer.

Charlotte (high school = 33% White). Charlotte is a petite young woman with a mane of curly mahogany hair and big brown eyes that she widens even more when she is surprised - which is often. She is the only focal participant who attended public school in the city where this study was conducted. Charlotte explained the racial diversity of her high school and her subsequent experience at UU in the following way:

[My high school] is mostly African American, I think, but you'll find people from everywhere. And like, everybody comes here [to UU] and they're like, oh my god it's so diverse, but I feel like I'm kind of used to that already, so it's not such a big deal for me.

Contrary to what you might expect of a young woman who grew up in the city, compared to her classmates, Charlotte seemed particularly unaware of the world around her; oblivious to current events, to the realities of other people's lives; to the workings of various systems that seemed commonplace to her classmates. Curious, though, in class

and in interviews with me, she would often ask, “Wait! How does that work?” about things like ability-level tracking, getting a teaching credential, or the school-to-prison pipeline.

From Nakia’s Class

Nick (high school = 96% White). Nick is an easy-going, friendly young man with an open expression, blue eyes, and a traditional cut to his sandy-brown hair. He often dressed in polo shirts, sweaters and jeans. Nick grew up in what he described in his autobiography as a “white upper middle class family;” his favorite childhood memories were of spending time outdoors at his family’s “mountain house.” Nick attended a prestigious all-boys Catholic high school that he loved; his goal is to return and teach there. In class, Nick sat leaned back in his chair, arms folded across his chest, making eye contact with the presenter. I never saw him bring an assigned reading to class or write anything down.

Steve (high school = 94% White). Steve is an active member of the ROTC and often wore his uniform to class. He wants to be an officer in the military and then a history teacher. He grew up in a mostly White rural area where, he says, “everybody was just pleasant.” Steve was in the AVID program in high school and began tutoring through AVID at a local elementary school when he began at UU. Steve often called on what he termed this “inner-city” experience in class. A confident young man, Steve was unafraid of contradicting or interrupting Nakia. At the same time, he seemed unaware of the implications of these behaviors as potentially disrespectful. He saw himself as a strong participant in discussions who enjoyed the course and appreciated his instructor.

Tiffani (high school = 91% White). Tiffani is a soccer player for UU. She often wore her soccer warm-ups, tied her straight brown hair back in a ponytail and chewed gum throughout class. She grew up in an insular, upper-class White community and felt that coming to UU had “opened [her] eyes up to a ton of things.” As an example, Tiffani added that she used to be really “scared” of homeless people. Now, however, she is no longer scared, “because it’s just, like, sad.” Tiffani sat in a table in the very back of the classroom with five other young White women. Although she occasionally participated in class, Tiffani often had her laptop out and appeared to be doing work for other classes, surfing the web, or using social media.

Ava (high school = 86% White). Ava describes herself as “half-White and half-Middle-Eastern.” Her mother is American, but they lived in Turkey with her Turkish father until she was 13, when she and her mother moved to Utah. At the beginning of the class, I assumed that Ava identified as White and so I included her in the study. Later, I decided to keep her as a focal participant because she presented an interesting case study of someone who, as she said in a written assignment for the course, “acknowledge[s] the privilege that ‘passing’ as White grants” and yet maintains a separate ethnic identity. Ava has short brown curly hair that was dyed blue for a lot of the semester. She dressed in a grunge/hipster style, looking hip in her glasses with thick plastic frames, dark skinny jeans or frayed shorts with tights underneath, and bold-colored, vintage tops. Attentive in class, Ava occasionally contributed to whole-class discussions, although her shyness seemed an obstacle to making friends in class.

Pam (high school = 84% White). Pam is quiet in class but gregarious with her friends outside of class. She seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the social aspects of her

freshman year of college - being a teacher in her own classroom seemed a lifetime away. Pam often described her own experiences by comparing them to those of two of her friends; one who is what she called a “rich girl” who attended a very posh private school and another who came from a lower-class family (she “lived in a trailer”) and attended Pam’s own school. Compared to these two points of reference, Pam positioned herself as a normal, middle-class girl with average experiences.

Naomi (high school = 54% White). Naomi grew up in a diverse town where many of her neighbors worked at nearby casinos and resorts. She has waist-length, straight, streaked, blonde and brown hair; she shaves the underside of her head up to her ears. She often dresses in a punk style: camouflage jackets, big boots, t-shirts advertising different bands. She wears thick eye make-up and lots of bracelets and necklaces. Naomi described her parents as “political;” from an early age they made her aware of issues of social injustice. Naomi was often shocked by the opinions of her classmates who grew up in all-White neighborhoods.

Ashli (high school = 39% White). Ashli has big, bright eyes and a broad smile. She keeps her curly brown hair tied back in a ponytail, and often dressed casually for class, in sneakers, leggings and a sweatshirt. She lives at home with her grandparents, mother and sisters, and commutes to UU. Ashli attended a racially diverse high school and had strong friendships and romantic relationships with people of different races. Partway through the semester, Ashli left a group where she had been sitting with other White students to join the two Black girls who sat together at the front of the room. As I explain in Chapter 6, I saw this move as a performance of solidarity with a Black perspective. Ashli confided in me in an interview that she did not do the readings for

class, but I did often see her engage with them during classtime, pulling the articles up on her laptop and intently watching the professor or student-presenters.

Lucas (high school = 19% White). Lucas stood out from his classmates in many ways. With his intentionally-scruffy long black hair, thick glasses, pale skin, and gamer t-shirts, he often appeared to me as though he had just emerged, blinking, from a dark room where he had been up all night playing videogames. Lucas's parents emigrated from Guatemala. While I might have classified him as Latino after interviewing him, Lucas told me that he thought of himself as White. As he explained in his autobiography,

I was the first of my family born and raised here... Though my family speaks primarily Spanish in the home, I don't know much about that culture nor have I ever been particularly interested in it. I suppose I am technically Latino but I mostly identify as White.

Lucas told me that he is married to a White woman who was surprised to discover that he was not "just a White guy" when she overheard him speaking on the phone in Spanish to his mother on the phone on their third date. In contrast with most of his classmates, Lucas did many of the readings for class. In addition, while some of his classmates took a relaxed approach toward completing in-class assignments, I often observed him trying to engage his peers in accomplishing assigned group tasks.

Participants' Incoming Beliefs about Race

In order to ascertain how the course might shape participants' racial ideologies, I needed to first learn what those ideologies were at the beginning of the semester. To do this, I triangulated data from participants' pre-assessments, from their comments in the first two weeks of class, from my first interview with them, and, for Nakia's class, with the students' autobiographies and first reading reflections which were due in the first two weeks of class. I also drew from students' course reflections from the end of the

semester; many of them articulated something like, “I used to believe X about race, but now I think Y.” In Dedoose, I created and analyzed a special data sub-set with all this data. In the findings below, I draw particularly on the data coded *race talk*, particularly the data sub-coded as *color-blind*, *color-conscious*, *not-talking about race* and *racism*.

With the exception of Naomi, the focal participants in this study began the course with remarkably similar beliefs about race.⁷ In this section, I address three salient aspects of these incoming belief systems: students’ beliefs about the role of race in society and schools, their beliefs about what constitutes racism, and, finally, their beliefs about how to address issues of race. In general, most students’ beliefs cohered to what scholars like Bonilla-Silva (2006) and Wise (2013) call a color-blind racial ideology. (This ideology is described in more depth in Chapter 2.)

Race No Longer Matters

The White preservice teachers in this study began the course committed to the belief that, in the United States, one’s race matters little in shaping one’s experiences and opportunities in schools and in life. Although they generally did not know the word “meritocracy,” they believed that our society is meritocratic. From these participants’ perspectives, the harder you work, the more successful you will become, end of story. As Nakia shared in her second interview, many students were so “shielded and blinded” that they seemed to begin class thinking that the world was all “lollipops and gumdrops.”

Students’ incoming beliefs were evidenced, in part, by students’ responses to a question on a preassessment given before the first day of class in each course. Students

⁷ Three participants - Hannah, Ben and Abigail - suggested that they had had these beliefs five months ago when they began college, but that their understandings about race were somewhat in flux at the beginning of the study.

were asked to offer an account as to why the United States has an academic achievement gap between students of different races. Most participants' answers made no mention of race or ethnicity, despite the fact that the question clarified that "The US Department of Education defines the achievement gap as "the difference in academic performance between different ethnic groups." Avoiding the use of racial markers is one characteristic of Bonilla-Silva's (2006) explanation of color-blind racism.

Abigail's (Andre's section, mostly White high school) response was typical:

I think that the opportunity gap is such a complex issue, it's difficult to fully grasp because there are so many factors that go into a person's education. Socio-economic circumstances such as family life, poverty and the neighborhood a person grows up in has a lot to do with it. A person's personal drive and determination also have a great deal to do with it, and I think luck is another significant factor - meeting certain people, making certain connections and encountering certain opportunities can happen to anybody at anytime.

While Abigail's response certainly might explain why *individuals* reach different levels of academic achievement, it is hard to interpret from her response why different *racial groups* tend to reach different levels of academic achievement. While it is possible that by mentioning "socio-economic circumstances," Abigail (and her classmates) were making a connection between race and income, that link was rarely made clear. I coded responses like this as *not-talking about race*. Abigail also highlights two values that are deeply linked with the ideology of the meritocracy: personal drive and ambition.

Despite the fact that racial explanations were explicitly triggered by the question, like Abigail, most students did not mention race. Tiffani's (Nakia's section, mostly White high school) response offers another example:

I think we have an achievement gap in the United States because of money. Everyone makes different amounts of money and how you live is dependent upon that. I believe that the public school education system is

wonderful in higher class suburban areas, but in a rural setting is not so good... Overall, I think that if you make a good earning your kids can receive a great education. Unfortunately, not everyone has the money to do so.

Tiffani recognizes that schools vary in quality by geography, although, interestingly, she does not mention the category *urban* which might be construed as a racial marker for people of color. Instead, she contrasts rural and suburban areas, which are both stereotypically White spaces. Tiffani draws on Bonilla-Silva's (2006) frame of color-blind racism called *naturalism* (explained in more detail in Chapter 2), when she explains that it is just normal and inevitable that "everyone makes different amounts of money" and people live among other people with similar incomes. Tiffani seems to believe that differences in academic achievement are due to social class, rather than race. However, she avoids any explicit discussion of how or why differences in income might produce racialized patterns of achievement.

Students who *did* mention race usually did so in order to explicitly discount the role of race or racism in contributing to the achievement gap. Noreen's (Andre's section, mostly White high school) response illustrates this strategy:

When discussing achievement gap the topic of race is immediately brought to the floor and, i feel, can sometimes play a larger role in the discussion of the topic and sometimes overpower the true topic of education. personally, i don't think its an issue that there is a gab in the educational achievement of people separated in the views of ethnicity. there are always going to be people who have higher achievements than others as well as more educated folks so the generalized numbers of these individuals grouped into racial groups do not have any weight for or against each other and are just facts and numbers.

Noreen states that she does not think the achievement gap is "an issue," efficiently minimizing the role of race and racism in her explanation of an instance of racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Like many of her classmates, she relies on the frame of

naturalism when she says that “there are always going to be people who have higher achievements than others.” When I asked Noreen how she identifies racially in our first interview, Noreen replied,

It’s interesting to leave that unsaid. Because I feel like it’s just such a big factor in like our society how you just kind of like, group people, and it’s just so objective. Race on its own. Like how you want to identify, and what it really means and how other people see it.

Noreen initially strongly resisted the idea that race might have any social meaning. For her, using racial terms to describe groups of people did not reflect a reality - it was “just facts and numbers.” For Noreen, at the beginning of the semester, race did not matter.

In contrast with her classmates, Naomi (the radical, Nakia’s section, racially diverse high school) offered a fairly sophisticated analysis of the achievement gap. Although this was her first education class, in her answer, Naomi highlights many of the topics that *Contexts* covers. She wrote,

The achievement gap in America is an extremely complex problem, therefore demanding a complex solution. There is not one sole cause of the achievement gap either, it is a combination of many things. One of which is the United States troubled past with abusing, mistreating, and segregating minorities. A result of that is white privilege, in which white people get better schooling than minorities, because they can afford to live in an area with a good school. Other ethnic groups then live in lower income areas with poor schools and poor teachers. In order to close this gap, priority must be placed on improving schools in lower income and urban areas. Better teachers must be placed in these districts, teachers who specialize in teaching in cities and urban areas. More incentive must be placed on education, and the school-to-prison pipeline that exists in these communities must be eradicated as well. A closing, or at least shrinking, of the achievement gap could incite major improvement in the United States educational system.

Naomi’s response demonstrates several elements of color-consciousness. She brings up a history of racism, and connects that history to present circumstances. She mentions the role of White privilege, and explicitly links race to class. She uses racial markers and

describes Whiteness as part of a system of power rather than a normal or neutral state. In addition, Naomi was the only student to allude to the role of teachers in creating (and closing) the racial achievement gap. Naomi's response was a clear outlier among those of her classmates. She seemed to begin the class with a color-conscious - rather than color-blind - racial ideology.

As I have tried to explain above, most participants began *Contexts* with a strong belief that race is not a major factor in shaping a person's experience of schools or society. This corroborates findings by scholars such as Bonilla-Silva (2006); Hitchcock (2008); Picower (2013); and Sleeter (2001). The incoming beliefs of the White preservice teachers in this study seemed to generally reflect those of the American White preservice teacher population, in general.

Most of the data that I initially coded as *color-conscious* from the first two weeks of class were actually descriptions of white people as the victims of reverse racism. Reverse racism – the belief that White people are disadvantaged in our society – is clearly not a tenet of color-consciousness, but it *is* an argument that in some situations, race does matter, and so I initially coded these examples as *color-conscious*. Later, because a belief in reverse racism conflicts with color-conscious ideology, I removed the color-conscious codes from these excerpts and double-coded them as *whiteness* and *racism* instead.

In the data subset from the beginning of the course, many participants describe White people as disadvantaged because a) they are vulnerable to being stereotyped as being racist; b) they are vulnerable to being stereotyped as privileged; or c) schools and jobs preferred to admit and hire people of color. Evidencing the existence of these kinds

of reverse racism was a somewhat awkward argument for students to make, given that these statements often came in close proximity to a claim that race does not matter. For example, examine Ashli's (Nakia's section, racially diverse high school) response to an interview question about whether being White has influenced her life:

I think that people assume that I'm more privileged than I actually am because I am White. Like, I think people have assumed that I live a life of [?] because of that. Like a lot of my friends didn't know that my parents divorced, they didn't know that I was REALLY lower middle-class, like very much so, if I didn't have my grandparents, I wouldn't have been able to go [Hillmont] High School...So I think that a lot of people make assumptions that I'm just this kind of middle class girl from the suburbs and everything is kind of like, good. Yeah, but no. I definitely had to work. Like I'm paying for college myself and I definitely had to do a lot of baby-sitting and stuff when I was younger.

Although Ashli does not explain how it has hurt her that people assumed that she is more "privileged" than she actually is, she made this same point several times: in class, in her autobiography, and in this interview with me. Each time, she had a wronged, frustrated tone - she was relating a situation in which she felt she was a victim. As I explain in Chapter 5, statements like Ashli's also served as a way of positioning students as good, not-racist people. In students' incoming understandings of racism, there were just two positional identities: racists and victims. By portraying herself as a victim of racist stereotypes, Ashli by default asserts herself as non-racist. I discuss this discursive strategy in more detail in Chapter 5.

On other hand, not all students believed that being White was a disadvantage. Several students, particularly those who had already taken a college course that dealt with race, began the class with some acknowledgment of the existence of White privilege. As an example, Pam (Nakia's section, mostly White high school) nods to the existence of White privilege in the following interview excerpt from the beginning of the semester:

Karen: Do you feel like being White has influenced the way you see the world or your life in any way?

Pam: Um, I'm sure that there's some things that have influenced my life that I don't even notice, every day things. Nothing like specifically, but, I'm sure if I was a different race and then I was this race, I would notice something. You know what I mean? I guess there's definitely advantages to being White compared to different races.

Although Pam does not name specific advantages to being White, she does acknowledge that they probably exist. I was uncertain whether Pam really believed that White privilege existed, or whether she was offering what she had learned was a right answer in some education classes. Either way, it is important to note that not all students began the semester committed to a belief that White people were disadvantaged because of their race.

Racism is Personal, Evil and a (Mostly) Historical Phenomenon

At the outset of the course, most students understood racism to be a personal (rather than systemic) problem that was enacted by bad people, mostly long ago. Specifically, students believed an act of racism to be a malicious attack on a person because of his/her race; *racists* were the perpetrators of those acts. This belief is consistent with the findings of other researchers who have studied White Americans (see, for example, Helms, 1997; Milner, 2003, 2010; Tatum, 2003). For example, Lucas (Nakia's section, racially diverse high school) explained in his final interview that at the beginning of the class, his idea of racism was "almost like cartoon-y, super-villain-y;" something explicitly prohibited by the "why can't we all just get along" message of "Saturday morning cartoons."

Because the White preservice teachers in this study believed that racism was something that only evil people did, they generally absolved themselves, their friends and

their family members from being racist. For example, if their roommates or family said something negative about a person of another race in the privacy of their home or dorm, participants labeled this act “just a little bit racist” or plain “not racist.” In her first interview, Pam (Nakia’s section, mostly White high school), for instance, shared that her roommate occasionally made remarks about people of different races that made Pam feel “weirded out.” Pam explained, “She's not **racist**, or anything, but she'll say things. And I'm just like, ‘Oh my.’ Like, I'll literally turn my head and be like, ‘Are you serious?’” Although her roommate’s comments are strong enough to make Pam turn her head and ask her roommate if she’s serious, Pam explicitly identifies her roommate as “not racist.” It seemed as though Pam and her classmates saw racism as an act that required a victim, and so they were able to retain positive views of their friends and family as not-racist when they spoke negatively about other groups, as long as people from that group were not present at the time.

As I will explain in Chapter 6, this view of racism as an individual, evil act seemed especially important to participants because it absolved them of being racist. Since these young people did not understand themselves to be the kinds of people who commit malicious attacks on people because of their race, White preservice teachers in this study were able to enjoy an understanding of themselves as good, not-racist people. As I explain in Chapter 6, some students worked hard to maintain that positive sense of self when they were confronted through the course with a view of racism that was more systemic, implicit, and veiled than they had originally believed, and, furthermore, implicated them as beneficiaries of racial privilege.

Be Colorblind

With the exception of Naomi, the White preservice teachers in these classes firmly believed that good people do not see or notice race. In fact, they felt that seeing or noticing race was an indicator of racist beliefs and, therefore, to be avoided at all costs. These findings support those of many other studies about White racial ideologies including Bonilla-Silva (2006), LaDuke (2009) and Marx (2006). Markowitz and Puchner (2014, p. 75) explained a similar dynamic with the White preservice teachers in their study in the following way: “When the participants aspired to color-blindness, most of them felt that being different was somehow an insult, something for which students should hide. A good colorblind person should treat everyone the same, ignore differences, and consequently, deny White privilege.” Markowitz and Puchner’s analysis seems to apply to the participants in my research as well. For instance, Steve (Nakia’s section, mostly White high school) explained that his family taught him to never see race:

Karen: Do you feel like being White influences the way you see the world or the experiences you have in the world?

Steve: No, not at all. I mean...my family raised me to never judge anybody by the color of their skin or their background or culture. So I don't know, I never look at anyone because of, like, differently, because of that, ever.

Steve’s answer, on the surface, does not seem to really address the question that I thought I was asking. I had hoped that this question would help me ascertain whether or not Steve felt like he experienced any privilege - or disadvantages - as a White person. Since, however, I was evoking the frame of racism by asking a question about the role of Whiteness in his life, Steve interpreted my question as if I was asking, *Do you have any racist beliefs?* For Steve, noticing race or acknowledging the role of race was

an indicator of racist beliefs, and so it was important for him to assert his non-racist-ness with his statement that he “never look[s] at anyone” “differently” because of the “color of their skin or their background or culture.” Like Steve, most participants began the course firmly committed to the idea that the best way to address racial issues is to endeavor to not see race.

Jessica’s (Andre’s section, mostly White high school) answer to the same question in our interview in the first week of class reflects a similar set of values and illustrates several of the points I have tried to make above. When I wrote my original interview protocol, I wrote the question below (Do you feel like being White significantly influenced the way you grew up, the way you see the world or the way you think about yourself?) as a means of ascertaining whether participants ascribed to colorblind ideologies; in other words, whether or not they believed that race mattered in their lives. When I asked this question of my participants, however, I was surprised and confused by their answers. It seemed as though they were defending an accusation that I did not think I was making. Their answers do make sense, though, if we consider their underlying beliefs. Since most participants believed that acknowledging that race matters indicates that one is racist, a yes answer would therefore implicate them as racist. This was to be avoided at all costs. In the following interview excerpt, Jessica asserts that a) being White can be a disadvantage b) her family is just “a little bit racist,” c) Jessica is not racist, d) race does not matter, and e) color-blindness is the best policy.

Karen: Do you feel like being White significantly influenced the way you grew up, the way you see the world now, or the way you think about teaching?

Jessica: I don't think so, um, I feel like, some, occasionally, people have stereotypes against, like, thinking that I have stereotypes. Like people are

predisposed to thinking that I am either racist or stereotypical based on either my family who happens to be a little bit racist. Or just the fact that I am, you know, White, and I grew up in a middle- to upper-class area. And I am completely the opposite. I have no racial stereotypes whatsoever.

Karen: You don't have any? How do you avoid them?

Jessica: It's just - it's all melanin. I don't really see the difference. I mean, I believe in *cultural* stereotypes. I believe that there are definitely different people from different areas who act a certain way, but race has nothing to do with it.

Jessica handles this question delicately in a way that preserves her own image as non-racist. First she evokes the idea of reverse racism by stating that “people have stereotypes” about her, that because she is White and middle-class and her family is “a little bit racist,” other people sometimes think that she might be racist. Although this statement includes an admission that race matters, it is an acceptable admission because Jessica portrays herself as the victim of racism and stereotyping, rather than the perpetrator. She clearly positions herself as “the opposite” of both her families and her would-be stereotypers; asserting, “I have no racial stereotypes whatsoever.” She marshals a biological argument against color-consciousness: since race has no biological reality - “it’s all just melanin” - it should be ignored. She also relies on a strategy that Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls “minimization of racism” when she describes her family as “*a little bit racist*.” Finally, she concludes with an example of what Bonilla-Silva calls cultural racism – racial groups may in fact be distinct from one another because of their cultural differences - but she emphasizes that race “has nothing to do with” these differences. Implicit in Jessica’s response is the idea that good people do not have racial stereotypes about others, indeed, good people do not notice race at all, because race does not matter.

While I have chosen to share Jessica and Steve's responses here because they were especially clear, strong endorsements of colorblind ideologies, they still exemplify the beliefs of their classmates (except Naomi). I was surprised at the degree to which students' beliefs cohered both to one another and to Bonilla-Silva's (2006) description of White color-blind racial ideologies. At the beginning of the course, most participants seemed deeply committed to a "seamless ideological web" (Markowitz and Puchner, 2014, p. 77) of color-blindness that seemed to permeate much of their thinking about teaching, especially about teaching students of color. For the instructors, an important pedagogical project of the course was to shift students from color-blind to color-conscious racial ideologies in just fourteen weeks. In Chapter 5, we'll look at the ways that each instructor went about this task.

Summary of Chapter 4

In the course *Social Contexts of Education*, teacher educators at UU attempt to provide White preservice teachers with basic understandings about the ways that race, class and gender can influence students' educational experiences. Although the course has some core required components, instructors exercise considerable decision-making power in what actually happens in class. The two instructors whose courses I studied are both Black, are in the same doctoral program, and have similar previous teaching experiences yet they have very different pedagogical styles and philosophies.

The White preservice teachers in this class are mostly middle class and from the suburbs, although there are some students who grew up in urban areas and two focal participants who consider their backgrounds more "lower-middle-class." Perhaps most surprising is the homogeneity of participants' racial ideologies prior to taking this

class. With one exception, the White prospective teachers in this study began *Contexts* as active participants in a color-blind figured world in which race is not a factor in determining the amount of opportunities one has access to; racism is an evil, personal action and mostly a thing of the past; and the best way to deal with race is to ignore it. In summary, at the beginning of the course, most participants adhered to what Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls a color-blind racial ideology. In Chapter 5, I describe the pedagogical strategies the instructors employed in the attempt to interrupt these color-blind ideologies. In Chapter 6, I explore the ways that participants engaged with the learning opportunities they were offered.

CHAPTER 5: TEACHING COLOR-CONSCIOUSNESS

In the previous chapter, I contended that most of the White prospective teachers in this study began *Contexts* committed to color-blind racial ideologies. Both of the instructors of *Contexts* were concerned by these ideologies and wanted their students to adopt more a color-conscious approach to address issues of race in education. In this section, I describe the racial ideologies that were presented by the instructors and the methods through which the instructors taught these ideologies to their students. I conceptualize the instructors' offered ideologies as color-conscious figured worlds that contrast sharply with participants' incoming belief structures.

Instructional Context

Previous studies about the role of teacher education coursework in changing White preservice teachers' racial identities and ideologies have tended to focus exclusively on the students rather than the beliefs and practices of teacher educators (Laughter, 2010). Recently, some researchers have called for a more explicit focus on the instructional context and content of these courses. These scholars wonder what learning opportunities White preservice teachers are offered in these kinds of classes (Castro, 2010; Gorski, 2009). Taking up this call, I first describe the instructional context of each section of *Contexts*. Although race was not the sole focus of either section, both instructors wanted students to challenge their color-blind beliefs through the class.

In the table below, I summarize the key differences between the color-blind beliefs that students began the semester with and the color-conscious beliefs their instructors hoped they would adopt. In Chapter 6, I argue that these beliefs are part of

figured worlds that served as realms of interpretation through which students developed self-understandings.

	Color-Blind Figured World	Color-Conscious Figured World
Key Tenets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Race no longer matters; we live in a “post-racial” society - Racism is personal, historic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A person’s experience may be mediated by his/her race - Racism is systemic, present
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evil, racist people (Southerners, Neo-Nazis) - People who are “a little bit racist” (friends, family) - Good, not-racist people = everybody else 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All people in our society have been raised in the “smog” (Tatum, 2006) of racism - Anti-racist people fight for social justice - Color-blind people are in denial
Values and Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Noticing and/or talking about race implies racism. -Ignoring race implies a good person who “doesn’t see someone for the problem of his race” (Steve, student participant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ignoring race means being racist (and denying privilege) -Good White people try to understand the ways in which racism and privilege impact people’s experiences
Discourse Markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Few explicit racial markers - Evasion, incoherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explicit use of racial markers like Black and White

The two instructors approached the task of moving students from a color-blind figured world to a color-conscious figured world in different but overlapping ways. In this chapter, I describe four pedagogical choices (personal anecdotes, a school case study assignment, particular readings, and the Harvard Implicit Association Test) that both instructors made in the attempt to effectively challenge students’ color-blind racial ideologies. First, however, I address the instructors’ underlying beliefs and assumptions that informed those pedagogical choices.

Nakia's Strategy: Make it Clear

For Nakia, interrupting students' color-blind ideologies was a primary goal of the class and one that she shared explicitly with students. In particular, as she shared with me an interview, Nakia thought that two points were "really important for the course." First, "there's no such thing as meritocracy" and second "color-blindness is a really negative thing for students of color." Several times throughout the semester, Nakia found opportunities to tell her class that being color-blind is equivalent to "ignoring a very important part of who a student is" and "is not beneficial to them or to you as a teacher."

For example, Nakia shared her beliefs about color-blindness with her class in the seventh week of the semester in the following way. According to my fieldnotes, while Nakia was delivering this mini-lecture to the class, all her students were looking at her, apparently keenly aware of the importance of this topic to their instructor:

Forget about race, class, gender. [Imagine] you're sick. You tell someone you're sick and they're like, 'No you're not sick, you're fine. No, you're not sick, you're fine.' And, like, imagine...you're really in pain, and people ignore you!...That's...related in a sense to this, if you ignore what happens to people - race, class and gender - it kind of becomes offensive and it's hard to...take down walls...If you don't acknowledge my experience, it's harder for me to communicate with you.

In this mini-lesson, Nakia calls color-blindness "offensive." She equates not seeing race with denying that someone is ill. She asks students to shift perspectives and "imagine" that "you're really in pain and people ignore you." Nakia further points out some of the drawbacks of color-blindness: if you are color-blind, it is "harder" "to communicate" with people from different backgrounds.

In addition to challenging color-blind stances, Nakia makes another point here that was also an undercurrent of many of her other lessons. She makes a connection

between being Black and being sick or in pain. As I discuss in Chapter 6, students picked up on this theme and struggled to make it square with another of Nakia's course goals: that students see people of color from an asset- rather than deficit- based perspective.

In addition to direct statements to her class like the one above, Nakia made her beliefs clear in other ways. For example, she showed a segment of *The Daily Show* in which liberal Jon Stewart makes fun of conservative Bill O'Reilly for refusing to admit the existence of White privilege. Through strategies such as these, Nakia explicitly communicated her disapproval of color-blind stances to her students.

Andre's Strategy: Let Them Make Up Their Own Minds

Compared to Nakia, Andre was much less explicit with the class about his views on color-blindness. This stance is consistent with his beliefs about the dangers of imposing beliefs on others. As Andre explained to me in our end-of-semester interview,

I think I've said it in class many many times, probably too many times, that there's nothing neutral about teaching. And race is just one example of that. And you know, some of the readings make clear that...the more color-blind or race-neutral approach that you take, the more damage you're going to cause without knowing that you're doing it. Because a lot of these stereotypes, the only way to really ensure that you're treating everyone as best as you can, and as fairly as you can, is to acknowledge first your own racial biases.

But...I don't ever want to impose my views... I'm hoping that from the examination, from the readings, um, you know, and maybe from what I even say sometimes, you'll realize that, okay, race-neutral doesn't make much sense.

For Andre, race “is just one example” of how “there’s nothing neutral about teaching.” (For Nakia, on the other hand, racial oppression is foregrounded - more salient or more important than other forms of oppression.) Andre acknowledges that he chose particular readings with particular messages about how color-blind or, as he says,

“race-neutral” approaches can damage students. Still, he does not want to impose this belief on White preservice teachers, he hopes that they will come to the realization on their own that “race-neutral doesn’t make much sense.” While in Nakia’s class, color-blindness was explicitly positioned as misguided; in Andre’s class, this value judgment was more implicit. These distinctions had implications for their instructional choices.

Pedagogies of Conversion

In the four brief sections that follow, I share the pedagogical choices that instructors made in the hopes of moving students from color-blind to color-conscious figured worlds. I choose these four strategies to share here for two overlapping reasons. First, three of these (the course readings, the school case study project and the Harvard Implicit Association Test) are the strategies that the instructors mentioned when I asked them how they tried to challenge students’ color-blind beliefs. Second, almost all of the data that I coded color-conscious was in the context of (for example, in students’ presentations of their school case study) or contained a reference to (for example, when participants retold instructor anecdotes) one of these strategies. By choosing to share these four strategies based in part on the fact that they sparked or were related to some students’ performances of color-consciousness, I am privileging the more successful strategies that the instructors employed. An alternative story to tell here could include also those pedagogical choices that seemed to lead to purely color-blind performances. However, since the instructors did not name any of the other aspects of class as specifically designed to shift students’ racial ideologies, I have decided to focus on these four.

Instructor Anecdotes

One way that Andre and Nakia influenced students' views was through the telling of personal anecdotes. About once a week, both Andre and Nakia recounted short (one- to three-minute) personal stories about their own experiences as students or teachers that related to the week's learning objectives. In addition, Andre often told stories about his wife, who is a White teacher in a predominantly Black school; and Nakia often shared the experiences of a woman she described to the class as "one of her best friends." This "blonde, blue-eyed" woman comes from a wealthy family and teaches in an "inner-city" school. Early on in this research, I began taking special note of what I called *storytime* because the whole tenor of the class changed when instructors told these anecdotes. Students' bodies would still and they lifted their eyes to their instructors. Through these stories, instructors often personalized the class content. For example, in a class discussion about an article about what Lisa Delpit calls "the culture of power" (1988), Andre told this story about one of his wife's experiences teaching:

Actually, my wife...when she was student teaching...something very similar. And she grew up also in a very middle class background...Her mother, instead of telling her, 'Go take a bath! Just get your butt into the shower now!' she was used to [*in a higher-pitched, softer voice*] 'Don't you think it's time for you take a bath now, honey?' [*Returns to normal speaking voice.*] She's used to that very indirect way of giving... instructions. So she...responds to that. So as a teacher, she'd find herself doing a lot of that. So she did that with a particular student, the student was sitting in the middle of the hallway, she said, 'Don't you think you should not be sitting here? It's not appropriate?' And the kid actually responded: 'I think it's fine!' [*Class laughs a little.*] 'I think it's fine.' Right? And so she had to realize that, Oh, I didn't tell him what to do, I'm asking him, 'Can you move?' And she still put it as a question actually, right?...That's how much of your own background goes into your teaching.

This short anecdote illustrates several characteristics of many of the stories that Nakia and Andre told. First, the focus of this story is someone who the speaker loves and respects, in this case, Andre's wife. She is positioned as acting with good intentions. She speaks to a student in the language and style she is most familiar with – a White, middle-class style of framing directives as questions. When the student does not respond in the way the teacher hopes, the teacher realizes that the issue is miscommunication (rather than student defiance) and makes an adjustment. In this story, and in all the stories that Nakia and Andre told about their friend and wife, respectively, a White woman is portrayed as an earnest teacher who overcomes an obstacle on the way to becoming a more successful educator of students of color. The primary obstacle in these stories tended to be the White teacher's unawareness of her own race and culture or, in some anecdotes, her discomfort talking about race. As I explain below, students remembered some of these anecdotes long after they were told and often took them personally, identifying with and measuring themselves up to the teachers in the stories.

Course Readings

Both instructors assigned articles about the role of race in education written by scholars like Pedro Noguera, Jonathan Kozol, Lisa Delpit, Ann Arnett Ferguson, Beverly Tatum and Peggy McIntosh. In Andre's class, 11 of 27 (41%) of the required readings had a strong focus on race; in Nakia's class, this percentage was higher: 24 out 31 (77%). The overriding theme linking many of these readings was that race influences students' schooling experiences. By their own admission in interviews as well as my observations and interactions with them in class, most of Nakia's students rarely, if ever, actually read the assigned readings. They did, however, participate to varying degrees in

class discussions and activities about the readings, and some of the class assignments required that they refer, at least generally, to the main ideas in particular articles. In contrast, most of Andre's students appeared to read for most classes. They brought copies of the articles with them, often highlighted and with notes on the side, they took notes about the readings in class, they responded with informed opinions to cold-call questions about the texts, and they wrote specific answers to complex questions about the texts that required in-depth analysis, both in weekly assignments as well as on a cumulative midterm and final exam.

Two articles seemed to have particularly strong impacts on students. Students in both classes alluded to them, unsolicited, long after they were assigned as readings. The first of these is Peggy McIntosh's (1988) classic "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" in which the author lists forty White privileges that often go unnoticed by White people. The second article was "The Forces Shaping Concentrated Poverty" by William Julius Wilson (2008). In this text, Wilson describes several pieces of legislation and economic policies (which the author classifies as either race-based or "ostensibly nonracial") that contributed to the creation of predominantly Black areas of concentrated poverty. This article explicitly challenges the notion that "people are poor and jobless because of their own shortcomings or inadequacies" (p. 556). Most students learned about policies of institutional racism like redlining for the first time by reading this article (Andre's class), or watching a related movie shown in class (Nakia's class). Many students drew on these two readings when articulating their beliefs about race later in the semester.

The School Case Study Assignment

A primary project for both sections of class was an assignment called the “School Case Study.” Preparing for, completing aspects of, and presenting this assignment took several class periods in both sections of the course. This assignment was worth 40% of students’ grades in Nakia’s class and 30% of students’ grades in Andre’s class. Although the details differed across sections, the basic elements of the project remained the same. Working in small groups, students were assigned (Andre’s class) or chose (Nakia’s class) two schools to study; one had to be in the urban school district in which UU is located, one was required to be in a suburb. Students researched basic information about the schools like test scores and racial demographics on the internet and then they visited the neighborhoods of the schools. In Andre’s class, they then wrote a paper and made a presentation to the class about the strengths and weaknesses of these schools; additionally, they were required to make specific connections between their research and the course readings. In Nakia’s class, students were asked to first write a paper describing their two schools, and then draw on an article by Tara Yosso (2005) to make a map of community resources and cultural capital in the neighborhoods of their schools.

Individual students engaged with this assignment at different levels; some earnestly attempted to complete the assignment as assigned; others told me that they fudged actually going to the neighborhood of the schools. Still, as I will argue in Chapter 6, the act of trying to apply the arguments made by course authors to actual situations seemed to create opportunities for some students to perform color-conscious behaviors.

Harvard Implicit Association Test

Nakia required one assignment that Andre did not. This assignment was referenced in about a fifth of the data from Nakia's class that I coded *color-conscious*. Given that it was referenced in a significant chunk of the data and that it specifically elicited students' opinions about color-blindness versus color-consciousness, I felt that it was important to include in this chapter even though Andre's section did not complete an analogous assignment.

Nakia required her students to take the Black/White Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) and then complete a short written reflection on the experience. The IAT is a short online interactive test that seeks to reveal people's hidden biases by measuring their reaction time when sorting words or images into different categories, in this case, Black and White faces and synonyms for the words good and bad. The IAT's website states that most White Americans have a slight to moderate preference for people of their own race. The short written reflection was presented as a neutral, no-right-answer kind of writing prompt.⁸ Students referred to the IAT and the accompanying written reflection for weeks afterwards when issues of race arose in the classroom or in interviews.

⁸ The writing prompt read as follows: "Some argue that we live in a "colorblind" society (one in which we don't notice race and all people are treated fairly and equally). Others suggest that "colorblindness" is a form of racism because it ignores the dominant stereotypes by racial group and the role those stereotypes play in our interactions. You tested your conscious or unconscious associations (with the Race Implicit Association Test). Do you think America is "colorblind"? Do we have assumptions about who is "good" and "bad"? How might assumptions about "good" and "bad" shape education? Consider how the assumptions relate to teacher recommendations for Advanced and honors classes; student ideas about their own capabilities; classroom and school discipline; the rigor of the curriculum; the way we give (and do not give) others "the benefit of doubt". Consider your results from the Race IAT."

Summary of Chapter 5

Although the instructors varied in the degree to which they were open about their goals with students, students engaged in similar kinds of work in both sections of the course that I studied. In order to shift students' racial ideologies, the course instructors relied on four main strategies: telling personal anecdotes, assigning color-conscious course readings, requiring students to research and compare nearby schools, and engaging students in activities designed to reveal their subconscious biases like the Harvard Implicit Association Test. In the next chapter, I contend that some participants used these learning opportunities to re-evaluate their pre-existing racial ideologies and practice performing different selves but others did not.

CHAPTER 6: STRUGGLES IN LEARNING COLOR-CONSCIOUSNESS

In this chapter, I endeavor to answer the primary question that guides this research: How, if at all, does participation in a teacher education course focused on race influence the racial ideologies of White preservice teachers? I describe what the White preservice teachers in this study did with the learning opportunities outlined in Chapter 5. I explore the ways that the White prospective teachers in this study participated (or resisted participating) in the new, color-conscious figured worlds offered by their instructors. I contend that for some participants, engagement with the course content led to the re-formulation of racial ideologies and racial identities. Central to all participants' engagement with the course content is a profound desire to not be thought of as racist. As students' understandings of what it means to be racist changed (or remained the same); and as the specific local context of expression (like the wording of an assignment) implicated them as possibly racist (or not), some students' performances of non-racist selves changed.

Overview of Findings

As one step of analysis, I looked at the occurrences of color-blind versus color-coded data over the course of the semester. In both classes, I found a clear pattern: the number of color-conscious code occurrences increased over the course of the semester while the number of color-blind codes decreased. This pattern suggests that there was a general trajectory that participants seemed to move through throughout the course of the semester, from generally more color-blind to generally more color-conscious. However, I struggled to conclusively classify students into groups, to say, for example, this student started in position A and finished in position B. This was difficult in part because from

one day to the next, or even one sentence to the next, students said and wrote things that seemed completely contradictory. This phenomenon is not unique to participants in my study. As LaDuke (2009, p. 43) wrote about the White preservice teachers in her study,

Preservice teachers not only contradicted themselves within the duration of the course, but sometimes within a singular class period, or in some cases within minutes of a previous statement. Although this could be interpreted as lack of conviction, in this context it is considered a natural and necessary component in the development of multicultural educators. Preservice teachers do not change their entire world view with a single incident but rather a series of events and interactions in both informal and formal settings, making it a "slow and stumbling journey" (Cochran-Smith, 2004) rather than a race to a finish line.

In the sections below, I describe some of the events and interactions that I observed in *Contexts*. I hope that together they portray a rough picture of a broader "slow and stumbling" journey that these young women and men engaged in through the class. As I will argue at the end of this section, my participants' experiences suggest that racial identity development is not always a regular, linear process in which individuals neatly move from one stage to the next. Further complicating the picture is the fact that each individual exerted considerable agency. I observed students making their own meanings from the same inputs; and, in the language of Holland and her colleagues (1998), authoring their own paths.

As with many educational interventions, participation in *Contexts* led to three general groups: the outliers on both ends of the spectrum for whom the intervention was either very or not all successful, and then those in the middle, for whom the intervention had some impact. In this research, I find utility in thinking about these three groups in terms of figured worlds.

In Table 6.1, below, I offer a brief summary of the occurrences of color-blind and color-conscious data by participant. It is important to note here that I did not design this study or code in such a way that the precise numbers of coded excerpts in each category would reveal the particulars of participants' racial ideologies. Still, the chart below offers the reader a general sense of the patterns of occurrence of performances of each racial ideology in my data set.

General Pattern	Name	Instructor	Excerpts coded color-blind	Excerpts coded color-conscious
Resist Color-Consciousness	Dylan	Andre	9	1
	Steve	Nakia	8	1
Vacillate Between and Color-Blindness and Color-Consciousness	Noreen	Andre	7	2
	Charlotte	Andre	6	2
	Ashli	Nakia	5	3
	Jessica	Andre	8	7
	Nick	Nakia	3	2
	Diana	Andre	3	2
	Lucas	Nakia	4	4
	Tiffani	Nakia	3	2
	Abigail	Andre	3	5
	Pam	Nakia	4	6
Adopt a Color-Conscious Figured World	Ava	Nakia	1	5
	Naomi	Nakia	0	7
	Ben	Andre	2	14
	Hannah	Andre	1	19

The first group consists of two young men, Dylan and Steve, who remained committed to the figured world of color-blindness. These young men resisted some course content by relying on a discourse of color-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) and by generally disengaging from the class. They essentially chose not to participate in a figured world of color-consciousness.

Next, I discuss those students, Hannah, Ben, Ava and Naomi, on the other end of the spectrum who became full participants in a color-conscious figured world. Through active engagement with the course readings, three students adopted color-conscious stances which served as new realms of interpretation; in fact, these students came to believe that color-blindness is a kind of racism. Through participation in *Contexts*, these three students revised their belief systems, developed new self-understandings, and articulated political philosophies of education.

Finally, I discuss the experiences of the remaining ten participants. These young people neither fully abandoned their color-blind figured worlds nor became full participants in a color-conscious one. While these students experimented at varying points throughout the class with performing color-consciousness; these performances were interspersed with performances of color-blindness. In this section, I describe some of the patterns of confusion and contradiction that seemed to impede these ten students from fully adopting, or even fully understanding, color-conscious ideologies. I argue that these moments of experimentation and performance are important developmental steps for students, even though they did not follow a consistent chronological trajectory and did not result in a complete overhaul of students' ideologies within the delimited time period

of this study. Previous research suggests that White prospective teachers struggle to learn course content about race due largely to their resistant behaviors (see, for example, Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Sleeter, 1995, 2001). A key finding from this research is that most of the participants did not engage in behavior that I considered resistant, however, these more-willing, less-resistant young people *still* struggled to learn the course content.

Rejecting Color-Consciousness; Reinforcing Color-Blindness

Because so much of the literature on White preservice teachers focuses on the ways that White preservice teachers resist learning course content about race, I began this study prepared to see some resistance. I was surprised; however, to find that I only observed two students consistently resist course content in ways similar to those documented in previous studies (for example, Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Sleeter, 2001 and 2008; Ullucci & Battey, 2011). Both of these resisters were young White men and they both attended high schools that were more than 95% White. Each young man entered the course deeply committed to an ideology of color-blindness. Below, I describe each young man's strategies of resistance and the class's responses to that resistance.

Relying on the Discourse of Color-Blindness

In Andre's class of twenty-eight students, only one student, Dylan, appeared to consistently resist the principle that *race matters* throughout the semester. As a future history teacher, Dylan strongly identified with conservative identities and ideologies; in fact, he called himself my "conservative guinea pig" because his political perspective was so salient in the conversations that he and I had about the class. From Dylan's standpoint, some of the course content seemed absurd; I often noticed him rolling his eyes or struggling to stifle a comeback during class.

Dylan was the only student that I heard reference what Bonilla-Silva calls “the past is the past” storyline of color-blind racism (2006, p. 76). Bonilla-Silva argues that White people use this storyline in order to argue that “we must put the past behind us and that programs such as affirmative action do exactly the opposite by keeping the racial flame alive” (p. 77). In a group interview at the end of the semester, as a response to the question, “Do you think that teachers should consider the role of race in the way they teach and in what they teach?” Dylan made the following comments:

I see myself as egalitarian. Like, I don't care what color somebody is. That has no effect on my life, what color you are, so it's hard for me then to take that into account when I just don't care. Like, I don't care what color you are!

[Race has] been made to matter long before us. Like we're kind of, we're paying for that... We've inherited the responsibility, I guess. As much as I can say it doesn't matter, it really does... I would say 95% of the people that go to this school don't give two shits about what color somebody is!... We're dealing with the problems of previous generations.

It seems the over-riding theme in a lot of classes is attempting to make me feel guilty for being a straight White guy who grew up in the suburbs, you know what I mean?... And I don't know whether it's succeeded or not or whether I'm kind of pushing against it, because nothing's my fault! I was born in '83!

When Dylan calls himself “egalitarian,” he evokes the frame that Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls “abstract liberalism,” in which White people rationalize color-blind policies because everything should be equal. Dylan is holding firmly onto his belief that racism is primarily an interpersonal act. Since he doesn't “care” what “color” other people are, he does not see any reason that he should notice a student's race. In his account, Whiteness remains central. Since someone else's race “has no effect on” *Dylan's* life, he wants to argue that race does not matter. *Contexts* has challenged this position, though, so Dylan is pushed to admit “As much as I can say it [race] doesn't matter, it really does.” Still,

Dylan insists, “Nothing’s my fault! I was born in ’83!” Dylan seems to be relying on what Bonilla-Silva calls the “I didn’t own any slaves” storyline, in which White people insist that present generations are not responsible for racial inequality because they were born after these problems began.

Dylan’s responses to the course material align neatly with the color-blind racial ideologies described by Bonilla-Silva (2006). A key point here, however, is that he was the only person in Andre’s section class who consistently performed these ideologies throughout the entire course. Dylan was also the oldest student, and it is possible that his age might have been a factor in his response. In a longitudinal meta-analysis of research about the attitudes and beliefs of White prospective teachers, Castro (2010) finds that Millennials (those students born after 1985) are much more likely to have had experiences in diverse settings and may have more positive beliefs about people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Because of the small sample size of this study, however, this link between age and beliefs is speculative. Age certainly was not the only factor determining whether or not students resisted course content: in Nakia’s class, nineteen year-old Steve played an analogous role, engaging in behaviors that researchers have labeled resistant.

It’s Not Race, It’s Class

Steve had much in common with Dylan although he relied on a different but related strategy in order reject color-conscious ideologies. Like Dylan, Steve is a politically conservative White male who attended a high school that was almost entirely White. Unlike Dylan, Steve strongly identifies with a working class background. Similar to students described by Heinze (2008), Helms (1997) and LaDuke (2009), Steve held

onto his color-blind ideology by insisting that any racial inequalities in the United States are due entirely to social class. To make this narrative work, Steve also had to argue that there is no link between race and social class.

In my field notes, I documented several times over the course of the semester when Steve either interrupted Nakia (or, one occasion, raised his hand and was called on) to argue that the United States has a class problem rather than a race problem. This was already a pattern when I interviewed Steve for the first time (after 5 class meetings):

Karen: In class sometimes you say that you don't think it's race so much that makes the difference between those things [whether or not schools have adequate resources]

Steve: It's definitely class

Karen: Can you say more about that?

Steve: I always think about it that way because, like I said, I never see anybody for the problem of their race. I just feel like...there's not a lot of wealthy people around here, and a lot of people, like, you know, get aid from the government or are just...working-class. This is a very working-class city. So the fact that it's dominated by mainly African-Americans and other cultures and races is, I think, why everybody views it as, like, 'Oh it's because they're African-American that they don't get the same opportunities as White kids do.' But it's not! It's just that they're all in the same class. You understand what I'm saying?

Karen: I think it's hard because African Americans are more likely to be poor in our country -

Steve: You're right and I don't know why that is, but I don't think it has anything to do with their race.

Steve contends that he never sees anyone “for the problem of their race.” This statement corroborates previous research (Helms, 1997; Tatum, 2003) that finds that some White people equate being a person of color with having a problem. Furthermore, by arguing that social class is the main determiner of access to educational resources, Steve is able to

position himself as disadvantaged rather than privileged; since he, too, comes from a working-class background. He worked hard to maintain this positionality throughout the course.

It seemed that Steve's commitment to his color-blind figured world was so strong that he was not able or willing to learn new content that conflicted so strongly with his previous beliefs. As he said, "My family raised me to never judge anybody by the color of their skin or their background or culture. So...I never look at anyone...differently because of that, ever." His use of the words "never" and "ever" here indicate his strong, all-or-nothing perspective. Because Steve is so committed to a color-blind ideology, pointing out that African-Americans attend schools in poor or working-class neighborhoods in disproportionate numbers sounds, to him, like racism. Since Steve is unable to see race, he is blind to racism as well (paraphrase of Hitchcock, 2002, p. 9).

Steve sometimes took course material that was intended to push him to question his color-blindness and twisted it slightly, using it instead to reinforce his commitment to color-blindness. This may have been more possible since he was in Nakia's section, and was not held accountable for carefully reading each text. For example, in one short writing assignment, students were asked to watch short videos that offered critical perspectives on the GI Bill, *Brown versus Board of Education*, and the Equal Rights Amendment and then reflect on whether or not our society is a meritocracy. Through this assignment, Nakia hoped that students would reflect on the discrepancies between the promises made by these pieces of legislation/judicial rulings and their actual disparate impacts on White people and people of color. Steve, however, took the opportunity to

write about how great each of these pieces of legislation was. He concluded his writing assignment as follows:

I believe that America is a meritocracy and that the American dream is not an illusion...I believe that today the American Dream is more achievable than ever, with the G.I. Bill, Brown vs. Board of Education, and the Equal Rights Amendment has helped push America to a more meritocratic society.

For the first seven or eight weeks of the semester, Steve seemed unaware that his opinions about race differed from those of his instructor. When I asked him about the short writing assignment above, for example, he said that he was pretty sure Nakia would agree with him and that he had given the right answer. As the semester lengthened, however, Steve seemed to disengage from the class. He interrupted Nakia less and contributed less frequently to class discussions. Although he attended class every day, he spent most of each class whispering - or just plain talking - with two of his classmates. He often seemed to be working on assignments for other classes on his laptop, and rarely made eye contact with the presenter or Nakia. These sorts of behaviors have been labeled resistant by other researchers (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; LaDuke, 2009).

Other Students' Interactions with Rejectors

Dylan and Steve's resistance seemed to have some impacts on their classmates. Some of their peers began to view Dylan and Steve as in disagreement with the instructors and the course texts and worked to distance themselves from these two students. For example, in a group interview of eight students in Nakia's class, interviewees seemed to enjoy expressing their frustrations with Steve and his groupmate's behavior in class. Naomi hypothesized the following amid much head-nodding from the other interviewees:

I don't want to make any judgments because I don't know them; but I'm pretty sure they're two White people, so they could maybe just not want to acknowledge any of this. Because I know so many people don't want to acknowledge racism...Some people just don't want to acknowledge that.

Naomi positions Steve as a White person who does not “want to acknowledge racism” and herself as a dialogically opposite from this stance. Through exchanges like the one above, Steve and Dylan became sort of symbols of color-blindness.

In my final interview with each focal participant, I asked him/her to talk about which of his/her classmates s/he agreed with and which s/he disagreed with. Some participants pointed out Dylan (Andre’s students often called him “the older guy”) or Steve (Nakia’s students called him “the army guy”) as someone who was “out of line” or “doesn’t want to be here.” The fact that Steve and Dylan’s behaviors and ideas became to some extent censured by their peers suggests that the instructors had succeeded at least somewhat in communicating their desired racial ideologies. According to my end-of-semester interviews, in the figured world of these two courses, endorsements of color-blindness like Steve’s and Dylan’s were no longer be considered acceptable by some focal participants. Interestingly, however, as I will explain below, some of the same participants who pointed out Steve and Dylan as having the wrong beliefs still seemed to cling to some of those same ideas themselves.

Resisting Color-Consciousness: Discussion

While the research suggests that many White preservice teachers resist course content about race, in this study, only two focal participants engaged in behaviors I felt comfortable calling resistance. The two students who did do so relied upon two main strategies: insisting that modern White people are not responsible for racial inequalities, and insisting that the role of social class is much stronger than that of racism in

determining these racial inequalities. Neither Steve nor Dylan adopted the values, categories or characterizations of a color-conscious figured world; they did not revise their self-understandings. They left the semester feeling as though they were good people who would continue to not see race.

Dylan's position did shift somewhat; where before he claimed to not be racist, through the course of the class, he revised his position to "everyone's a little racist;" a blanket claim that still worked to absolve him from any responsibility in interrupting White supremacy because he was a decent person who was just like anyone else.

While it is tempting to note that both of the resisting students were heterosexual young White men who attended almost entirely White high schools, I must also point out that other participants with those demographics did not resist in these same ways (or at least as consistently). Although I do not have much data to support this, my sense is that what distinguished Dylan and Steve from their peers was the degree to which their attachment to color-blindness was already cemented when they began the course. To use Holland's language, Dylan and Steve were active participants in a color-blind figured world when they began the course. If we conceptualize color-blindness and color-consciousness as two ends of a spectrum rather than two distinct positions, then we may be able to see that some students are more committed to color-blindness than others, and so may have more to un-learn and learn than others. This suggests that instructors of courses like *Contexts* may need to employ different pedagogical strategies when they have students in class who are so deeply committed to previous belief systems that directly contradict the targeted ones. I return to this idea in Chapter 7.

Adopting a Color-Conscious Figured World

Throughout the study I paid special attention to times that students seemed to perform an understanding that *race matters* in schools. I created a code called *color-conscious*, and used it to mark the moments when students alluded to, stated, described or argued that race matters in education. With the exception of Dylan and Steve, the rest of the focal participants sometimes picked up and performed pieces of color-conscious ideologies and discourses; assuming, at least for a moment, a color-conscious positionality. Four of these students, Ava, Ben, Hannah and Naomi, consistently rejected color-blind ideologies and embraced color-conscious ideologies from about Week 3 onward. Since Naomi entered the class with much of her color-conscious ideology already formed, I focus in this section on Ava, Ben and Hannah who seemed to first adopt and then deepen commitments to color-consciousness through their participation in *Contexts*. Ben attended a racially diverse charter high school, while Hannah attended an elite, private high school where 95% of the students were White. Ava attended mostly White schools in Utah, but she identifies as “half-White, half-Middle Eastern.” Ben and Hannah were in Andre’s section of *Contexts*; Ava was in Nakia’s section.

Reading and Writing One’s Way into a Color-Conscious Figured World

Over the course of the semester, Ava, Ben, and Hannah rejected their previous color-blind figured worlds, and became full actors in their instructor’s offered color-conscious figured worlds. I attribute this dramatic shift to these students’ strong academic skills. Hannah is in the honors program at UU and enjoys challenging herself academically. Ben aspires to be a writer and an English teacher and really, as he said in his final interview with me, “nerds out” on some academic readings. Ava one of only

two focal participants (the other was Lucas) who seemed to do most of the readings for Nakia's class, despite the fact that she probably could have earned an "A" without doing much reading, as many of her classmates did. Ava, Hannah and Ben's written work, especially, indicated that these three participants engaged with the course readings on a deeper level than most of their peers. These participants frequently made connections between various readings; they applied them to their own life contemporaneously and retroactively; they used them as catalysts for self-reflection; they referred back to previous readings months after they had read them; they adopted the language and ideas used in some of the readings and applied them in new ways.

For example, in the seventh week of the course, Andre's section discussed McIntosh's 1988 article about White privilege. During the whole-class conversation, most students talked about the privileges described in the article, and whether or not they thought these were still privileges. Hannah, however, made a comment that stood out from any of her classmates' in that she took an idea from a course reading and used it to reinterpret her own family's experiences:

My mom grew up in Philadelphia and she went to Catholic school. So obviously, like, her parents made the choice to not put her in a public school and put her in a Catholic school. So, like, that act is like them being like the segregators? So...she...probably got a better education because she was at a private school rather than a public school? Because of that, that's the false sense of superiority, like I'm more superior than you because I can segregate myself from you and get a better education.

Here, Hannah refers to a reading about segregated schools by Jonathan Kozol that the class had read several weeks before. She also incorporates the language "false sense of superiority," which comes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" and had been quoted by Andre previously in the class. While many of

her classmates seemed preoccupied with presenting themselves as not-racist, Hannah indicts her own grandparents' and parents' actions. One way to think about Hannah's statement is to consider that she, too, might have been asserting a not-racist self, but her definition of racist behavior had changed so that it included acknowledging and challenging White privilege. By recognizing White privilege and her mother's "false sense of superiority," Hannah worked to position herself as *anti-racist* through the values of a color-conscious figured world. I describe this kind of discursive positioning in more detail below.

Through *Contexts*, Ava, Ben and Hannah developed understandings of themselves as anti-racist teachers with politicized action plans for how they should take race into account as educators. The following excerpts are taken from their final philosophies of education, submitted in the last week of the course:

My goal is to create a classroom where all children have equal opportunities, no matter where they live or what their race, gender, or socioeconomic status is. To me, this doesn't mean building a classroom in which I approach each child the same way; it means understanding some students have more privilege and are given more opportunities than others, and it's my role, as a teacher, to ensure that they all leave my classroom with the same opportunity set in the end. - Ava

In previous courses, my philosophy consisted of an outlook that merely claimed non-specific empathy, patience, and guidance, but given the eye-opening nature of a [*Contexts*] course I have now realized the true extent and potential power associated with specific ideologies....All in all, my philosophy places equal value on cultural understanding through dismantling the myth of race, as well dismantling the patriarchal system of capitalism that falsely lulls our society into believing opportunity is equal. - Ben

I never really thought about it before, but the culture of power (Delpit) dominates the classroom through curriculum, classroom rules, and even bulletin boards (Gay 108). White culture is forced upon students in a

country filled with diversity, and because of this students learn implicitly that white culture is superior. This will be something that I must overcome. - Hannah

Not only do these excerpts suggest that these students have adopted color-conscious ideologies, they also imply that these three students have developed specific understandings of their own roles as teachers that are influenced by the values of a color-conscious figured world. For example, Hannah charges herself with overcoming a White culture of power and Ava is determined to provide those students with fewer privileges more resources so that they leave her classroom with the same “opportunity set” as their peers. The actions that these students imagine for themselves align with their new color-conscious ideologies.

Other Students' Interactions with Adopters

Drawing on Holland's theoretical framework (1998), I suspected that the participants might create positional identities in relation to significant others. Holland contends that one way that people come to understand who they are is by mentally identifying with (or in opposition to) particular actors within a figured world. To find out whether their class peers could be these significant others (or even whether the two classes might be functioning as figured worlds), in my final interviews, I asked participants to talk about their classmates and their classmates' views. Two of the color-conscious figured world adopters seemed to make a profound impact on their peers. Ava and Ben were both contributed relatively infrequently to class discussions. Naomi (in Nakia's section) and Hannah (in Andre's section), however, were vocal participants who spoke passionately and convincingly in color-conscious terms in their respective classes. Their classmates noticed.

In the final interviews, almost all of Hannah's classmates mentioned her as someone they agreed with, that they looked up to, who seemed really "smart." Interestingly, Ben described her as the most "objective" of his classmates. In addition, in my field notes, I noted several times when Hannah's comments in class seemed to change the direction of a class discussion. On the last day of class, for example, a group of Hannah's classmates presented their school case study project. They shared the racial demographics of the high-performing Catholic school they studied, and told the class that one of the reasons they thought the school was so successful was because it was mostly-White, so teachers did not have to "deal with" other cultures. They further explained that they imagined that if you picked this school up and moved it from the suburbs to the city, that it would quickly go downhill because of the pressures that urban communities face. After their presentation, Hannah raised her hand and shared her experiences at a Catholic school that is located in an urban area. She politely offered a counterpoint to her classmates' assumption that good schools cannot be located in urban neighborhoods. After her comment, two of her classmates raised their hands to submit that they, too, attended high-performing urban schools. Hannah was unafraid to disagree with her classmates, yet she also made her challenges in ways that most of her peers seemed able to hear and understand without feeling defensive.

Naomi was in Nakia's class, which engaged in whole-class discussion only a fraction of the amount of time as Andre's, so there were fewer opportunities for students to engage with those peers outside of their immediate table groups. Still, Naomi became a leader of a sort in her class when she moved her seat from a group of White classmates to sit with the two Black young women who had previously sat by themselves at the front

of the room. This table became a sort of spatial symbol of color-consciousness. Two class meetings after Naomi moved to the front table, two and sometimes three other of the young White young women who most frequently made color-conscious remarks in class began sitting at this table as well. It seemed to me as though they were physically positioning themselves as color-conscious through this move.

I did some of my final interviews in the same classroom, and I was surprised to notice that some participants referred to color-conscious ideas (or urbanness or Blackness) by gesturing at that particular table (which was empty during the interviews). For instance, in a group interview, I asked students who they thought was learning the most in the class. Gesturing to that front table, one participant said, “I almost feel like the people in the class that come from the urban community, um, they love to like voice their opinion, which I like to hear.” Another student, Xavier, followed-up, “I definitely think they can relate a lot better to the content material....Yeah, cuz I’m sitting there half the time and I’m like ‘Wow, this is what it’s actually like?’” In exchanges like this, the students who sat at this front table were positioned as “urban” students who could “relate” to the content material. Interestingly, Xavier suggests that these students were getting more out of the class than students like himself who were surprised to find out that racism still exists (“Wow, this is what it’s actually like?”).

Adopters: Discussion

Only three of the sixteen focal participants used their strong academic skills to embrace the course content, reject their previous color-blind figured worlds and adopt color-conscious ways of knowing and being. Why so few? And why these three? While many of their classmates were confused by the course readings (or simply didn’t

read) Ava, Hannah and Ben were able to use the course readings to create and internalize coherent, sensible color-conscious philosophies. These students' strong academic skills were a key part of this process.

Although relatively few focal participants adopted coherent color-conscious ideologies, at least two of these students made a large impact on their classes by doing so. They came to be seen as star students who were generally admired by their peers. It is also possible that as these students move on as a cohort through the rest of their teacher education classes that these students' impacts on their peers will continue to grow.

These findings suggest that one way that teacher educators can guide more students to have experiences like those of Ava, Hannah and Ben in courses like *Contexts*, is to help students who are less academically-gifted or academically-motivated to access the course material. I share specific ideas for this work in Chapter 7.

Finally, my observations of these students, particularly Hannah, forced me to rethink some of my opinions of honors programs in general. UU has an honors program that is intended to attract high performing students that otherwise might attend more prestigious universities. I have felt critical of the honors program as it provides extra resources (like smaller class sizes, free printing, and focused, individualized academic advising) to the students who seem to need them the least. Yet in this study, I saw the only honors student enrolled, Hannah, make what seemed like an outsized impact on her classmates. Her thoughtful contributions in class pushed many of her classmates to rethink their ideas and deepened many class discussions. Since my research suggests that strong academic skills are a key factor whether and how prospective teachers develop color-consciousness, one direction for future research is the exploration of the

experiences of academically gifted students (and their classmates) in these sorts of classes.

Vacillating Between Figured Worlds

Unlike the students who completely rejected color-conscious ideologies (Dylan and Steve) and unlike those who seemed to wholeheartedly embrace them (Hannah, Ava, Ben and Naomi), most White prospective teachers in *Contexts* seemed to spend most of the course in a state of disequilibrium where they sometimes performed color-blindness and other times performed color-consciousness. Holland and her colleagues (1998) would say that even sporadic performances of color-conscious selves matter since it is through participation in particular figured worlds that we create new self-understandings. One way, then, of looking at students' moments of color-consciousness is to see them as instances of development, experimentation and performance that may lead eventually to revised beliefs and self-understandings.

Many studies about impact of teacher education coursework on the attitudes and beliefs of White preservice teachers rely on pre- and post-assessments in which students complete Likert scales or answer multiple choice questions. Approaches like these miss the messy processes and moments of experimentation that may occur between the two moments of data collection. Yet, it is these in-between moments that may offer the most insight into how to best prepare teachers to address issues of racial inequality in their classrooms. Scholars operating from a socio-cultural understanding of identity, like Holland and her colleagues, would argue that performances of color-consciousness serve as vital opportunities for practicing new presentations of self (Goffman, 1959) even if students would choose the same Likert scale option at the end of the semester.

The focal participants that I describe in this section (Jessica, Charlotte, Ashli, Nick, Noreen, Abigail, Diana, Lucas, Tiffani and Pam) felt deeply uncertain about whether or not - or how - they should engage with race-related issues in the classroom, even at the end of the semester. Their commitments vacillated between color-blind and color-conscious ideologies and their actions and opinions reflect these ambivalent commitments. In the sections below, I first describe the three contexts in which these liminal actors performed color-consciousness. Second, I describe the primary obstacles that seemed to limit these performances to isolated occasions. In many ways, I find this group the most interesting of the three that I describe in this chapter, perhaps because I was continuously surprised by what these students did and said.

Performing Color-Consciousness by Engaging with Course Texts

I found that I used the code *color-conscious* most frequently when students were writing about or answering direction questions about course readings in which the authors were making strong arguments for color-conscious approaches. In some of these moments, it was not always clear whether or not the student agreed with the author. For example, Charlotte (Andre's class, racially diverse high school) wrote in her midterm in the seventh week of class,

One of the issues discussed in Kozol's article is that segregation is even more a problem now than it was back in fifties and sixties. It becomes a problem within the schools because a lot of the times the schools aren't as successful and end up performing lower than non segregated schools.

In this excerpt, and in many other excerpts that I coded as color-conscious, the student makes a claim that race matters but the authority is entirely given to the author, absolving the student of taking a position.

Repeating an author's color-conscious ideas without explicitly endorsing them happened not only in writing, but also in class discussions. For example, while answering the question, "What is the author's main point?" in class, Diana (Andre's class, racially diverse high school, week 7) voiced the author's (McIntosh, 1988) ideas but does not reference her own:

I guess the issue or the problem that was raised is that people on a day-to-day basis like don't realize, I guess, that they're even being, well not they don't ever realize, but usually, on a day-to-day basis, like you never really realize like, oh, my skin color has gotten me places. And other people's hasn't.

Note that Diana tries to summarize the article without using racial markers. She uses "people" to refer to "White people" and substitutes "other people" for a term like "people of color." She also uses "you" to talk about other White people. While students like Naomi, Ben, Ava and Hannah were able to use explicit racial markers and speak and write with less obfuscation, many students like Diana struggled to talk clearly about issues of race. Diana's response exhibits what Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls "rhetorical incoherence." Bonilla-Silva found that "because the new racial climate in America forbids the open expression of racially based feelings, views and positions, when whites discuss issues that make them feel uncomfortable, they come almost incomprehensible" (p. 68). It seems possible that this class gave Diana an opportunity to practice talking about racial issues, first by saying what someone else thinks about race. I wonder whether this might serve as a scaffold to help some students grow more comfortable voicing their own opinions on racial issues.

As the semester progressed, students were more likely to state the author's claim and then also their own opinion on that claim. This served to position them as aligned

with the author and in a more color-conscious stance. For example, Ashli (Nakia's class, racially diverse high school) wrote the following about an article by William Julius

Wilson (2008):

I never knew that highways were set up to separate black and white neighborhoods. When discussing the highways structure William stated "created barriers between the sections of the cities, walling off poor and minority neighborhoods from central business districts."(558) A lot of the time I thought it was the general public's fault for stereotyping and racist ideas, but the government played a huge part in the separation. For example I never knew about red lining and reading about it shocked me. People today put the blame on African Americans for being in lower income situations, but that is not fair. After years of the government mistreatments, our society just expects them to pull themselves from the bootstraps after all this history of segregation.

In this written response, Ashli makes an argument for color-consciousness: because of "government mistreatments" African Americans are "in lower income situations." Ashli positions herself as someone who did not know about these issues beforehand, but is "shocked" to learn about them. Furthermore, she positions herself as opposed to a "general public" who engages in "stereotyping" and has "racist ideas." Like Ashli, by aligning themselves with particular authors, many students positioned themselves as color-conscious, at least temporarily.

For example, in the following excerpt from a written assignment, Jessica (Andre's section, mostly White high school) aligns herself with author Peggy McIntosh (1988):

Peggy McIntosh's article, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," discusses the issues with the idea of a "dominant race". There will be no "dominant" race in my classroom. I want my students "to distinguish between earned strength and unearned power" (McIntosh 3). If you want recognition and power, you should earn it, not just have it handed to you based on your genetics.

Here, Jessica takes on one of McIntosh's goals and says she wants her own students to be able to identify privilege (or, in McIntosh's words, "unearned power"). Jessica also critiques the existence of race-based privilege in her final sentence when she states that privileges should be "earned" rather than "based on...genetics." In this excerpt, Jessica sounds color-conscious: she acknowledges the existence of a racial hierarchy and voices her goal of having her classroom be a place where that hierarchy is challenged.

Students made these sorts of positional alignments with authors aloud in class as well as in their written assignments. For example, in a whole-class discussion about an article by William Julius Wilson about role of the government in the creation of areas of concentrated poverty, Charlotte (Andre's class, racially diverse high school), first quoted from the article and then agreed with it. By doing so, she seems to position herself as color-conscious:

[The article] says, "Yet, despite the improvement, African Americans still have the highest rates of concentrated poverty of all groups" ... and I thought we were improving, but I guess not. And I think, to this day, I can still see that. I guess like especially in Uptown⁹ and, like, in the schools."

In this excerpt, Charlotte acknowledges that she used to think that American society was more equitable ("I thought we were improving") but reading this article has suggested otherwise. Her comment suggests that she sees that racism is present ("to this day") rather than purely historical. She seems to be acknowledging that African Americans are more likely to live in concentrated poverty than other groups, which is an instance of the broader color-conscious claim that *race matters*. She demonstrates her understanding by

⁹ Uptown is a pseudonym. Charlotte named a nearby impoverished neighborhood.

giving an example of local impoverished neighborhood that is predominantly African American.

Talking about course authors and texts as in the examples above was the most frequent way that students performed color-consciousness in the two sections of *Contexts* that I studied.

Performing Color-Consciousness through Course Assignments

Participants also practiced color-consciousness through specific course assignments. Except for Dylan and Chris, all the students seemed to endorse a color-blind position on at least one course assignment. For example, the school case study assignment required students to report on a school's racial demographics, both on paper and then in a presentation to the class. Andre said that he thought this might have been the first time that some students actually spoke some racial markers aloud.¹⁰ Furthermore, the school case study assignment served as an opportunity for some students to gauge their own privilege. As they researched the varying amounts of money that different schools receive and the different kinds of courses that students are offered at different schools, many students made comments aloud or in writing about being shocked to realize how easy they had it compared to students in urban schools.

Like the school case study assignment, the Harvard Implicit Association Test, or IAT (described in Chapter 5), was a class assignment that many students took up as an opportunity for personal reflection: For example, Ashli (Nakia's section, racially diverse high school) wrote the following in her reflection on her experience taking the race IAT:

¹⁰ I plan to explore the evolving use of racial markers in these two courses in a future study with these data. It seemed as though many students whispered words like "Black" or "racist" more often towards the beginning of the semester and were more confident saying them aloud at the end of the semester.

Growing up I had many friends from different cultures and was raised by my grandparents who were not so understanding of this. In High School when I went on dates with boys who were not the same race as me, my grandparents would often question my judgment. I would always have the response to them, “Well I’m color-blind and do not care.” They would always say they did not approve and I know the boys I dated parents felt a similar way. Since entering higher education I have realized that there is no way to really be color blind in today’s American society. When I took the IAT it told me I had a slight preference towards my own race, which is White, and this did not surprise me. I don’t believe these results make me racist, but they do make me aware. No one should prance around claiming they’re color-blind, because then it does ignore that there are these stereotypes set up in society today.

Ashli continues to position herself as not-racist through this statement. She makes a connection between herself and diverse others (“friends from many different cultures”); she positions herself as distinctly opposed to people who might be racist, in this case, her grandparents, and she directly states “I don’t believe these results make me racist.” It is significant, also, that Ashli’s ideology has shifted some; whereas before “higher education” she believed that color-blindness was the best strategy, now she revises this statement to say that color-blindness “does ignore that there are these stereotypes set up in society today.” The word “does” indexes the class narrative; she alludes to the fact that she is agreeing with Nakia and the various authors read in the class. Finally, she uses the word “prance” to subtly poke fun at (and distinguish herself from) people who profess to be color-blind.

Performing Color-Consciousness by Agreeing with an Instructor

At the beginning of the semester, Nakia shared with me that she felt that some White students might not pick up her message that race matters because they would assume that she, as a Black woman, was too sensitive on race-related topics and was exaggerating the existence of racial inequities. Nakia has experienced this reaction in

other classes she has taught, and, indeed, other researchers have noted this dynamic between faculty of color and White students (Allison, 2008; Griffin, Pifer, Humphrey, and Hazelwood, 2011; Harlow, 2003). I was surprised, therefore, to find that students in these two particular classes seemed to trust their instructors and understood them to be experts on issues of race, in part *because* they perceived them as Black. I was also surprised to the degree to which students took up the points that were made explicitly by instructors, even when these contrasted with students' previous ideologies.

Of course, there are issues of power at work here. Students, at some levels, are performing for grades, so they may have been merely saying what they thought the instructor wanted to hear. Similarly, in interviews with me, they may have sensed or assumed that I was aligned with their instructors. Students really wanted to be right. Still, particularly given that previous studies have shown a pattern of White-students-not-trusting-Black-instructors, the absence of this dynamic is notable. It also seems possible that both instructors' youth, easy-going attitudes, and commitment to diverse perspectives contributed to students trusting what Andre and Nakia had to say.

For example, after Andre told the class that he believes that everyone is a little bit racist (see Chapter 4), Jessica (mostly White high school) told me in her final interview that his speech came as a "not a bad slap in the face but a slap in the face." Jessica had previously contended that she did not have any stereotypes about other people, and so she found this mini-lesson to be particularly moving. Recalling that moment in class five weeks earlier, she explained,

I never think of myself as racist at all. I think of myself as actually very open-minded. But then when he said that, it kind of made sense. And I feel like, there are certain stereotypes based on people's races. And you

make assumptions...I really thought about it, and I was like, 'oh my gosh, oh my gosh,' it's humbling and, like, horrifying all at the same time.

Evidently, Jessica took Andre's point to heart. When he said, "We all have stereotypes. We all have racist tendencies," Jessica heard and believed him, despite the fact that she had a strong previous self-understanding as someone who does not notice race. This changed the basic way she understood herself. While she does not go so far as to say that she now thinks of herself as racist, she does acknowledge that "there are stereotypes based on people's races" and "you make assumptions." I think it is interesting that Jessica uses "you" here, rather than "I." This seems to keep Jessica's admission at one step of removal from herself - part of a larger social pattern rather than an individual failing.

In summary, select course contexts and assignments fostered opportunities for students to perform color-consciousness. Although the majority of participants did not instantly and consistently shift ideological positions, they did try on color-consciousness at least briefly in these moments. Next I turn to a discussion of the obstacles that seemed to hinder participants from embracing color-consciousness more fully.

Obstacles to Performing Color-Consciousness

Most of the White preservice teachers in this study struggled to adopt color-conscious ideologies. These participants wanted to be right, they did not want to be racist, and they wanted to become good and successful teachers. However, many participants' previous understandings of their worlds and of themselves were so different from and contradictory to the course content that many of them got stuck in an in-between, confused, liminal space. Furthermore, since participants' incoming conceptions

of racism included behaviors like noticing and talking about race and participants did not want to be thought of as racist, they were reluctant to adopt color-conscious behaviors.

Obstacle #1: But I'm not racist! As I explained in Chapter 4, most students began the course with the idea that racism is something that only evil people do. At the beginning of the course, all the students seemed confident that they, themselves, were not racist. At times throughout the course, participants' commitments to retaining views of themselves as not racist made it difficult for them to learn the course content.

Both instructors wanted the preservice teachers in their courses to become aware of any deficit views, stereotypes, or implicit biases they might have toward people who are different from themselves. For students to confront these biases, they needed to engage in self-reflection. Before genuine self-reflection happened, however, some students would preemptively insist on their own goodness and not-racist-ness. I was struck by the many ways that students worked to position themselves as not-racist, as well as the amount of energy and emotion that seemed to go into these performances.

Most students in this liminal group had at least one utterance or excerpt of a course assignment that I double-coded as both *identity*, in which they were talking about themselves, and *racism*, in which they discussed or mentioned racism or racists. In each of these excerpts, participants in this group declared themselves to be not-racist.

Some of the most fierce and surprising declarations of not-racist-ness came up in Nakia's class after the activity that most directly asked students to confront their own implicit assumptions, the Harvard IAT. For example, many of Nakia's students contended that the test was unfair, biased, or rigged rather than face the implications of their results. One student explained that his finger suddenly started hurting and so he was

unable to tap the computer keys correctly. Another student shared her experience with the IAT during a group interview at the end of the semester, seven weeks after she took the test, in this way:

Maybe I'm just stupid, but when I was doing it, I was not even thinking about race at all, I couldn't like push the buttons! I was not thinking about race at all; so when I got the results, I was like, 'okay,' but I don't think this is a good way to test it, because I was so focused on like, trying to hit the right button at the right time.

It appears that this student would rather suggest that she might be stupid than that she might have implicit racist assumptions about Black people. Confusingly, she claims that she was not thinking about race at all during a test in which she was asked to sort pictures of Black and White faces into different groups. Her need to assert her not-racist-ness impeded her from attaining the intended goal of the activity: that she notice that she (along with most Americans) is probably not actually color-blind.

It seemed to me that these White students were working hard to remain sort of unconscious about these kinds of behaviors; as though the act of introspection was just too frightening. In the following interview excerpt from the end of the semester, for example, Jessica struggled with the word *racism*. It is so difficult for her to see herself as having what she calls "racist tendencies" that she wants to invent a new word to use instead of "racist."

Jessica: I definitely agree that people have these pre-destined or pre-ordained stereotypes based on their lives, and based on what they've observed and based on their own experiences, but...you know, the word "racism" or the word "racist" in itself, I don't want to think of it like that. I don't want to think of it that harshly. Because when I think of racism or racist, I think of people who, you know, take these things and use them in negative ways... So I, um, I kind of wish that there was another word, because I feel like it's just such an extreme harsh word, and I would hate to think of myself as having racist tendencies because of having these...unfortunate... You know...

Karen: Associations?

Jessica: Yeah, associations

Jessica's diction hints at an internal conflict. Through the class, she has been exposed to a new idea: that people of color suffer more negative consequences from stereotyping than White people do. This new understanding implicitly positions her, as a White person, as a beneficiary of this system of racism. This is an uncomfortable position for Jessica; she explains that she would "hate to think of" herself as racist. Like Jessica, other participants' beliefs in their own non-racism were very strong; so strong, in fact, that even when they were presented with experiences designed to make them face their own racist assumptions, they struggled hard to retain their views of themselves as not-racist. For these focal participants, it appeared that the admission that they have implicit biases about different racial groups was tantamount to implying that they were bad people. The course instructors, who assumed that all Americans have racial biases because of the racist society we live in and who prized admissions of these biases, seemed unaware of the internal struggle some participants experienced when these topics arose in class.

Rather than view responses like Jessica's as resistance, I am interested in the possibilities afforded by viewing moments like the one described above as performances of non-racism. With this lens, the pedagogical problem is shifted away from bad White preservice teachers who are unwilling to learn course content to the shoulders of teacher educators who, as I explain in Chapter 7, can capitalize on students' profound desires to be thought of as not-racist.

Lucas, (Nakia's class, racially diverse high school) the student whose parents immigrated from Guatemala, also spoke explicitly about how important it was to him to consider himself not-racist. In our second interview, Lucas told me a story about how his business partner and "best friend" for many years was a Black man, but Lucas never "saw" him as Black. One day, after several years of working together, Lucas' wife finally met this friend. After the friend had left their house, Lucas's wife exclaimed, "You never told me he was Black!" Lucas told me that he reminds himself of this moment in order to assure himself of his not-racist-ness. He explained,

Lucas: So in my head, that's my go-to. Obviously I'm not racist, you know? And it's funny, I think almost every White person does that. How can I prove that I'm not racist in case somebody ever accuses me of being racist?

Karen: Right, it's the worst insult to give to a liberal White person

Lucas: Right, it's like a knee-jerk, you have to have something to return with, oh, my best friend growing up with was Black! Or something like that. But at the same time you can analyze that and be like, why do I have to think that way? Why do I have to justify not being a racist? Why can't it just speak for itself, the fact that I've never done anything or I have never had a racist thought?

Even at the end of the course, Lucas is still committed to his belief that only racist people notice race. He can assure himself that he is not racist by reminding himself that for years, he never used a racial marker about one of his best friends when he was talking to his wife. Through this class (and another, Lucas was concurrently enrolled in another class that focused on race and racism), Lucas starts to question this fierce commitment to his own not-racist-ness; he asks, "Why do I have to think that way? Why do I have to justify not being a racist?" But rather than admit that he might have implicit assumptions about other groups of people, Lucas maintains his innocence: he's never "done anything"

or even “had a racist thought.” Again, we see an assertion of “I’m not racist” de-rail a logical conclusion. Lucas, like his classmates, was holding onto his previous conceptions of what it means to be racist and struggling to make these understandings square with the course content.

In a written reflection, Lucas reported that his IAT results suggested that he has a strong, automatic preference for European American people over African American people. About this result, he wrote,

I could simply say that the test is wrong because I'm not a racist and that it was a waste of my time. But to do so would be to ignore why the test gave me that result and deny myself the chance to evaluate my thinking. It's true that I'm not a racist, but maybe the test has pointed out some inherent bias and stereotypes that live within me. I'm willing to accept that and work with it because I want to be an inclusive teacher that offers opportunities to students of all races and creed. I don't want any subliminal or deep-seated biases to manifest themselves by discriminating against a student in anyway, whether its something small or large.

Lucas’s reflection suggests an internal struggle. Part of him wants to just “say that the test is wrong because I’m not a racist.” Another part of him acknowledges that to do so might be to forego a learning opportunity. He acknowledges that “maybe” the test “pointed out some inherent biases” and he connects the importance of recognizing these biases to being an “inclusive” teacher. Like Jessica, who was in the other class, Lucas begins to admit that he may have some “inherent bias and stereotypes” but he does not believe that those make him “a racist.” Lucas’s struggle indicates how much internal conflict some students may feel when put into a position where they feel like they might be vulnerable to accusations of racism. It seemed as though this internal conflict may take up so much of some students’ attention and energy and create such negative physical and affective states that it may serve as an obstacle to adopting color-conscious stances.

A key point here is the issue of language. It appears that the word *racist* has become heavily loaded for these young White people. As Lucas said, he and his classmates seemed to have a “knee-jerk” reaction to the slightest hint of an accusation that they might be racist. Teacher-educators need to think carefully about how to defuse this issue in class. Possibilities include helping students to re-define what it means to be racist so that students understand this term as not solely reserved for evil, hating Southerners, but also applicable to particular ideas or actions committed by people with good intentions who have grown-up in a racist society. Another alternative is to consider offering students or (co-developing with students) other, less-loaded, terms to talk about these ideas. I discuss this idea further in Chapter 7.

Obstacle #2: “I don’t get it.” The White preservice teachers in this liminal group struggled to take up color-conscious ideologies in part because they did not understand them. In Nakia’s class, the term “color-blind” was used occasionally, but the term “color-conscious” was never spoken in my hearing. In Andre’s class, neither term was used (except once by Hannah, who used it in an interview with me). Students seemed generally unaware that there were two competing ideologies about race. Instead, they seemed to attempt to incorporate new learning about race onto and into their previously-learned schema. Perhaps not surprisingly, this left many students confused since the new learning (should have) explicitly contradicted what participants already believed and could not simply be added to their previous understandings.

Some of these confusions were revealed in students’ summaries of articles they read, in which participants misinterpreted or misrepresented an author’s ideas. For instance, one article that seemed to confuse many students was William Julius Wilson’s

(2008) “The Political and Economic Forces Shaping Concentrated Poverty.” This is a complex text in which Wilson argues that some of the political and economic forces that have contributed to areas of concentrated poverty were motivated by racism and others were not. Most students, however, did not follow his whole argument (although they did pick up on some pieces of it; for example, many of students seemed to learn about redlining for the first time through reading this article). Nick (Nakia’s class, mostly White high school) reflected on this article:

This article supported the idea that people who are in poverty do not work hard enough to get out of poverty. It is their fault that they do not have enough money to leave certain urban areas.

Contrary to Nick’s summary, Wilson does *not* argue that “people who are in poverty do not work hard enough to get out of poverty.” In fact, in a discussion of media coverage of Hurricane Katrina on the first page of the article, Wilson writes, “It is unfair and indeed unwarranted to blame people with limited resources for being trapped in their neighborhoods and vulnerable to natural disasters” (p. 555). Nick has stated the exact opposite of Wilson’s argument.

At first, when I was reading assignments like Nick’s, I assumed that he and his classmates were accidentally using the wrong word: perhaps, for example, he used the word “supported” when he meant something like “contradicted.” However, the sheer numbers of student summaries that directly misinterpret or misquote the arguments in the course texts suggests something deeper was going on. On the occasions when I got to see an instructor respond in writing to statements like Nick’s above, the instructors generally used a questioning strategy. For example, Nakia wrote on Nick’s assignment, “What evidence can you find in the article to support this claim?” Unfortunately, I do not have

any data revealing how students responded to comments like these, or if they even read the feedback on their assignments. I think that this area is ripe for future research: How do teachers with color-conscious goals respond to students' assertions of color-blindness? And what do students, in turn, make of those responses? In this study, I was unable to completely track the instructors' feedback, as many assignments were responded to on paper or via email, rather than through the shared course website.

Some instances of student confusion were not as clear-cut as the above example. The focal participants in this in-between group sometimes took articles that were written from a color-conscious perspective and interpreted them in color-blind ways, sometimes relying on isolated quotes to support these interpretations. Below, I offer a typical example of this phenomenon. One of the first articles that the students read about race was "Using Anthropology to Make Sense of Human Diversity" by Mukhopadhyay and Henze (2003). This article, written by anthropologists for teachers, makes a two-part argument: first, race is not biologically real; and second, nevertheless, race is a profoundly important social construct. Many students interpreted this article as support for a color-blind perspective: since race has no biological reality, teachers ought to ignore it. Many students even offered quotes from this article to reinforce color-blind arguments about other texts. Diana (Andre's class, racially diverse high school), for example, drew on this article (and one by Pedro Noguera) on her midterm:

In "The Trouble with Black Boys" Noguera mentions, "The student informed me that his teacher had instructed the class to focus on the plot and not to get into the issues about race"(32). Mukhopadhyay & Henze then mention, "race does not exist"(paragraph 4). Noguera was trying to point out that teachers are afraid of discussing race in a classroom, I think this complements "Using Anthropology to Make Sense of Human Diversity" because the teacher wanted the students to look past the social reality that is race. There should be no problem with someone's skin color

because everyone is the same on the inside, we all have organs and we all breathe the same air.

I interpreted Diana's response as revealing some basic misunderstandings about these two texts. In "The Trouble With Black Boys," Noguera (2003) shares the example that Diana alludes to (in which a Black student is frustrated that his teacher wants the class to focus on the plot of *Huckleberry Finn* and ignore issues of race, including the use of the N-word) in order to support his argument that issues of race and racism have real pedagogical consequences for Black male students. Diana, however, interpreted this anecdote as an example of a good teacher who wants his/her students to, as she writes, "look past the social reality that is race." Furthermore, when she excerpts the quote from Mukhopadhyay and Henze, Diana loses the authors' intended meaning. The full sentence from the article reads as follows: "In this article, we explain what anthropologists mean when they say that 'races don't exist' (in other words, when they reject the concept of race as a scientifically valid biological category) and why they argue instead that "race" is a socially constructed category" (2003, paragraph 4, parenthetical statement in the original). Diana picks out words of a quote within a quote that make sense to her and resonate with her color-blind ideology, when quotes the authors as saying (while misquoting "races" as "race" and "don't" as "doesn't") "race doesn't exist." She supports this color-blind ideology with some further unassailable commentary: "everyone is the same on the inside, we all have organs and we all breathe the same air." According to Diana, since we are all human and, since race does not exist, there "should be" no meaningful differences in people's experiences of the world.

I asked Andre for his opinion on this excerpt of Diana's midterm. He shared with me that he thought her primary issue was not comprehension of the course texts, but

rather how to build a logical written argument. (In fact, his comment to her on this part of her midterm was that she needed to elaborate further on each article.) The fact that Andre and I had fundamentally different interpretations of the root issue behind Diana's confusing answer suggests an important gray area. Students certainly sounded confused. But confused writing and expression make the precise skill and knowledge gap hard to identify: is it in comprehension? written expression? argumentation? Future research should explore this question as well as the ways that instructors account for and attempt to coach or correct students who appear confused. Could more direct feedback or dialogue between instructor and students support student learning about race?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the confusion of the ten focal participants in this group extended from summarizing particular texts in the middle of the semester to articulating general stances about race and racism at the end of the semester. Students varied in their level of awareness about this confusion. For example, when trying to explain whether or not they thought teachers should consider the role of race in the classroom in their final interviews, some focal participants used terms like "push and pull," "grapple with," "you also have to keep in mind that...;" and "reconcile," demonstrating their awareness of the complexity of this topic and the uncertainty of their own responses.

Other participants seemed to answer these sorts of questions with confidence, yet articulated contradictory ideas. Noreen (Andre's section, mostly White high school) told me with a big smile that, after taking this class, she thought that educators should engage in "teaching race without teaching race." Although I pressed her with follow-up questions, I was not able to ascertain what she meant. Other students offered similarly

paradoxical-seeming answers. For example, Tiffani (Nakia's section, mostly White high school), exclaimed in her second interview:

I just, I hate the whole racism thing! **We need to see it**, but then **we don't need to see it**...When we talked about it in class, how **we should see kids**, to help them out more, if they need their help, so **we shouldn't see**, but **we shouldn't see race**, and, like, it was a confusing concept. But I think it's more just, like, **look at the kid in general. Don't look**. There can be a Black kid in your class that's getting all A's and a White kid that's really struggling. It doesn't matter what color they are, you just need to look at a student in general.

Tiffani acknowledges that this is a “confusing concept” and that she is not sure how or whether she should see race. She vacillates between two positions, “see it, don't see it” and “look” but “don't look.” She concludes with a retreat to her color-blind philosophy: “it doesn't matter what color” a student is; a teacher should just “look at a student in general.” Tiffani finished *Contexts* uncertain how - or whether - to account for race and racism in her classroom. Tiffani's experience was typical of the other nine students in this group.

Charlotte's (Andre's class, racially diverse high school) end-of-semester interview response to the question, “Should teachers consider the role of race in the way they teach and in what they teach?” reflects similar confusions. First she said, “I think it kind of depends.” Then she clarified, “Wait, should they keep race in mind as they're...?” As I started to list, “As they're planning curriculum, as they're...” Charlotte replied, “Well, I guess a little...but wouldn't people see that as racist?” She whispered the word “racist” quietly like it was a bad word she did not want people to overhear. I put that question back to her, and she replied that she thought that considering race would be “a little bit racist;” and it would be better to consider “where they came from” and “their skill level.” A moment later, Charlotte concluded, “Okay, I think maybe before

you come in you should not think about race at all, and then as the classroom starts to go and you see how things roll, then maybe....yeah. I think that's my answer.” Like most of her classmates, after taking *Contexts*, Charlotte is still confused about whether she should acknowledge the role race in the classroom. Her previous figured world leads her to believe that considering race might make a teacher racist; but she also now suspects that she is supposed to acknowledge race, somehow. She concludes that teachers should begin their year without preconceptions about race, but then “see how things roll.” While some researchers might classify Charlotte’s incoherence as resistance, I read her as confused, or, perhaps, developing. It is also interesting to note that both Tiffani and Charlotte, after waffling back and forth in their responses to the question, revert to color-blind stances.

Jessica (Andre’s section, mostly White high school) offers an example of a student unaware she is mixing color-blind and color-conscious ideologies. An excerpt from her Philosophy of Education, submitted at the end of the semester, reads as follows:

Above all, I want to have a classroom that embraces differences, whether they are racial, cultural, spiritual, differences in gender, or any other difference that comes into play. Something I have always said is that I want my students to check their stereotypes or negative ideas at the door. I want my classroom to be a place where those thoughts come to die!

In the beginning of this excerpt, Jessica acknowledges that differences, including racial differences, exist. Furthermore, she says she wants her classroom to “embrace” those differences. These ideas suggest a color-conscious stance in which Jessica acknowledges that *race matters* and that differences are to be celebrated rather than assimilated.

However, in the next sentence, “I want my students to check their stereotypes or negative ideas at the door,” she reveals an over-simplified of understanding of racism as inter-

personal - negative “thoughts” that can simply be checked at the door. In other words, if all of Jessica’s students come to class with open minds and good intentions, then she believes that racism (and other –isms) will not be present.

One of the reasons that Jessica’s response is so interesting is that she was not at all aware that she has not mastered the course material. She –and most of her classmates - professed to “love” the class, and she said she “learned so much” in it. She appeared to be an eager, enthusiastic (certainly not resistant) student. Yet she still believes that she and her students can just drop or erase their stereotypes and then they can go on not-seeing race and being good people.

In summary, two primary obstacles seemed to hamper participants’ taking-up of color-conscious ideologies. First, participants were determined to maintain non-racist self-understandings, and second, they were confused by the basic principles of color-consciousness that their instructors shared.

Patterns of Student Response

This research project was intended to be exploratory – to describe the general patterns of student response to the course material rather than to quantitatively determine what factors determined those responses. However, this research does suggest some preliminary hints to the next logical question: What factors influenced whether students rejected, adopted or struggled to learn color-conscious ideologies?

Previous Courses on Race

According to my observations (and confirmed by student interviews) students who had already taken a class to satisfy UU’s “Race and Diversity” general education requirement were noticeably more comfortable than their peers talking about issues of

race. (One exception to this was Hannah, whose race and diversity class was “Race in the Ancient Mediterranean.” Hannah said this course was completely useless in helping her understand contemporary race relations.) This finding supports other research that suggests that one course is not enough for students to unlearn color-blindness, learn color-consciousness **and** figure out how to become effective teachers for students who are racially, culturally, and linguistically different from them (Castro, 2008; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; LaDuke, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Markowitz & Puchner, 2014; Picower, 2013; Sleeter, 2001).

In a similar vein, students who were new to talking about issues of race were quick to note that fact. Many students said things like, “This is really hard for me because we just don’t talk about race at home” or “Race was never mentioned at my high school.” I was surprised that in whole-class discussions in both sections, students mentioned that they wished they had taken a class like *Contexts* in high school. In both classes, these comments were received with much nodding and verbal support from the contributor’s classmates.

Not all of these previous educational experiences happened at UU or through official schooling practices. Ava, for instance, says that reading books that were not required by school was really important in developing her understanding that color-blindness is a form of racism. She explained that she used to try to be color-blind until high school, when she read some books that challenged her ideology. For Ava, this reading led to participation in activist communities. She explained,

I don't know, I was just reading things and I was like, I never thought about it that way! And then I just kept learning more and more and like, now, I got more involved with communities that were, you know,

organizing for all different kinds of things? They're always just very aware of things and teaching me things, so the last few years have been like that.

Regardless of where exactly students had practiced talking about race, these previous experiences seemed to support learning the content of *Contexts*. This supports the view that learning color-conscious ideologies in a color-blind society may take longer than a semester.

Experiences with Racial Diversity

One focus of this study was an exploration of the ways that students who had different previous experiences with diversity engaged with course content about race. I quantified these previous experiences using just one piece of data – the racial diversity of participants' high schools. I compared the number of data excerpts that I coded as color-conscious from students who attended racially diverse high schools with those who attended mostly White high schools. There was a general pattern – students who attended racially diverse high schools tended to make more color-conscious comments or observations than those who attended mostly White high schools. However, some individuals did not fit this pattern. This raises several points to consider.

First, the racial diversity of a student's high school is a clumsy proxy for real experiences with racially diverse peers. Due to racialized tracking systems, for example, some participants attended racially diverse high schools but interacted almost exclusively with other White students. Other participants attended high schools that were almost entirely White yet had a person of color as a very close friend. Furthermore, students like Ava, who attended a White high school in Utah yet has a strong ethnic identification as half-Turkish, may see themselves as ethnic others and therefore approach classes like *Contexts* from an entirely different perspective. Another problem with my data collection

is that because so few of the students in both classes attended racially diverse high schools, I ended up lumping together students like Diana, whose high school was 63% White, and Charlotte, whose high school was 33% White, into a single category. Yet it seems likely that there might be important differences within the experiences of students that I placed in this group. For instance, Diana was still a racial majority at her school, while Charlotte was in the minority. Presumably, these are meaningful differences.

The patterns in my data were not strong enough to warrant a tidy conclusion about whether or not participants' experiences with racially diverse peers directly influenced how they engaged with course content with race. Of the four students who adopted color-conscious ideologies, two (Naomi and Ben) attended racially diverse high schools. Of the ten students who vacillated between color-blind and color-conscious ideologies, four (Charlotte, Ashli, Lucas, and Diana) attended racially diverse high schools. Interestingly, neither of the two students who most resisted color-conscious ideologies (Dylan and Steve) attended a racially diverse high school. Still, these data points do not reflect a strong direct correlation between the diversity of a student's high school and performances of color-conscious ideologies in this course. It appears that the diversity of students' high schools was not the primary contributor to whether or not these focal participants adopted color-conscious ideologies.

My data does, however, shed some light on the ways that participants drew on their previous schooling experiences in order to make sense of new learning about race. Some students who attended diverse high schools were able to draw on those experiences in order to assimilate course content. Interestingly, this knowledge seemed to be latent until it was drawn on by the class. For example, Hazel, who was not a focal participant,

is a White woman who attended a high school whose student body was 96% Black. In a discussion about Jonathan Kozol's (2005b) article, "Still separate, still unequal," Hazel told the class,

If you asked me before I read the article if my school was segregated, I probably wouldn't have thought to answer that it was?... But it's like really obvious...It was like three other white girls who graduated in my class of 370, or something like that. But I didn't even realize that it was that segregated or feel very put out. Because all the different cultures within - okay, yeah, they're all like Black, but there's different cultures, so I didn't think that it was not, you know, diverse or anything? But reading the article...was like a wake-up call.

Hazel, who was one of three White girls in a high school that was almost entirely Black, says that she never thought about her school as "segregated" until she read Kozol. One way to interpret this phenomenon is just to marvel at how strong Hazel's color-blind ideology must have been. She was taught not to notice race, and so she did not see her classmates' Blackness, but instead, saw their "different cultures." This fierce focus on characteristics other than race also served to obstruct the development of Hazel's critical consciousness because she was not able to make a link between the race of her classmates and some other characteristics of her schooling experiences that she later told her classmates that she had noticed but never thought about before this class. For example, Hazel mentioned that the other White students who lived nearby all went to private schools instead of attending her school. Hazel's response here also has a thread of surprise at her own growing understanding of her situation. She says that it should have been "obvious" that her school was segregated and she calls reading the Kozol article a "wake-up call."

Hazel was not alone. Through the class, many students, particularly those who attended racially integrated schools, appeared to suddenly have realizations that there

were, in fact, racialized tracking systems at their high schools; or that they had seen classmates of color experience something that they now thought of as racism but would not have labeled as racism before.

In his midterm for Andre's section, Ben, who attended a racially diverse charter high school, explained how this course enabled him to re-interpret some of his previous experiences:

When thinking back on my personal time spent in grade school, I can recall black classmates who seemed noticeably less ambitious, and me being also rather uninspired at that time could relate, and assumed that's just the way boys were. As I got older into high school though, I started to take notice that slower-track classes had a higher number of black males than the fast-track ones. **I didn't give much thought to this then because I assumed if I gave attention to it I would be considered a racist**, but now...I understand the pressures that are put on specifically black students. (Bolding is mine.)

Ben explains that he had noticed that White and Black classmates had different experiences in the schools he went to, but he tried hard to ignore this fact because, as he says, "I assumed if I gave attention to it I would be considered a racist." Again, we see how a student's commitment to color-blindness prevented him from making logical connections about something he observed. In Ben's account, the motivation for continuing to be color-blind is also explicit - if you are not color-blind, you are racist.

More rarely, students who attended predominantly White high schools drew on those experiences in order to relate to course content about privilege. For example, when Tiffani presented an article about the role of poverty in education (Ladd, 2011) to the class, she explained that her family had paid her English teacher to work with her one-on-one with her as an SAT tutor and "it's not cheap, so if you are from a low-income family that doesn't have that money, you can't do as well." Pam, who was teaching the class

along with Tiffani, pointed out that her school had mandatory, free SAT classes for all their students: “so we got all those strategies without paying for anything, so that was totally an advantage compared to other schools.” Before taking this class, students had not understood these experiences to be privileges, instead, they were just the way things were. Participation in *Contexts* helped students build schema around color-conscious ideas that came to serve as a new realm of interpretation. With these new understandings, they interpreted the same set of circumstances in a new way, drawing different conclusions from the same experiences.

Academic Ability

In this research, the most academically-inclined students seemed to become the most color-conscious. Of course, students who are interested and invested in the course material are going to put more effort into course readings and assignments. Similarly, Steve, Dylan, and other students who were firmly committed to color-blindness may have strong academic skills that they were choosing not to use in this context. However, in the liminal group especially, were students like Charlotte who really wanted to figure out what the right answers but who remained confused. Many students at UU take *Contexts* in their freshman year, and they are often assigned readings that may be far more difficult than those that they are accustomed to in high school. Add to this the fact that the readings directly contradicted what students believed to be true and it is probably unsurprising that many students were at-sea. As I explained above, students like Ava, Hannah and Ben who had strong academic skills and who were invested in taking on challenging non-fiction texts were able to fill in the gaps and construct coherent color-conscious ideologies. This research suggests that many White preservice teachers may

need more scaffolded approaches that will help them comprehend the complex and nuanced ideas in course readings. I offer more suggestions for this work in Chapter 7.

Previous Commitment to Color-Blindness

If we think of positions of color-blindness and color-consciousness as poles on a spectrum, it is logical that some students – although still predominantly color-blind – were more towards the middle of the spectrum at the beginning of class, and therefore had less far to travel to positions of color-consciousness. This is difficult to confirm from my data. Although the pre-assessment and first interview questions were intended to assess whether students were color-blind or color-conscious, my questions were not constructed to assess the depth of that commitment. So how, then, can I distinguish between two participants who both said that “race doesn’t matter”? There are a few hints in the data. Some students, like Abigail and Hannah, mentioned that their thoughts were in a state of flux on issues of race. These students said things like, “Since coming to UU, I have started to question this” or “I’m not really sure, but I think...” Students at the other end of the spectrum, like Steve, peppered their answers with absolutes like “never” and “always.” These discourse markers seem to align roughly with students’ relative positions at the end of the course. Students who entered the course with stronger commitments to color-blindness seemed less likely to experiment with performing color-consciousness. One direction for future research may be to explore ways of assessing the depth of students’ commitments to particular ideologies. For example, it seems possible that if I had also used some sort of depth-of-commitment scale when I coded particular statements as color-blind or color-conscious, my data would have revealed more of a progression from one ideology to the other.

Summary of Chapter 6

In this chapter I have described three main categories of White preservice teachers' experiences in two sections of a course that attempted to shift their racial ideologies from positions of color-blindness to color-consciousness. Two of fifteen focal participants resisted the course content and remained committed to color-blindness throughout the semester. Three focal participants, who were especially academically talented and motivated, rejected color-blindness and seemed to whole-heartedly adopt color-consciousness. The remaining ten focal participants performed color-consciousness in some moments of the course and color-blindness in others. These students seemed to genuinely want to learn the course content, but were hindered by their deep commitments to retaining a non-racist sense of self as well as by their difficulty understanding the color-conscious ideology offered by their instructors.

CHAPTER 7: A RETURN TO CONTEXT, IDENTITY AND AGENCY

This research study employed Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998) theoretical framework of the figured world in order to highlight the interacting roles of three important aspects of teaching and learning color-consciousness: context, identity and agency. The findings related to each of these aspects have implications for future research, policy and practice.

Context

As qualitative researchers have been arguing for decades, *context matters* (for example, Fine, 1991; Hatt, 2012; Heath, 1983; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998). The experiences of the participants in this study appeared to be profoundly shaped by particular nested contexts, or what I call *figured worlds* (Holland et. al, 1998). First, at the outer-most macro level, all participants except Naomi began the class as active participants in a figured world of White hegemonic understandings that included an ideology of color-blindness. At another step inward, students were influenced by the meso-context of their university, in this case, a large urban institution with a publicized commitment to diversity. This meso-context served as a realm of interpretation (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998) through which terms like *race*, *whiteness* and *diversity* took on particular meanings. At a micro-level, participants were influenced by the local social context of their section of the course: for example, the ways that particular ideas took on particular values, the ways that particular characters were positioned, the implications of using particular ways of speaking. These micro-contexts were co-created by the instructors and the students, and were different enough across sections of the course that students enrolled in the different sections had different

learning experiences. In this chapter, I contend that teacher educators who are attempting to shift students from color-blind to color-conscious figured worlds must attend to all three of these contexts.

Macro-level Contextual Implications: Society

Color-Blindness is Pervasive

Given that this research took place in the contemporary U.S., during the presidency of Barack Obama and a time when use of the phrase “post-racial society” is commonplace, I probably should not have been as surprised as I was at the degree to which the White preservice teachers who participated in this study shared an incoming belief system, specifically, a color-blind ideology. All the participants except Naomi began the course believing that race matters little in our society and that teachers should endeavor to not notice their students’ races. A further reason I should not have been surprised is that this finding was preceded by many previous corroborating studies (Gay and Kirkland, 2003; LaDuke, 2009; Picower, 2013; Sleeter, 2001; Ullucci, 2005; Ullucci and Battey, 2011). Still, the fact that all of these young White people, who seemed so hip and modern, who were born in the mid- to late-1990s and who grew up in a variety of different environments articulated similar beliefs astonished me. Their endorsement of color-blindness is particularly noteworthy given the meso-context: an urban university that publicly touts its commitment to diversity.

This homogeneity of belief implies the existence of a figured world of White hegemonic understandings that is far more entrenched and pervasive than I originally suspected. Evidently, teacher education programs like UU’s are faced with the challenge of developing strategies to address a belief system that students internalize long before

they enroll in their first education course. This suggests that teacher educators are charged with a large task: not only must they teach color-conscious attitudes and practices, but they must also provide students the opportunities to unlearn their color-blind ways of knowing and being. Markowitz and Puchner (2014, p. 77), for example, argue that the task of changing preservice teachers' ideologies is so difficult, in part, due to "the seamless ideological web" that "exists beyond the university...in our families, in the economy, inside political systems, and in our religious institutions." Given that this "ideological web" of color-blindness reaches so far beyond the university walls, is it reasonable to expect that teacher education programs single-handedly change participant's ideologies?

Ullucci and Battey (2011, p. 1214) highlight this concern: "Blaming education alone for reproducing color-blind ideologies and inequity does a disservice to educators by placing the burden for society's ills on their shoulders. Surely, educators have a part to play, but broader institutions set policy and law that affect education." Ullucci and Battey suggest that we should not hold teacher educators entirely responsible for transforming their students' beliefs. Still, my research suggests that teacher education coursework *can* influence participants' racial ideologies. Furthermore, I believe teacher education could do more to influence these racial ideologies if teacher educators recognized the pervasiveness of color-blind ideologies their students may begin with. In this context, perhaps the most important part for teacher educators to play is to help prospective teachers recognize the workings of color-blind policies both in and outside of classrooms.

Ullucci and Battey (2011) suggest that preservice teachers need guidance and practice in developing “understandings of oppression at the institutional and policy levels” (p. 1214). My research supports this conclusion. In both sections of the course that I studied, participants read only one article (Wilson, 2008) that specifically addressed racism on an institutional and policy level. This article described the role of government policy in creating areas of concentrated poverty and introduced participants to terms like “redlining.” As I explained in Chapters 5 and 6, this article made a big impact on students – even those who did not fully understand Wilson’s argument. Specifically, the article gave students an opportunity to practice color-consciousness and talk and think about the ways that institutionalized racism – rather than personal acts of racism - impacts peoples’ experiences in the US. Given that this one article was so powerful, it seems reasonable to suggest that teacher educators should offer students more opportunities to learn about different kinds of institutional racism.

Ullucci and Battey (2011) offer specific recommendations for developing prospective teachers’ color-consciousness including the following: having prospective teachers use critical ethnographic methods to study various school- and community-based programs; requiring prospective teachers to read book-length works that focus on the role of race and racism in American schools, health care, the judicial system, or the legal system; engaging prospective teachers in class projects in which they investigate the outcomes of various education policies (for example, the availability of AP classes) on different racial groups. For me, the key here is practice and exposure. Given that White prospective teachers spend decades learning that our society is a meritocracy, it is only reasonable to suspect that they need more time and opportunity to develop skill in

identifying racist institutions and policies. Just like we want our prospective teachers to do with their own students, teacher educators need to first learn about and then incorporate their students' prior knowledge into the classroom. In this case, the prior knowledge may explicitly contradict the course goals, and so it is extra important that we find ways to address it. I share more ideas on this task in the section on classroom-level implications below.

Meso-Level Contextual Implications: The University

In this research, the teaching and learning of color-consciousness was also influenced by the meso-level context – the university. In the section below, I describe the ways that elements of the university culture and the teacher education program design influenced participants' experiences.

Are Color-Conscious Stances Too Radical?

At UU, telling students that color-consciousness was the right stance seemed like a too-radical, too-liberal position. For example, during an orientation meeting with all the instructors of *Contexts*, the professor who oversees this course called creating “teacher-activists” a “hidden agenda” of the class. From her perspective, at UU, this agenda should be “hidden” because it might alienate more conservative students or members of the college. In this figured world, teaching color-consciousness is uncomfortably close to indoctrination.

In this study, Andre felt very strongly that it would be unethical for him to promote a specific racial ideology. Nakia told me that she felt as though she was “overstepping” when she told students that color-blindness was a form of racism.

Furthermore, as the students from these two instructors' courses move on through the rest

of their teacher education programs, it is likely that they will have other instructors that are uncomfortable or unwilling to explicitly endorse color-conscious stances. How might this influence the continued development of their racial ideologies?

Not all teacher education programs agree that a public endorsement of color-consciousness is too radical. In fact, in some teacher education programs, color-consciousness is presented as the only sensible path for prospective teachers in a racially inequitable society. In these programs, color-blindness is not considered an acceptable alternative. For example, University of Wisconsin at Madison requires its prospective teachers to “strategically address race, class, and gender in culturally relevant and sustaining ways” (program website, also personal communication with UM-W teacher educator K. Kirchgasser, 07-20-15). In a meta-analysis of seven recent literature reviews on multicultural teacher education, Furman (2008, p. 23) concludes with the following contention: “We must view teacher education as inherently multicultural, antiracist, and transnational. There can no longer be a view of teaching as apolitical or that ignores issues of diversity in its many forms.” Future research could compare these two approaches - do we tell preservice teachers what the right answer is or do we hope that they to come to it on their own? And most importantly, are either of these approaches linked to teacher behaviors and student learning outcomes?

Start Early with Coursework about Race

LaDuke (2009) argues compellingly that teacher education programs should position courses with race- and privilege-related content early in preservice teachers’ programs. Although my research was not designed to corroborate or disprove this finding, it does seem to support LaDuke’s conclusion. Many of the freshman participants

in my study appeared to be in a period of rapid growth and disequilibrium; they were aware that their ideas about the world were changing. Many students, like Abigail who called this fact “really cool,” embraced this change - it fit with her liberal notions of what college is supposed to do for a person. It seems likely that students in this stage are more open to learning course content that conflicts directly with what they believe about the world. Two of the three older students in this study (Dylan, 30 and Jessica, 28) certainly seemed to struggle more with the course content as it conflicted with longer-held beliefs that were more cemented than those of their peers. Future research could explore student age and year in school as a possible factor contributing to the efficacy of coursework about race.

Attention to Race Should be Woven Throughout Coursework

On the other hand, we know that “most teacher learning occurs in the first years of teaching and not at the undergraduate or preservice level” at all (quoted from Furman, 2008, p. 7). So how can we better thread coursework throughout a pre-service teacher’s experience and create the conditions through which s/he can continue to reflect on these issues as s/he begins to teach? This study corroborates previous research that contends that one course on issues of race and privilege is simply insufficient in guiding White preservice teachers to adopt the beliefs and master the teaching practices that are the goals of these courses. For more than two decades, in fact, researchers have argued that course content on race, power and privilege must be infused throughout the curriculum, rather than relegated to a single course (Castro, 2010; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; LaDuke, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Markowitz & Puchner, 2014; Picower, 2013; Sleeter, 2001). In a review of the literature, Furman (2008) found that some

researchers even suggested that the single-course approach may be *detrimental* for White preservice teachers (see Chapter 2 for an explanation). In the current era of public education, however, when teacher education programs are pushed to focus on standardized tests and accountability and assessment at the expense of goals of social justice, courses about race and privilege are often forced into backstage positions or eliminated altogether.

Despite trends to the contrary, there *are* models of teacher education programs operating within our current system that work to infuse themes of social justice and color-consciousness throughout their education programs. Rutgers University, for example, offers a certificate in Urban Education that pre-service teachers can earn along with their credential. This program, The Urban Teaching Fellows (UTF), aims to “develop teacher candidates who champion exciting and innovative learning environments to better serve racially, ethnically, economically, and linguistically diverse student populations” (Rutgers Graduate School of Education website, retrieved 08/10/15). According to one of the program directors, most teacher candidates opt into this program not because they are already deeply committed to issues of racial inequity, but because they believe that having this certificate will make them more desirable candidates for teaching positions. Once they are enrolled, however, many of them develop color-conscious attitudes and practices (B. Rubin, personal communication, 2-28-15).

UTF threads attention to race and class throughout preservice teachers’ learning experiences, essentially turning “the traditional one-semester teaching internship into a three semester teaching residency” (Rutgers Graduate School of Education website, retrieved 08/10/15). UTF participants first take one additional course that focuses on

Urban Education. While they are enrolled in this course, they are assigned (a semester earlier than their non-UTF peers) to the school that they will later student-teach in. They conduct observations at this school and are asked to make explicit connections between their observations and the course content. The following semester, UTF participants student-teach. While they are student-teaching, they participate in specific professional development about effective teaching practices in urban environments and have an additional college instructor who is, him/herself a skilled educator of urban students, assigned to observe and work with them. Finally, during their last semester, participants return to their student-teaching site in a small group and facilitate a youth participatory action research project (YPAR) with a group of their former students. In addition to helping their students develop critical consciousness and research skills, these YPAR projects engage UTF participants in learning about the problems that urban students face, as well as deepen their understanding of the communities in which their students live.

Programs like UTF are not ideal in that they still require pre-service teachers to opt-in and so some will obviously choose not to participate. Still, in the context of large universities that may not have the resources or political will to be able to mandate that all students take an extra class that focuses on race or spend extra observation time at a school, Rutgers' program offers a workable model. The most important feature of Rutgers' model, to me, is that it provides authentic opportunities for *praxis*. In other words, through this program, preservice teachers get to apply what they are learning to a real situation, and to reflect on that application. Compare this to a course like *Contexts* at UU, in which students are learning course material without any real contact with actual schools or students. Furthermore, Rutgers' three-semester model allows preservice

teachers more time to assimilate the programs' goals regarding race and equity compared to UU's semester-long crash-course.

Micro-Level Contextual Implications: The Classroom

In the discussion of the liminal group in Chapter 6, I explained that three particular academic contexts seemed to produce opportunities for participants to practice color-consciousness. These were engagement with color-conscious texts and authors; completing particular course assignments that required attention to the role of race; and agreeing with a color-conscious instructor. From the perspective of the figured worlds framework, these opportunities are especially important because it is through performances of color-consciousness that students became stronger participants in a figured world of color-consciousness. My research suggests that preservice teachers need copious opportunities to practice and experiment with color-conscious ideas. Below I offer more specific suggestions for this work.

Engagement with Color-Conscious Texts and Authors

The course texts proved a tremendous resource for the few students who were academically able and attitudinally willing to engage with them. However, many students remained confused about the main ideas in the articles even after they endeavored to read them and discussed them in class. In these two courses, the texts appeared to be an under-utilized lever for shifting students' ideologies. There are two likely explanations for this.

First, as in many college courses, there may have been a gap between students' independent reading abilities and the difficulty levels of the articles taught. The general unpreparedness of high school students for college reading and critical thinking tasks is

well-documented (see, for example, Greene & Forster, 2003; Moore, Slate, Edmonson, Combs, Bustamante & Onwuebuze, 2010). Complicating matters further, at UU and many other universities, the educators who teach these sorts of courses have little experience in teaching reading and may lack the skills necessary to help students access these texts or to choose more accessible texts. In addition to the sheer complexity of some of the course texts, participants may have struggled with the readings as they contradicted participant's incoming beliefs. When participants tried to draw on their previous understandings of topics like race and racism in order to comprehend these texts, they became confused. This may account for a phenomenon I described in Chapter 6: some students misinterpreted some of the assigned readings, finding details in them (at the expense of the larger argument) that served as confirmation of their own color-blind beliefs.

One possible strategy to help students learn from the readings is to have teachers specifically outline the principles of both color-blind and color-conscious ideologies with students, and then have students engage in activities where they need to differentiate between authors and ideas from these two perspectives. For example, after explaining the tenets of color-blind and color-conscious ideologies, teacher educators could have students discuss the ways that people operating from these particular ideologies might interpret the same scenario in different ways. Along the same lines, teacher educators could have students examine various educational policies and label them as color-blind or color-conscious. As an extension, they could analyze which kinds of policies further what kinds of educational goals. Prospective teachers need practice in noticing the key ways that their own ideas may differ from those offered by the course texts, and learning

the terms “color-blind” and “color-conscious” (or other comparable terms) might support this work.

The Role of Instructors' Beliefs

The instructors of both of these courses were well-liked and respected by their students. This also served as a lever for learning. As I described in Chapter 6, participants wanted to agree with their instructors - they just could not always figure out what their instructors thought. Two possible implications arise and warrant further study: either, a) instructors need to find ways of clearly communicating the ideologies, attitudes, beliefs and practices they want students to adopt; or b) perhaps instructors can continue to not “impose” (in Andre’s words) their ideas on students if they can trust that students will continue to grapple with these ideas and figure them out on their own, later. In other words, it seems possible that the strategies of teachers like Andre - let them figure it out on their own, do not indoctrinate them - may, in fact, pay-off in the longer term. However, I found no research to support either possibility. This is one of the reasons I would like to follow these students over the next several years. Will the students who were in a state of transition eventually come to color-consciousness as Andre had hoped? And might that position of color-consciousness be stronger and more developed because students came to it on their own? Or, will they revert back to their more comfortable color-blind ways of knowing and thinking? (LaDuke, 2009). These questions warrant further research.

Course Assignments

Course assignments are a vital opportunity for students to practice color-consciousness. In the two sections of *Contexts* that I studied, assignments like the School

Case Study Project offered students the chance to use race as an investigative lens. Preservice teachers need practice identifying the roles of race and privilege in a variety of contexts. I contend that the more opportunities we give students to practice, the more likely they are to develop color-consciousness attitudes and practices. My study also suggests that when students are given the option to either address issues of race directly or to avoid them, many students will choose to avoid them. For example, in Andre's midterm, students were required to choose and discuss eight of twelve course terms from a list. Some students chose not to write about racialized terms like "White privilege" or "redlining" and chose race-neutral terms like "Montessori." If we want White students who have grown up in a color-blind society to talk and think about race, we need to set up situations in which we require them, in safe ways, to practice these behaviors.

Agency: What White Prospective Teachers Bring to Class

Some of the previous research about White preservice teachers seems to treat White preservice teachers as a monolithic homogenous group of racist, deficient learners (for a critique of this body of work, see Lowenstein, 2009). In this study, White students taking the same course had widely varying experiences, in large part due to their own individual choices and actions. Whether they were resisting or relishing the readings, students were active agents in shaping their own learning. When offered specific opportunities and guidance in doing so, many participants successfully drew on their previous life experiences with diversity or privilege in order to understand course content. In other words, White preservice teachers had "funds of knowledge" that they brought with them to class (Moll, 1995); they were certainly not empty vessels waiting to be filled with the course content. Perhaps instead of planning universally applicable

intervention materials for this work (Furman, 2008), we should think about how we create environments in which preservice teachers in particular contexts can build on what they already know and be active participants in their own learning. In the sections that follow I offer a few specific ideas for this work.

Agency Extends Beyond Resistance

Previous research has considered the agency of White preservice teachers primarily through examining their resistance (for example, see Gay and Kirkland, 2003). With the exception of Dylan and Steve, the participants in this research seemed, in general, remarkably less resistant to learning about issues of race and privilege than the White prospective teachers documented in other studies. My participants spoke frequently about how much they enjoyed the courses, and how great it was to finally talk about a taboo topic, race. Participants in this study, in general, saw themselves as (and seemed to me to be) striving to master the course content. While some focal participants did engage in some behaviors that could reasonably be labeled as resistant, such as choosing only race-neutral terms to write about on a test, or insisting that their families achieved their suburban lifestyle through hard work alone, on the whole, resistance seemed like a fairly minor undercurrent in both classes.

We can account for this lack of resistance in several ways. First, it is possible that the instructors' gentleness and their endeavors to make every student feel at ease lowered students' defensiveness and made them more open to the course content. For example, in Chapter 5, I explained that Andre and Nakia told anecdotes of White teachers that they knew and loved and who sometimes struggled to be effective teachers of students of color. This strategy seemed effective in (at least temporarily) making students feel that

their essential goodness was not threatened by the course content; perhaps it also decreased student resistance. It is also possible that the students at this particular university represent a more racially-progressive subset of the national population of White preservice teachers because of their decision to attend a college located in an urban area that has a reputation for valuing diversity. This would imply that a university's commitment to diversity could be an important factor in producing color-conscious teachers. The connection between a university's public commitment to and reputation for diversity and prospective teachers' incoming and outgoing beliefs about race is therefore a possible line for further research.

Finally, it is possible that my finding that participants in this study demonstrated relatively low levels of resistance is just a feature of my own perspective. Other researchers might, in fact, have considered some of the participant behaviors that I described in Chapter 6 as resistance. For example, I can imagine that some scholars might have seen resistance where I saw confusion. As I noted in Chapter 2, resistance is certainly a term that has grown in scope and applied widely to a variety of behaviors. Many times throughout this project, I asked participants questions about race and received incoherent responses. Whether we conceptualize these moments as confusion or resistance matters since our understanding of the problem determines the sorts of interventions we plan. Whereas resistant students need psychological motivation and safe spaces (or perhaps, need to be excluded from teacher education programs) (Brown, 2004; LaDuke, 2009), confused students need more explicit and accessible instruction. As I watched students in both classes strive to take-up color-conscious ideologies, I began to develop a commitment to the idea (discussed in the section below) that focusing

on students' interests and strengths, rather than their resistance, may be a more successful approach in some contexts.

Identity: Learning About Race, Developing New Self-Understandings

This research demonstrates that learning course content about race, for White Americans, is inextricable from learning about oneself. Teacher educators need to create instructional environments that *assume* that students will be developing new self-understandings and that support them in doing so. In addition to asking questions like, *How do these courses change White preservice teachers' beliefs?* We also need to ask, *What is the role of these courses in shaping White preservice teachers' racial and professional identities?*

I'm Not Racist! (So I Can't Learn This!)

Perhaps the most significant finding of this research is that, although students did not, for the most part, engage in behavior that I considered resistant, most of them *still* struggled to master the course content regarding race, specifically to understand and adopt color-conscious ideologies. As I argued in Chapter 6, this struggle seemed to arise from two primary interrelated sources; first, a general confusion about color-consciousness (Why should anyone see race? When should teachers see race? What would that be like? For what purpose?); and second, participants' deep commitments to retaining understandings of themselves as good, not-racist people.

Endorsing color-consciousness seemed to necessarily include an admission of the existence of White privilege. This had deep implications for participants' self-understandings. In other words, with color-consciousness as a realm of interpretation, White participants were led to re-interpret their own status in life as the result of privilege

rather than pure merit. This had large emotional - and perhaps even physical (Sullivan, 2014) - consequences for participants. However, these courses (and college coursework in general) focused on an emotionless, intellectual, logical discussion of ideas. When Tiffani exclaimed, “I hate the whole racism thing!” in her final interview, I believe she meant, “I hate talking and thinking about race because it makes me feel like a bad person because I’m White!” Sentiments like these made focusing on issues of race difficult. Some teacher educators have found that creating space in class to address feelings like Tiffani’s can lead to a dead-end mire of guilt, shame and resentment, de-railing the courses’ objectives (Lensmire et al., 2013). This is a real concern. On the other hand, this study suggests that White preservice teachers need support in processing these feelings so that they can eventually develop positive identities as color-conscious White people. I share a few thoughts on this difficult task below.

Treat White Preservice Teachers as Aspiring Anti-Racists

Research about White preservice teachers often describes this demographic of learners as racist, incapable of learning multicultural course content (for critiques of this body of research, see Lowenstein, 2009; McDonough, 2009). While many of the participants in my study did, in fact, have negative beliefs about people of color and many of them struggled to learn the course content, focusing on these attributes seems unhelpful. It entrenches teacher educators in a deficit perspective in which White prospective teachers are seen as the problem. How can we guide prospective teachers to bring about ends of social justice if we conceptualize them, as racist individuals, as the primary problem? I was struck again and again by the ways in which the participants in this study were profoundly motivated to retain understandings of themselves as good,

not-racist people. This force was so powerful that students acted in illogical and inconsistent ways to retain these not-racist identities. Wanting not to be racist is a powerful asset that teacher educators should draw on. I wonder how teacher educators' standpoints and instructional practices might shift if we began to think of White preservice teachers as *aspiring anti-racists* rather than racist. I contend that not wanting to be racist is an asset, and this perspective affords powerful pedagogical possibilities.

From this perspective, the primary instructional task becomes supporting students to re-define racism, including the characteristics of people who are more or less racist. As I explained in Chapter 6, when Hannah, Ava and Ben's ideas of what constitutes racism shifted, they were able to engage with the course content while still retaining senses of themselves as essentially good people. For example, when Hannah decided that performances of anti-racism included noticing White privilege and admitting to having implicit racial biases, she was more easily able to do those things without feeling like a bad person; it simply became another (hopefully more useful) way of performing non-racism.

I have organized my understandings of student thought-processes into the table below. Both groups of students are clearly motivated by wanting to retain positive senses of themselves as individuals. My study suggests that once White preservice teachers' definitions of what makes a good person changes, they can change their actions without having to experience such negative feelings about themselves.

Table 7.1: <i>Rationale and Motivation of Color-Blind and Color-Conscious Actions</i>		
Element	Color-blind students' rationale and motivation	Color-conscious students' rationale and motivation
Goal	I want to be thought of (and think of myself) as a good person	I want to be thought of (and think of myself) as a good person
Underlying Beliefs	<p>Racism is evil and personal.</p> <p>Racism is mostly a thing of the past.</p> <p>Color-blind attitudes and policies are the best way to be fair to all people.</p> <p>Racists are bad people who notice race and engage in race-related "personal acts of meanness" (McIntosh, 1988).</p>	<p>Racism is systemic and cultural in addition to personal.</p> <p>Racism is still prevalent in our society.</p> <p>Color-blindness is a form of racism because it denies the existence of racism, which has negative consequences for people of color.</p> <p>All White Americans are racist to varying degrees. Everyone has implicit beliefs about people of different races.</p>
Actions	I can best demonstrate my own goodness by insisting that I am not racist and ignoring the role of race (and, therefore, privilege).	I can best demonstrate my own goodness by distinguishing myself from a color-blind perspective through admitting that I am at least a little racist and noticing and talking about race, racism and privilege.

LaDuke (2009, p. 43) describes this process as follows, "In order to make progress toward becoming an antiracist, you must simultaneously admit to your identity as a racist." My study suggests that we must add to LaDuke's formulation that students must re-evaluate what it means to be "a racist" and what sorts of actions and behaviors are consistent with being a good person. While we do not want our students to take Dylan's approach - throwing their hands up in the air and stating, "Everyone's a little racist!" in

order to dodge any responsibility for participation in a racial hierarchy - scholars like Beverly Tatum (2003) suggest that creating instructional environments in which students can own and admit their own racism allows the possibility of then moving on to the next stage of asking, “So what’s next?”

Summary: Four Recommendations for Color-Conscious Teacher Education

1. Teacher educators should conceptualize White preservice teachers as “aspiring anti-racists.” Rather than assume that White preservice teachers do not want to learn content about race (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Sleeter, 2001), teacher educators should focus on White preservice teachers’ strong motivation to think of themselves as good, not-racist people. My study suggests that many White preservice teachers are captivated in a push-pull tension with content about race (Lensmire, 2010; Lensmire & Snaza, 2010). Teacher educators need to appeal to the “pull” side - the part of White preservice teachers that desperately wants to be a good teacher and good person. To this end, teacher educators should help students re-think what it means to be racist and to develop criteria for anti-racist action.

2. Teacher educators should explicitly teach prospective teachers the differences between color-blind and color-conscious ideologies, practices and policies. Most participants in this study appeared to want to master the course content but they were confused about the specific differences between color-blindness and color-consciousness. Indeed, they did not even know that these two labels existed. If teacher educators want their students to move from positions of color-blindness to positions of color-conscious, they should use some instructional time to outline these two positions. This seems like a crucial step in developing students’ thinking around issues of race. Depending on the

institutional context and instructor's pedagogy, teacher educators may also want to be clear with students that teachers with color-conscious stances demonstrate better outcomes with students of color (Teel & Obidah, 2008). To do otherwise seems like an example of adults protecting the feelings of other adults to the detriment of children of color (Fine, 2006). In addition to outlining the components of these two ideologies, teacher educators should give students many opportunities to practice differentiating between color-blindness and color-consciousness.

3. Teacher educators should foster opportunities for prospective teachers to practice talking about racial issues, use racial markers, and notice the role of race and racism in particular scenarios. Rather than focus exclusively on what prospective teachers *believe*, teacher educators should implement in-class and out of class activities that require students to engage in color-conscious behaviors. Suggestions for this work (discussed in more depth above) include having prospective teachers study the experiences of students from different racial demographics in particular schools and neighborhoods, having prospective teachers read and discuss texts that express color-conscious ideas; requiring prospective teachers to research how particular societal institutions serve people of different races in different ways.

4. Teacher educators should require students to reflect on a) how the course content relates to their own previous educational experiences, b) how it may influence the way think about themselves and their role in society, and c) how it might influence the way they think about their future teaching. When students were required to reflect in the two courses I studied, they often expressed surprised at the new understandings they came to. Hazel, for example, did not realize that she attended a segregated school

until she was asked to connect a reading by Kozol (2005b) to her own school experiences. While some students will certainly make connections between the course content and their own lives on their own, my research suggests that these connections are more likely to happen if students are required to reflect through specific course assignments. Using reflection as a strategic pedagogical choice to address students' dysconscious views about race and racism, sometimes called Critical Race Reflection, has been documented in other studies and shows promise (i.e. Milner, 2003, 2010; Ullucci, 2010). Certainly, not all kinds of reflective activities are likely to produce the same results. Future research should explore the elements of reflection that are especially effective in shaping prospective teachers' racial ideologies.

Contribution to the Field

The challenge of preparing White teachers to teach for social justice has become something of a hot topic in the new millennium. Offering this study to the field is therefore an especially daunting task. My research's primary distinction is the application of Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's figured world to this work. The figured world allows us to see how effective teacher educators will take the macro-level context into account and do what they can to tailor the meso- and micro-levels to their students' specific needs. Effective teacher educators must acknowledge that preservice teachers are powerful agents who bring their own resources and funds of knowledge with them and then provide those students opportunities to tap into those funds of knowledge. And finally, and most importantly, the use of this framework foregrounds the fact that learning content is inseparable from learning about oneself. This, in turn, forces a reconceptualization of the central problem. Instead of wondering why resistant White

teachers are slow to change the beliefs that they are taught as members of our society, I believe we should be developing opportunities through which these young people can practice noticing and talking about race while maintaining positive self-understandings.

This study also contributes to the field a new finding that complicates the field's understanding of how to best prepare White teachers to teach for social justice: even when they have chosen to attend a university that values diversity, and even when they do not engage in typically resistant behavior, most White prospective teachers in this study *still* struggled to learn course content about race. Like the contribution discussed above, this understanding also re-focuses the issue on the quality of learning opportunities these students are receiving rather than on the supposed deficiencies of this population.

Reflection on the Process

Concluding a project as large as a dissertation seems to warrant some reflection on the journey. When I began this project, I was primarily interested in the development of critical consciousness in urban high school students. I originally planned a dual-site ethnography; I wanted to explore the conscientization of both high school students of color and of the White middle class women who tend to teach them. I was encouraged by my sensible and caring committee to focus on just one these populations (“Karen, you really only get to say something about *one* thing”), and I chose the group that I had much less experience working with - the White preservice teachers that I had just begun teaching. This decision seemed like the right one since I was developing a conviction that issues of power and privilege deserve theoretical exploration just as much as issues of oppression. Perhaps even more important – I just could not stop thinking about that class. What was going on in my students' heads? *A lot*, I thought, but I could not figure

out *what*. When I changed my design from two populations (urban high school students and prospective teachers) to one, I had hoped to be able to study pre-service teachers in class one semester and then follow the same individuals student-teaching the next semester. Due to the particulars of the teacher education coursework sequence at UU, this would have been impracticable, stretching my dissertation process out over at least an additional year and a half.

I remain very interested in what happens next in the conscientization of these young people. The research discussed in this dissertation is just one 14-week snippet of the thread of the participants' development as people and as teachers. Will the trends that I saw continue on as these young people become teachers in their own classrooms? I hope to find out. Ideally, I would like to continue to follow my participants over the next few years as they student-teach and then enter the workforce. Through interviews and observations, I hope to study their process and explore the possible connection between teacher ideologies, teacher behaviors and, ultimately, student learning outcomes. On a personal level, I look forward to seeing these young people continue to grow. I feel honored that so many of them let me so far into their thoughts and inner lives and were willing to be vulnerable and open about a topic that made them uncomfortable.

While I was analyzing the data, I often felt overwhelmed by the multiple voices and stories therein. I saw many possible patterns - so many stories to tell! I recently read an op-ed by novelist Stephen King (2015) in which he captures this sensation:

...my head was like a crowded movie theater where someone has just yelled "Fire!" and everyone scrambles for the exits at once. I had a thousand ideas but only 10 fingers and one typewriter. There were days — I'm not kidding about this, or exaggerating — when I thought all the clamoring voices in my mind would drive me insane.

For this research project, I decided to tell the story about teaching and learning color-consciousness because it was often the loudest story. Of course, I am central in this process: the data I collected, the codes I used, the stories I heard all have shadowy analogues in data I did not notice or I ignored, other codes that would have foregrounded other findings, and ultimately other possible stories. I have tried to make the most important decisions of inclusion and exclusion clear to the reader, but this is not an easy task. The real challenge of the qualitative researcher must be to see oneself so critically and dispassionately that the role one has played in influencing one's own research is completely clear. I have a long way yet to go in developing this skill.

My data offer much more to continue exploring – so many stories still to tell! I have two particular projects in mind. First, I am fascinated by the ways that the concept of diversity was employed in the two classes that I studied. What do different groups in our society consider diverse? How is it that White teachers, in one breath, can talk proudly of their own experiences with diversity but then talk about the diversity of their potential students as a challenge or drawback? Do people who grow up in diverse environments actually benefit from that experience? What are those benefits and how can we quantify them? Could those benefits be used to convince White people of the need to desegregate our communities and schools?

Second, I found myself to be deeply interested in the micro-interactional processes in each classroom, particularly on the discursive level. Since I have audio-recordings of the classes, I hope to do a second, finer-grained round of transcription. In my mind, I keep seeing one student's face as she crinkled up her nose and lowered her voice to almost whisper the word "Black" to her groupmates during a discussion about

stereotype threat. How can our students have meaningful conversations about race with diverse others if they struggle even to use racial markers? I wonder whether the actual racial markers that students used throughout the course changed over the course of the semester, as Andre suspected. I would like to layer this analysis onto the one presented in Chapter 6 and see what other patterns might emerge.

Although I am wrapping up this dissertation, I am certainly not finished thinking about the best ways to teach and learn color-consciousness in the context of a color-blind society. On one hand, as I understand the complexities of the endeavor more than I did two years ago, this task seems even more daunting. On the other hand, I find hope and possibility in the experiences of the prospective teachers I studied. Despite research that suggests the opposite, I firmly believe that these young people desire racial justice and want to be successful teachers of all their students. It is our tremendous responsibility and privilege as teacher educators to prepare them to achieve these goals.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hi! My name is Karen Pezzetti. For my dissertation, I am studying the ways that prospective teachers experience taking a class that explicitly deals with issues of race and privilege. I am hoping to find out what kinds of learning really happens in classes like this. I taught high school in California for ten years and I did not get to take a class like this before I started – I wish I had. The findings from this research project might be used to improve classes like this as well as to contribute to what researchers know about how to educate teachers to advance causes of social justice.

This semester I am planning to study this section of this class, [actual course name omitted here]. That means that I will be in class every day, and that I will be taking notes about what is happening in class. I would like to invite all of you to participate in my research project.

If you agree to participate, here is what will happen:

- Your instructor will allow me to read assignments that you submit online.
- I might take notes about what you say and do in class.
- I will audio-record class discussions in which you are a participant and transcribe those discussions later.
- Your name and personal information will remain anonymous. I will always write about you using a pseudonym – a fake name.
- I will not tell your teacher anything that I notice or think about you. At the end of the semester, I hope to give your teacher some general feedback, but your name would not be associated with any of that.

I am also looking for 8 people who will agree to be interviewed twice during the semester about their experiences in this class. On the consent form, that is called being “a focal participant.” Unfortunately, I cannot offer you money or extra credit in exchange for your time. I do hope that you will benefit a little from the interviews because I think that reflecting about experiences in a class like this can help students do well in that class.

If you do not want to participate, that is totally fine. You can either tell me or the teacher (my email is on the consent form), or you can just choose to not turn in the consent form.

If you choose not to participate

- I will not read any of the work you submit for this class
- I will not take any notes about you
- I will not audio-record you speaking.
- Your grade in this class will not be affected in any way.

I might, however, still study this class in general. If you would prefer that I not be here, I hope that you will talk to your instructor about it. You being comfortable in class is much more important than my research project, and there are other sections of this class that I could study instead.

I am going to pass out the consent forms. Please take a few minute to read it. I will take questions about the research project in a few minutes, or you can always email me questions later. I would love to collect these consent forms from you in the next class meeting.

Any questions?

I will hang around after class to collect consent forms if you want to complete them now and to answer any questions you might have.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

First Round Interview Questions for Andre and Nakia

1. Could you give me your three minute biography –where you grew up, what kind of work your parents did/do, siblings, what kinds of school you attended, where you've worked...
2. Tell me about your own education.
3. How did you end up at [UU]?
4. How did end up teaching this course?
5. Describe your racial identity – what label do you prefer; how salient to your identity do you feel _____ is? Can you talk a little bit about what being X means to you?
6. Describe the kinds of students that have been in your classes.
7. What went well this semester?
8. What do you think that students learn in this class?
9. Are there some kinds of students who get more out of this class than others?
10. What role, if any, do you feel like your own race (or gender or class) plays in this class?
11. Are you planning to make any/many changes for when you teach this class next semester?
12. Do you have any concerns or things you'd like to think through about how it'll work with me studying your class next semester?

1st Round Participant Interview Protocol

Thanks so much for coming! I really appreciate it! You can decline to answer any of the questions I'm about to ask you. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Name: _____ Age: _____
2. How long have you been at [UU]?
3. What's your major?
4. When someone asks you what race you are, or when you have to check a box on a form, what do you say? What term do you use to describe your race? Do you feel like being X significantly influenced the way you grew up or influences the way you see the world?
5. How would you describe your family's social class? (With a follow up for details – what made your family X class? Similar or different to other students at the schools you grew up in?)
6. Tell me a little about yourself. Where'd you grow up?
7. Describe your own education. What kind of schools did you attend? What kind of student were you/are you?
8. How did you decide to be an X major?
9. What parts of teaching are you most looking forward to? What seems most challenging?
10. What would you say is one important issue that public schools are facing today?
11. Review “cause of the achievement gap” question from pre-assessment. You said X, does that mean that you think Y? What made you write X? Did any experiences from our own life influence that answer?
12. How is *Contexts* going for you so far? What is being in this particular class like? How does it seem similar or different to other classes you have taken/are taking at [UU]?

Interview Questions, Round 2

1. I first interviewed you more than two months ago! Do you think your thoughts about the class have changed much since then?

2. I'm particularly curious about your ideas about the different perspectives of some of the people in class. Who do you tend to agree with? Who do you disagree with? How would you describe your own positioning in the class?

3. How do you think your instructor would define the characteristics of a "good teacher." How is this similar or different to the way you might have defined "good teaching" at the beginning of the semester? Based on this definition, can you talk a little about what whether you think you will be considered a good teacher?

4. Your instructor occasionally told some stories about his own teaching and he also shared some of his wife's experiences as a teacher. Do you remember any of those stories? Would you tell me one? Why do you think he told this story? Did you identify with anyone in this story?

- OR -

Your instructor occasionally told stories in class about her own experience as a student and as a teacher. She also shared the experiences of some of her friends. Do you remember any of those stories? Would you tell me one? Why do you think she told this story? Did you identify with anyone in this story?

5. Follow-ups: Before each interview I'll read each student's work and search my fieldnotes for their name. I've flagged lots of places of things I want to follow-up on with students.

6. Has anything happened outside of classtime that is relevant to the class that you think I'd be interested in? Maybe when you visited your school, or talked about this class with other people, or attended your ed policy event, or anything like that?

7. I'm interested in WHAT if anything, people are learning in this class. Could you describe what you think you've learned in this course?

8. Anything else you think I should know about this class? Anything I should have asked? Lingering thoughts?

Group Interview Questions

1. I'm going to give you back your answers to your pre-assessment from the beginning of the year. The first question you answered was "Why did you enroll in this class?" The second was "What is the purpose of education?" "The second was "Why does the achievement gap exist? How should we close it?" Do you think your answers to these questions have changed since the beginning of the semester? Why/how?
2. How, if at all, has this class influenced the way you think about the teaching profession or what makes a good teacher?
3. In this class, you've talked about racial and cultural diversity in American schools can be both a challenge and a strength. Can you talk a little about how you now see diversity – as a challenge, a strength or both? *(If they give just canned answers, like "of course diversity is good", try to push them a little – for what? Does it also pose challenges?)*
4. Do you think that teachers should consider the role of race in the way they teach or in what they teach?
5. Do you think that the racial dynamics of this class – specifically the fact that the instructor is black and this is class is mostly White - influenced in any way the conversation or the kinds of teaching and learning that happened here? How?
6. [Do you think that this class should be required for pre-service teachers at UU? Why?]
7. What else are you thinking about this class?

APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTS COLLECTED

<i>Documents from Nakia's Class</i>	
Document	Brief Description
Pre-Assessment	This google form collected some basic demographic and educational history information from students. In addition, it asked them to state the “purpose” of education and explain why they think there is a racial achievement gap in the US.
Autobiography	This two-three page writing assignment asked students to describe their families, schooling experiences, experiences with diversity, teacher role models, and reasons for becoming a teacher.
6 Reflections	Each two-paragraph reflection asked students to reflect on a particular course reading. For example, one reflection asked students to offer an opinion on whether or not being “colorblind” was a good way of teaching.
Philosophy of Education	This two-three page writing assignment required students to state their beliefs on the nature of teaching and learning, the role of schools in society, and their ideal future classroom. In addition, students were asked to reflect on their answers to the pre-assessment.

<i>Documents from Andre's Class</i>	
Document	Brief Description
Pre-Assessment	Identical to Nakia's pre-assessment
Reading Response Papers 1 and 2	These 1 and 2 page writing assignments required students to put two or more class readings in dialogue with one another. In general, these papers were more academic and less reflective than Nakia's "Reflections" assignments
Midterm	This 4-5 page exam asked students to define terms from the readings, offer short paragraph responses to analytical and evaluative questions inspired by the readings, and complete a longer several-paragraph response to a more philosophical question. Students had choices about which questions to respond to; it was possible to choose questions about readings that were not about race and therefore never directly address issues of race in writing.
Philosophy of Education	This assignment was similar to the one Nakia had her students do, but in Andre's version, students had to refer to specific course readings. Students were not required to reflect on their answers to the pre-assessment.