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The Illumination of Racial Understandings as Revealed in Teacher Education Students' Interpretation of Written Text

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Interpretation of Written Text

by

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Abstract

This study utilized a basic qualitative research design to explore how teachers enrolled in a graduate level social justice course read and respond to racialized texts, referenced as the "critical reading tasks." These "critical reading tasks" included the constructs of: racial identity/positioning, historical time frame, characters/personal attributes, language, class, and intersectionality. Additionally, the following research questions guided the study: In what ways do teacher education students evoke, interpret, construct or misunderstand race, racism and anti-racism? And how do these understandings change over time, as participants revisit the readings? In what ways do participants describe the emotionality associated with revisiting racialized texts at different points in time? What might this layered approach to reading texts offer to the field's understanding of racial literacy? Data sources included: (1) field notes, (2) texts, (3) written responses, (4) digital recordings of semi-structure interviews, (5) digital recordings of focus group and an (6) autobiographical survey. Data analysis tools included ground theory techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992 & Rogers, 2011). Findings revealed that the discourse of the various participants reflected evolving racial literacy, as a result of revisiting and re-reading of texts that were racialized in nature. This research adds to existing scholarship in the field of racial literacy, because it revealed that the "self" is not fixed, but dynamic. More importantly, racial literacy can be a powerful tool for shaping and expanding the understandings of teacher education students, as they attend to issues involving race, racism and anti-racism.

Key Words: Racial literacy, race, racism, anti-racism, critical discourse analysis

Chapter 1: Introduction

I can remember my tenth-grade sociology teacher telling an interesting story about her upbringing in Shreveport, Louisiana. Her name was Mrs. Rogers. Mrs. Rogers was a light-complexioned woman of African American descent, in what I guessed to be her early forties, at the time. She relayed the story of how her elementary school teacher structured her classroom when she was growing up. She indicated that the teacher placed all of the light-complexioned African American children in the front of the class and placed the dark-complexioned African American children in the back of the classroom. At the time, the story did not have much of an impact on me, because I had never really noticed issues of colorism in my upbringing. However, she told us the story to impress upon us how color conscious our society was, particularly with regard to people of African American descent. I did not think about that story again until I introduced a particular narrative, that I happened to stumble across, to some students in my developmental reading class at a local community college. The story depicts the life of comedian and social activist Dick Gregory (1964) in his autobiography titled *Nigger*. The following is a short excerpt titled "Shame:"

> I never learned hate at home, or shame. I had to go to school for that. I was about
> seven years old when I got my first big lesson. I was in love with a little girl
> named Helene Tucker, a light-complexioned little girl with pigtails and nice
> manners. She was always clean and she was smart in school. I think I went to
> school mostly to look at her…Everybody's got a Helene Tucker, a symbol of
> everything you want…..The teacher thought I was stupid. Couldn't spell, couldn't
> read, couldn't do arithmetic. Just stupid. (p. 44)

Dick Gregory in his compelling introduction provides extensive commentary on how he grew up poor and fatherless in St. Louis, Missouri, during the Depression era. During this time, teachers took up collections for poor and needy families. It was during this collection process that Dick Gregory relays the story of how he learned to feel ashamed and devalued. Gregory (1964) writes:

> I was shaking, scared to death. The teacher opened her book and started calling out names alphabetically: 'Helen Tucker?' 'My daddy said he'd give two dollars and fifty cents.' 'That's very nice Helene. Very, very nice indeed.' That made me feel pretty good. It wouldn't take too much to top that. I had almost three dollars in dimes and quarters in my pocket. I stuck my hand in my pocket and held onto the money, waiting for her to call my name. But the teacher closed her book after she called everybody else in the class. I stood up and raised my hand….. 'My daddy said he'd give….fifteen dollars…' The teacher turned around loo/ked mad. 'We are collecting this money for you and your kind Richard Gregory.' 'And furthermore, we know you don't have a daddy…' I walked out of school that day, and for a long time I didn't go back very often. There was shame there. (pp. 45-46)

The above passage generates the most painful of reflections. Many of the students listening to the story expressed how they can identify with the author's experience because many of them grew up poor and in single parent households. More importantly, they can relate to the pain the author felt when the teacher humiliated him and caused him to disconnect from the teaching and learning process.

In many circumstances, this level of humiliation resulted in feelings of isolation and some cases feelings of inferiority and anger and formed the basis of what critical theorist reference as internalized oppression. Pyke (2010) writes, "Internalized racial oppression is defined as the individual inculcation of the racist stereotypes, values, images and ideologies perpetuated by the dominant society about one's race and/or oneself" (p. 553). In the passage, Dick Gregory's "Shame" was a manifestation of his internalized oppression. For many of my students, negative educational experiences resulted in their internalized oppression. In addition to the humiliation and isolation that many of the students reported feeling, they also struggled with the internalization of racist stereotypes and images. This internalization was being reflected in their writings, and many would suggest represented an outgrowth of their educational experiences. Indeed, in a pilot study conducted with community college students enrolled in a developmental reading class, I observed evidence of internalized oppression and White privilege in their construction of meaning around texts with explicitly racialized themes. It is from these findings that the present research emerges. Van Dijk (1997) as cited in Rogers (2006) indicates that inscriptions of White privilege are encoded through talk and text, as was revealed in the pilot study. In the study, I focused on teacher education students and their racialized understandings or meaning-making surrounding texts that were racialized in nature.

Regarding my own background and educational experience, I grew up in a working-class family with two parents. On one level, I can relate to some of my students' experiences, but on another level I cannot. During my early childhood, I was never made to feel isolated and disconnected from the desire and enjoyment of learning.

I can remember having very dedicated African American and White teachers who had a passion for teaching and held me to high standards. I can remember many of my White and African American teachers taking us on field trips to the library and museums. In the library, we were all required to check out books on great African Americans. I can remember these teachers using innovative and creative ways to teach us about our ancestors and connecting it to the content area we were studying and thus it made it culturally relevant for us. These teachers stimulated a lifelong desire for learning that remains with me to this day. It appears that my experiences have been far more rewarding and positive than many of my students. I have never personally felt disconnected from the desire to learn. Perhaps it is the difference in my educational experiences and those of my students that stimulates my interest in this area. I wanted to understand better teachers and their racialized understandings and how they might ultimately impact the students they are responsible for teaching.

Teachers can have a powerful influence on a students' overall educational experience; they influence how they see the world around them, particularly when it comes to issues of race and dialogue surrounding these issues. Unfortunately, it is in the educational arena where flawed, incomplete or misinformation permeates the understandings that are sometimes cultivated and developed. Woodson (1933/2010) in a seminal piece of work titled *The Mis-education of the Negro* discusses how education in the early part of the 20th century was to transform the "Negro." He writes:

> Their aim was to transform the Negroes, not to develop them. The freedmen who
>
> were to be enlightened were given little thought, for the best friends of the race,

ill-taught themselves, followed the traditional curricula of the times, which did

not take the Negro into consideration except to condemn or to pity him. (p. 27)

Woodson (1933/2010) in his writings on the plight of African Americans was speaking of

the American educational system on the heels of the American Civil War and

Reconstruction. However, these misperceptions or understandings are sometimes in the

current educational arena. These misperceptions are still inadvertently passed from

teacher to student by teachers who themselves struggle with their understandings as it

pertains to race. Van Dijk (1997) writes:

Discourse plays an important role in the production and reproduction of prejudice

and racism. From the socialization talk of parents, children's books, and television

programs to textbooks, news reports in the press, and other forms of public

discourse, white people are in daily in communication about ethnic minorities and

race relations. In this way, they acquire the mental models, the social knowledge,

the attitudes, and the ideologies that control their action, interaction, and

dialogues with or about minorities. (p. 31)

 Rogers and Mosley (2006), in research surrounding the use of children's

literature in the construction of whiteness through discourse patterns, cite Van Dijk

(1997): "Racism is perpetuated in subtle symbolic and discursive ways through everyday

talk and texts" (p. 467). Essentially, Rogers and Mosley (2006) are arguing that the

engravings of White privilege are revealed through talk and text. Bolgatz (2005)

champions this argument:

Talk is a powerful tool. It develops our ideas and influences who we are. Talk is

also a form of action. Playwright Bertold Brecht said that art was a hammer with

which to shape reality. I believe that talk, like art, does not simply mirror reality; it influences reality…..Talk gives shape to our ideas. When we talk, we articulate ideas that have not been completely formed. (pp. 10-11)

Given the significance of language in the perpetuation and development of ideas, I was interested in how racialized understandings were being reflected in teacher education students' interpretation of written texts. Moreover, the type of responses the students were utilizing was an essential aspect of the study. A simplistic definition of comprehension is meaning-making, which is referenced by Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2010) as the autonomous model. In the autonomous model, comprehension is rooted in skill acquisition, which pertains to decoding and meaning-making processes (Street, 1984). However, the autonomous model of comprehension alone is insufficient to understand the lived experience of many diverse and disadvantaged students. Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2010) provide a more complex definition of comprehension:

If, as the ideological model holds, we read in ways constrained and defined, enabled and afforded by contexts, then we read and make meaning not only through the reader/text interaction and cognitive processes described in traditional reading research, but as well via entry into institutional context, the very social fields of exchange where texts are used. This also requires a 'reading of the world'…..We define comprehension, then, as a lived and institutionally situated social practice and intellectual practice, as well as an internal cognitive operation. (p. 16)

This definition, as presented by Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2010), presents a very multifaceted definition of comprehension. While, on the one hand, it represents a

cognitive process, it is also being mediated or influenced by social interpretations, values, beliefs, and how individuals view the world around them. More importantly, comprehension is a social and cultural phenomenon, in as much as students' lives and experiences shape their interactions with and understandings of texts. The text itself is alive and has persuasive elements that can influence thought and actions. Schieble (2010) writes, "Implementing a critical approach, or teaching from an awareness of a text as a socially constructed artifact, should invite readers to question discourses that shape their experiences as well as to resist textual ideology that promotes dominant cultural assumptions (p. 376).

Thus, teachers' understanding of the ideological model of comprehension as well as how to read from an aesthetic stance is critical to the meaning-making process for both teachers and students. Based on the ideological model of comprehension, a student's lived experience is connected to their racialized understanding, as it pertains to textual interpretation. Accordingly, a teacher's racialized or ideological perspective is also critical in their interpretation of a given text. Van Dijk (2001) writes, "Thus, when whites speak about blacks, meanings, and style of such talk may be influenced by racist or anti-racist ideologies. That is, ideologies may influence the ways social attitudes are expressed in discourse structures" (p. 11). Essentially, ideologies form the basis of the belief systems or social representations of specific groups. Given both of these potentially converging perspectives, it is quite necessary to explore how racialized understandings and ideologies can co-construct and influence a students' interpretation of written text or meaning-making processes.

Before we can examine racialized understandings, it is necessary to define the concept of being racialized. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2004) defines racialized as, "to give a racial character to" (p. 593). Additionally, I am also interested in how racial literacy can be used as a framework to understand the institutionalized and structural nature of racism in American society. Winans (2010) indicates that racial literacy is the ability to examine critically and continually question how race and racism inform beliefs, interpretive frameworks, practices, cultures, and institutions. Racialized understandings which are a component of an individual's belief system, tend to operate on a continuum. Internalized oppression being at one end of the spectrum and White privilege being at the other end. However, despite these polar ends of the spectrum, there are other positive orientations that lie in between these dimensions. One such example would be resistance to dominant ideologies, such as the notion of having White allies, who share in the work, by raising awareness of how White privilege is perpetuated. For example, during the civil rights movement, there were many such allies that helped embrace the movement and were able to effectively assist in changing policies that aided in the promotion of human rights. Rogers (2006) writes, "We need to provide counter examples of the productive and powerful ways that whiteness can be used to benefit society, rather than to reiterate racism" (p. 480). Additionally, White teachers who embrace anti-racist pedagogy are also advocating for resistance to a dominant ideology and are willing to interrogate instances of White privilege.

In a similar vein, Twine (2004) also discusses the concept of being "racism-cognizance" and discusses White parents who identified racism as a serious problem for their children and trained their children to identify and respond to racial hierarchies and

resist racism (p. 882). For this study, I was interested in how teacher education students' racialized understandings influence meaning-making processes.

Statement of the Problem

I began this study with dialogue surrounding issues of race, disadvantaged students, and racialized understandings of teacher education students. Current demographics in education paint a complicated and bleak picture of problems facing disadvantaged students, which consist mainly of students of color. Statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) for the years of 2007-2008 indicate that 83.1 percent of the teaching profession is composed of White, non-Hispanic teachers. Only 7 percent of the teaching force represents Black, non-Hispanic. To further complicate this problem, students of color make up more than 40 percent of the public school population (Zumwalt and Craig, 2005). Boser (2011) writes, "Teachers of color serve as role models for students, giving them a clear and concrete sense of diversity in education and in our society" (p. 1). Thus, the discontinuity between teacher and student, in terms of ethnicity, culture and language contribute to the disconnection and achievement gap faced by many African American students. Howard (2003) augments this finding and writes, "In short, U.S. schools will continue to become learning spaces where an increasingly homogeneous teaching population will come into contact with an increasingly heterogeneous student population" (p. 195). Additionally, Sleeter (2001) examines another outcome in terms of disconnection as it relates to graduation rates for students of color and writes, "Students are learning far too little, becoming disengaged and dropping out at high rates" (p. 94).   Data from the Alliance for Excellent Education

indicate that for 2008 only 57% of Black students and 58% of Hispanics students

completed high school compared to 78% of White students and 83% of Asian students.

The low graduation rate for African American students is just one manifestation of

internalized oppression and is an illustration of this concept of being "othered."

Kumashiro (2000) writes:

> The first approach to addressing oppression focuses on improving the experiences
>
> of students who are othered, or in some way oppressed, in and by mainstream
>
> society. Researchers taking this approach have conceptualized oppression in two
>
> ways. First, schools are spaces where the Other is treated in harmful ways.
>
> Sometimes the harm results from actions by peers or even teacher and staff. (p.
>
> 26)

The "othering" as a metaphor causes students to feel humiliated, oppressed and

disconnected. Kumashiro (2000) presents the same narrative that many of my students

and the author Dick Gregory felt in his retelling of his childhood experience, as he was

"othered," in a classroom setting, where students are supposed to be accepted and

nurtured. Many of the students I have taught in the past shared the same sentiments in

terms of how they were "othered" in an educational context.

Teachers and teacher education programs can play an integral role in dismantling

the cycle of "othering" as referenced by Kumashiro.   If African American students and

other students of color do not see themselves represented in the educational arena, it

further complicates this process of being "othered." This process has a devastating impact

on the psyche of African American students and ultimately impacts their academic

achievement. Essentially, the process of being "othered" results in internalized

oppression and becomes an impediment to the formation of a literate identity for African

American students. For White students, it contributes to the notion of White Privilege,

which reinforces White supremacy.

To illustrate the impact of internalized oppression on students, a seminal study

was conducted by Rist (1970) on kindergarten children living in an urban environment.

Essentially, the research involved an observational study of kindergarten students in a

blighted area of the city. The population of the school in the blighted area was 98%

African American with 55% of the students receiving Aid to Dependent Children which

was a form of welfare at the time. The teacher in the study was an African American

female, and came from a middle-class background.   In this study, the teacher observed

her students for a week and then made permanent seating assignments based upon

subjective values that included appearance, verbal ability, perceived potential ability and

social class. The teacher utilized no standardized testing to ascertain potential academic

performance other than her subjective values, which stemmed from her own middle-class

upbringing. She responded favorably to the students that she perceived to be "fast

learners" and fit into her value system. Students who did not meet her standards were

placed at tables further from her desk, received few favorable responses, and were

labeled "slow learners" or "failures."

The overall findings of Rist's study indicated that a teacher's perception could

have a devastating impact on the psyche of young children and impede their academic

growth. Students who did not possess middle-class experiences, values or language

patterns were totally dismissed. Essentially, the research conducted by Rist (1970)

revealed that students who were socialized to feel inferior had low levels of achievement.

The same type of humiliation experienced by Dick Gregory as noted earlier was being experienced by the young children in Rist's study. Clearly, Gregory and others with similar negative educational experiences began to internalize the mainstream message of inferiority with the resulting effect being internalized oppression. Branch (1999), also concluded that teachers influence the racial identity development of young children through perceptions of power, distance, and discourse. These interactions can create a sense of marginalization and devaluation in young children, and an inflated sense of self in others that can form the basis of White privilege.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my qualitative study was to understand, describe and explore the range of racialized understandings as revealed in teacher education students' interpretations of written text. As indicated earlier, teachers bring their racialized understandings to bear on a particular piece of text. More importantly, flawed racialized understanding can inadvertently be passed onto the students these teachers are responsible for teaching. Just as the medical Hippocratic Oath says, "to do no harm," society must hold teachers to the same level of accountability. In the study at hand, the interpretation of written text or "critical reading tasks" and the embedded constructs of, racial identity/positioning, historical timeframe, characters/personal attributes, language, class, and intersectionality (McClune, Alexander & Jarman, 2012) were documented and analyzed. The "critical reading tasks" took place in a teacher education social justice graduate class, as students responded to texts that were explicitly racialized in nature.

These "critical reading tasks" were explored in a variety of contexts including, before, during and after reading. Context is very important in the meaning-making process because the overall reading process emphasizes the building of knowledge during the three stages of reading.   First, before reading, an emphasis is placed on the activation of background knowledge or connecting new information to what is already known about the subject-matter. At the beginning of the semester, students read about the deculturalization of Native Americans, and other ethnic groups. Before discussing the dehumanization of African Americans, the professor asked students if they had any familiarity with the social construction of whiteness. She spent considerable discussion on European colonization, and the subsequent system of racial stratification that was used to maintain, and perpetuate White dominance in American society. She introduced the "One Drop Rule, and connected it to the reading of "The Wife of His Youth." Before each discussion, there was an activation of background knowledge. Second, during discussion students had an opportunity to ask questions to help develop their thought process and clarify ideas and challenge beliefs that they may have had. Third, after reading, students discussed and wrote about themes that emerged during the reading.

While the context of the reading is set by the professor, students brought their individual interpretations to the written text, influenced by numerous social and cultural factors. Gee (2011) argues that individuals use language "to build things in the world and to engage in world building" (p. 16). Essentially, Gee (2011) is arguing that language is the medium for the construction of social reality and personal identities for many individuals. Therefore, the analysis of language, both oral and written will reveal how individuals interpret their world through social practices. These social practices are

influenced by situated meanings, social languages and figured worlds. In other words, the construction of reality is reflected in an individual's racialized understandings. Specifically, how a student interprets a particular text reveals how they interpret the world around them. Goodman, Moses, and Jones (2012) further support the analysis of language as a social practice and write, "racial thinking and concepts are transmitted through discourse" (p. 151). Thus, the use of written text as a mechanism to understand, describe, and explore racialized understandings across a variety of discourse practices was very appropriate given the nature of this study.

Research Questions

The principle research questions that guided this study included the following:

- In what ways do teacher education students evoke, interpret, construct or misunderstand race, racism, and anti-racism? And how do these understandings change over time, as participants revisit the readings?

- In what ways do participants describe the emotionality associated with revisiting racialized texts at different points in time?

- What might this layered approach of re-reading and revisiting texts offer to the field's understanding of racial literacy?

Significance of the Study

There are numerous reasons why the study of teacher education students' racial understandings is relevant and necessary. As mentioned earlier, there are still great disparities between African American students and White students in academic achievement. It is my contention that teacher education students' racialized

understandings and meaning-making processes play a role in the transmission of knowledge to many vulnerable students. To bridge this achievement gap, this issue must be addressed.

Over 100 years ago intellectual and noted scholar W.E.B. DuBois (1903/2003) in a classic piece of work called *The Souls of Black Folks* introduced the concept of the "double consciousness" of African Americans. Double Consciousness as presented by DuBois (1903/2003) represents a psychological state that references both a "national identity" and a racial identity within a nation that despises their racial identity (p. xvii). Thus, for the African American, there is a conflicted sense of self. African Americans racial identity conflicts with their American identity. DuBois laid the groundwork over 100 years ago in a classic study of Whiteness and White supremacy. DuBois (1903/2003) comments, "It also refers to the ability of Black Americans to see themselves only through the eyes of White Americans to measure their intelligence, beauty and sense of self-worth by standards set by others" (p. xvii). DuBois' work is classic in nature and informs the work of numerous other scholars and their research on self-perception and how it influences academic achievement among students of color. Steele (2003) connects to DuBois work developing the concept of the concept of "stereotype threat" (p. 111), defined as, "the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype" (p. 111).   For African American students, the fear of appearing inadequate becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, group members internalize the negative messages and buy into negative expectations from an academic perspective. In this context, Steele (2003) questions whether the "stereotype threat" comes from the fear

of being stereotyped, or is there possibly a component of self-doubt internal in Black

students. Steele (2003) comments:

> Beginning with George Herbert Mead's idea of the looking glass self, social
>
> psychology has assumed that one's self-image derives in large part from how one
>
> is viewed by others—family, school, and the broader society. When those views
>
> are negative, people may internalize them, resulting in lower self-esteem---or self-
>
> hatred, as it has been called. (p. 116)

Steele (2003) indicates that "stereotype threat" influences African American

students' disengagement in situations where they perceive a potential threat that may be

race-based. Failure might reflect on their race reifying old stereotypes and adding

pressure. Also, they start to internalize the dominant message of society on issues of

performance and inferiority, and subsequently they develop internalized feelings of

inferiority. Essentially, when race and gender are made most salient, participants feel

their individual performance is being out-shadowed by their status in a particular ethnic

group:

> For no American group has there been such a persistent, well-articulated, and
>
> unabated ideology about their mental incompetence. Thus, both African
>
> Americans' caste-like status and the larger society's ideology about their
>
> intellectual competence create a distinctive set of dilemmas for African American
>
> youth and even adults. (Steele, 2003 p. 105)

This suggested an unabated intellectual inferiority complex of African Americans

goes back even before the "Founding Fathers" of this nation. On this point, Goodman,

Moses and Jones (2012) present Jefferson's (1776) *Notes on the State of Virginia:*

"Jefferson observed that blacks possess inferior endowments both of body and mind in comparison to Whites and to a lesser degree Native Americans" (p. 16). Additionally, Finkelman (2012) quotes Jefferson as saying that Blacks' ability to "reason" "was much inferior" to whites" (p. 409). This dehumanization of African Americans was passed from one generation to the next and is a precursor to today's racialized understandings that pervades the psyche of both African American and White students. These understandings form the basis of internalized oppression and White privilege, respectively. Ultimately, I argue that the use of racial literacy to critically examine beliefs, practices and the construction of meaning around text is a necessary component in developing teacher education students' understandings of text with explicitly racialized themes. More importantly, it can help in dismantling the sense of inferiority felt by many African American students that fuels the achievement gap.

As indicated previously, teacher education students are composed primarily of White non-Hispanic students. Thus, White identity development is a significant aspect of the study as well. Sue (2001) indicates that in working with White counseling education students, the importance of moving from an ethnocentric-oppressive bias to a non-racist self-affirming White identity is critical to being an effective counselor. I contend the same logic applies to teacher education students. Teacher education students must move along the continuum as well, and this point will be elaborated on more extensively in the Literature Review section of this proposal.

Another contribution of this study was an in-depth description of the discursive features of racial literacies and associated identities found within the participants in the

study. While other researchers have identified White privilege and internalized

oppression as positions brought to bear on classroom life (Bolgatz, 2005; Van Dijk,

1997), my study illuminated what the minute details of White privilege and internalized

oppression look and sound like. In other words, I focused not only the topics and content

associated with these racial positions, but also the way the content was being expressed. I

expand on this point in the "Discussion" section of this dissertation.

Numerous studies treat racial literacy as a product as opposed to a process. In the

study at hand, I attempted to understand how revisiting a text multiple times supported,

extended and reinforced teacher education students' understanding of race, racism, and

anti-racism. This research also drew upon noted educational theorist Lev Vygotsky and

his sociocultural approach to cognitive development. Vygotsky's contribution to the

development of literacy awareness, and more importantly racial awareness are

appropriate in the study at hand. His concepts emphasize the importance of revisiting

and re-reading to promote literacy development in young children. However, the same

concepts are relevant to how the re-reading and revisiting of texts can also apply to racial

literacy development in adults.

Overall, the interpretations generated from this study may add to the body of

scholarship that attempts to understand the present and future path of racial literacy and

its application to teacher education programs.

Racial Literacy, Critical Race Theory and Reader Response as Theoretical Frameworks

Racial Literacy

As a theoretical framework, racial literacy entails examining and critically questioning how race and racism inform beliefs, interpretive frameworks, practices, cultures and institutions (Winans, 2012). Guinier (2004) defines racial literacy as "an interactive process in which race functions as a tool of diagnosis, feedback, and assessment" (p. 110). Rogers and Mosley (2006) continue the debate and write, "Literacy education in schools must address race, racism, and anti-racism in an educative manner to prepare children to participate in U.S. democracy" (p. 465). Thus, racial literacy can become a process of enlightenment, surrounding issues of discourse, race, and power that are prevalent in the American educational system.

Another important component of racial literacy is the disruption of the colorblind ideology. Many White teachers adhere to a colorblind ideology, which they use to justify their pedagogical practices and forms the basis of many of their beliefs. Research by Haddix (2008) focuses on the ideology that underlines this colorblind notion in teacher education, which allows teacher educators to operate within the status quo and not have to confront issues of White privilege. Haddix (2008) writes:

> The paradoxical nature of multicultural teacher education allows White, monolingual preservice teachers to claim an ethnic-less, race-less, culture-less and language-less identity while working, in part, through dominant language ideologies to position culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and students in

opposition. In this way, multicultural teacher education and other teacher

education efforts that purport emphasizing diversity issues and tackling

hegemonic structures, may in essence, keep them in place. (p. 258)

Haddix is not alone in her argument about the hypocrisy of advocating for a

colorblind ideology in pedagogical practices and its incompatibility with the promotion

of racial literacy. Other theorists have also asserted that it is complicit in maintaining the

status quo. Bryan et al. (2012) write, "Education students who maintain color-blind

ideologies are unlikely to notice, raise, or discuss racial issues within the field" (p. 125).

Their inability to discuss race and racism reflect their level of "denial" about systematic

and institutional structures that perpetuate racism and interfere with the establishment of

anti-racist frameworks to counteract systematic and institutional structures.   Winans

(2010) argues that the embracement of a colorblind ideology on the part of teacher

education students reflects their ignorance. Indeed, she is arguing that this mind-set is

emblematic of an absence of content knowledge, regarding issues of race (p. 477).   More

importantly, Winans (2010) suggests that many teacher education students erroneously

believe that to move to a colorblind ideology is a process of enlightenment. However, it

illustrates how little they know about racism, racialized understandings, and unwarranted

assumptions that are rooted in ideological beliefs. If unwarranted assumptions are not

interrupted, they can be transmitted to students and ultimately influence their racialized

understandings of textual material.

Other scholars also have weighed in on the issue of racial literacy and the benefits

of creating a more just and equitable society, for example, Bolgatz (2005) writes:

In short, if we are to promote democracy, justice, and academic integrity, and

make schooling challenging and relevant for students, we need to figure out

compelling and productive ways to include race and racism in our curricula. (p.

18)

While there are numerous compelling arguments for the teaching of racial

literacy, it is not without its conflicts. There has been much attention devoted to the

constitutionality of teaching racial literacy, and the learning outcomes that balance such

exposure, against the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Kaufman

(2007) writes, "Teaching racial literacy requires prompting students to confront the

personal and political nature of race and racism in their educational environment" (p.

713). The Fourteenth Amendment in its Equal Protection Clause indicates that issues

involving racially conscious decisions must be carefully scrutinized.   Proponents of

racial literacy argue that in a democratic society it is necessary that schools address issues

of race.   Again, the counter argument is one that states that such decisions have to be

carefully examined, so that they tailor their outcomes to a particular compelling

educational interest, and do not infringe on the rights of others. However, in a so-called

"post –civil rights era," not everyone agrees on the need for racial literacy.

Critical Race Theory

Racial literacy is intimately connected and has also been defined within the

framework of critical race theory (CRT). The major premise of critical race theory is that

society is fundamentally racially stratified and unequal, where power processes

systematically disenfranchise racially oppressed people (Hylton, 2012). One of the

original theorists of critical race theory was Derrick Bell. Bell was a Harvard-educated

law professor, and civil rights activist during the 1960's. Bell's work with the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and its Legal Defense

Fund was instrumental in challenging unjust laws for African Americans. Bell and other

activists in the 1970's became disillusioned with the limited gains of the civil rights

movement (Bell, 1992). Bell and these scholars argued that while there had been some

limited gains from the civil rights movement, American society still did not allow for a

level playing field. Bell (1992) argued that Whites continued to leverage power and

status above people of color. Bell (1992) writes, "American society as we know it exists

only because of its foundation in racially-based slavery, and it thrives only because racial

discrimination continues. Bell (1992) continues, "The apparent anomaly is an actual

symbiosis" (p. 10). Thus, the symbiotic relationship involves having a dominant and

subjugated relationship. Bell's argument, from a methodological perspective,

encompasses a set of epistemological and ontological assumptions rooted in the social

construction of knowledge and reality. Critical race theorists would argue that American

society marginalizes some people while allowing others to operate in positions of power

and this forms the basis of our democratic society.

In articulation of critical race theory scholars such as Bell and others borrowed

from critical legal theory, Marxist theory, and radical feminism. Yosso (2002) writes,

"Indeed, critical race theory's intellectual origins incorporate Marxist critiques of

schooling, yet also look to the critiques offered by U.S./Third World feminism, cultural

nationalism, the internal colonial model and the work of critical legal studies and ethnic

studies scholars" (p. 4). Critical theory as advanced by Karl Marx and other social

theorists in the Western European Marxist Tradition aim to explain and transform all the

circumstances that enslave human beings. It also draws from other European philosophers and theorists, such as Antonio Gramsci and Jacques Derrida. Also, from the American radical tradition exemplified by such figures, as, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ceasar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Power and Chicano movements of the sixties and early seventies (Delgado & Stefanic, 2006).

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic (2006) explain the psychological and material aspects of critical race theory in terms of its need to maintain social order in American society:

First, that racism is ordinary, not aberrational—"normal science," the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country. Second, most would agree that our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic, and material. Because racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it. (p. 3)

Scholarship by Thompson (2004) addresses the use of critical race theory as an appropriate analytical tool for exploring inequities suggests:

For critical race scholars, race is not a "variable" but a theoretical lens or analytical tool" through which social, institutional, and textual relations can be examined and white made visible. Far from seeing racism as an unscientific aberration in an otherwise fair, democratic, and color-blind social order, critical race scholarship regards racism as 'an ordinary and fundamental part of American society. (p. 34)

To challenge the dominant discourse, critical race theory advocates the use of narratives that are in opposition to the standard belief of racial subjugation and inferiority. Researchers utilizing critical race theory as a methodology often rely on storytelling through a collection of what is termed counter-narratives. Such an approach recognizes the lived experiences of those marginalized by race, whose stories have often been silenced by a dominant paradigm. Additionally, these counter-narratives act as a rebuttal to the legacy of oppression (Esposito, 2011).   Additionally, to understand this dynamic, one has to listen to the counter-narratives that provide a framework by which to deconstruct racism and racist beliefs and ideology.

At the core of critical race theory is the concept of hegemonic practices or reproduction of the current social order or status quo, in terms of power relationships. More specifically, hegemony pertains to issues of dominance, in societal and institutional structures.   Erickson (1987) postulates, "Hegemonic practices are not only reified throughout the general society, and in the local community outside the school, they are also alive and well inside the classroom. They permeate and frame the school experience of students who are members of stigmatized groups" (p. 352). Institutionalized and system-wide racism as manifested in the schooling experience of many oppressed groups operates to maintain and perpetuate hegemonic practices. These institutions function to continue this imbalance of power, allowing certain groups to remain on the bottom ladder of society and advancing the gains of the dominant group.

Critical race theory transcends American boundaries. In other words, the same defining elements of critical race theory are not exclusive to American society, because the same type of subjugation and oppression is also applied to people of color living in

different parts of the world.   James (2012) in research conducted on African Canadian

males explains:

> I reference the African Canadian males as immigrants, fatherless, athletes,
>
> troublemakers, and underachievers, noting how these stereotypes tend to
>
> reflexively serve to frame individuals' perceptions and discourses of these youth
>
> and, in the process, contribute to the very educational and social problems that the
>
> "at risk" identification is expected to address. Although these stereotypes are
>
> discussed separately here, they invariably overlap, intersect, and reinforce each
>
> other. Indeed, they form a web in which too many Black people are caught. (p. 5)

James articulation of the plight of African Canadians illustrates how White

supremacy and privilege is not just an American phenomenon; it has worldwide

implications as it relates to people of color. The use of critical race theory as a lens to

explore issues of dominance and oppression, as manifested in the structure of American,

Canadian society or anywhere else in the world was very appropriate for this study.

Again, critical race theory seeks to unearth how racial understandings and ideological

beliefs are framed and perpetuated, through patterns of dominant discourse or hegemonic

structures, as apparent in the American educational system. At this junction, it is

necessary to examine inter-connectedness of racial literacy, critical race theory, and

reader response theory, as they relate to racialized understanding and meaning-making

processes.

Reader Response Theory

Reader Response Theory as developed by Louise Rosenblatt (1978) was a critical

aspect of understanding, describing and exploring the racialized understanding of teacher

education students. Rosenblatt (1978) in her seminal works of *Literature as Exploration and The Reader, the Text,* argued that there is a unique transaction between the reader and text.   Rosenblatt further asserted that readers engage in a unique transaction with the text, which forms the basis of her transactional theory. A new text is created with each additional reading of the text. Additionally, readers bring different social, cultural, and political backgrounds and cognitive abilities with them to a particular piece of reading. Given their prior knowledge and experience, there is no one correct response to a given text.   The authority of interpretation lies within the reader and not solely within the text.

Allen (1988) supports this theory advanced by Rosenblatt and indicates that during reading, the construction of knowledge is taking place. Essentially, Rosenblatt argues that readers use their prior knowledge to help them make sense of the text. If their prior knowledge or ideological beliefs reveal internalized oppression or White privilege, which essentially represents their racialized understandings then what emerges in their interpretation of the text or meaning-making shows orientation. As indicated, Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2010) amplify the ideological bases, biases, and standpoints that have persuasive elements, embedded in the text.   In other words, text can manipulate a reader, if as this author contends there are flaws in their racialized understandings.

Scholarship by Van Dijk (2013) incorporates the concept of mental modeling. Van Dijk (2013) argues that discourse is coherent only when people can construe a mental model or subjective representation of the text in their mind. Van Dijk (2013) also notes that ideology can influence mental models, as a part of a shared group or set of beliefs. Thus, scholarship by Rosenblatt, Van Dijk and Luke Dooley and Woods all

incorporate the interconnectedness of the text, context and prior knowledge in the meaning-making process.

Research conducted by Lewis (2000) uses reader response theory to illustrate the merging of political and social dimensions of a response foregrounded in particular context. For example, Lewis (2000) indicates that interpretation in a reader response is a "social act and that understanding the transaction between reader and text involves examining the many social conditions that shape stances readers take up as they interpret and respond to literature" (p. 258). The scholarship as presented by Lewis presents a very powerful argument; a student's interpretation will be rooted in how they position themselves from a cultural and social perspective. A student who feels powerless will interpret the text from a stance of being powerless or conversely a student who feels more powerful will have a different interpretation of the text. Thus, this scholarship connected back to the current study, which was to explore how interpretations of the text or meaning-making are influenced by racialized understandings.

Both racial literacy and critical race theory as theoretical lenses to critically examine and question how race and racism inform beliefs was very important for this study. The framework of reader response sheds light on teacher education students' meaning-making processes, both from an oral and written perspective. Thus, these three frameworks were appropriate mechanisms to understand, describe and explore the phenomenon of racialized understandings of teacher education students and their ability to instruct all students.

Definition of Terms

Critical to understanding this study is the understanding of various concepts. Here are how these concepts were used in the study:

Black: "Black or African American" refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "Black, African Americans, or Negro" or reported entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Discourse: Discourse is an association of socially accepted ways of using language, other symbolic expression and artifacts of thinking, feeling, believing, and valuing and acting that can be used to identify yourself as a member of a socially meaningful group (Gee, 1996).

Fair: Being in accordance with rules or standards; Pleasing to the eye or mind especially because of fresh, charming or flawless, quality; not dark.

Fair-Skin: A person, not necessarily African or biracial, whose complexion is lighter than black and darker than White. Light skin is not to be confused with a person that has fair skin.

Internalized Oppression: The process by which Black people internalize and accept the dominant White culture's oppressive action and beliefs toward Black people (Bailey, Chung, Williams & Singh, 2011; Pyke, 2011)

Persons of Color: A person who is not White or of European Parentage (Oxford Dictionary).

Racialized: To give a racial character to (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2004).

Racism: The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races (Oxford Dictionary).

White: "White" refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "White" or reported entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

White Privilege: Preferential treatment of Whites based solely on their skin color and/or ancestral origin from Europe and unearned advantages of being White in racially stratified society (Harris & Ordona, 1990; Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I used a critical approach in examining the phenomenon of teacher education students' interpretation of written text. Merriam (2009) writes, "Critical educational research, queries the context where learning takes place, including the larger systems of society, the culture, and institutions that shape educational practice, and the structural and historical conditions framing practice" (p. 35). Additionally, critical research also raises questions about the power dynamics that advance the interest of one group while minimizing the interest and contributions of other groups.   Critical research can also be applied to institutional practices, with the hope of advancing social justice for groups that have been disenfranchised. Merriam (2009) indicates that critical research interrogates the context where learning takes place.

This type of qualitative inquiry challenged the educational practice and the structural and historical institutions that frame this practice. In planning for this study, a literature review was conducted drawing on a variety of databases and journals including: *ERIC, Psych-Info*, *Journal of Critical Education and Policy, Journal of Language, Identity and Education, Democracy and Education, Reading Research Quarterly*, *Theory Into Practice, Journal of Literacy Research* and other relevant sources.   A review of the scholarship revealed four major domains that govern a vast body of literature that pertains to racialized understandings and the interpretation of written text by teacher education students. These four domains include Racial Identity Formation, Whiteness Studies and Teacher Education, Discourse, Race and Teacher Education and Racial Literacy and Teacher Education.

I began this discussion with the narrative on the life of comedian and social activist Dick Gregory. His autobiography revealed how teachers could be a powerful influence on the formulation of a literate racial identity, among African American students. Because of the humiliation, Dick Gregory experienced at a young age, it influenced his self-perception and racialized understandings. While his story is over seventy years old, many students I have encountered still struggle with their racialized understandings, as revealed in their interpretation of the written text or their meaning-making processes. It is my contention that some of this confusion may have originated in an educational context, from teachers who themselves may have flawed or inadequate understandings, as it pertains to race.

While the study examines racialized understandings from a broad perspective, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the possibility of racialized understandings emerging from the data that may represent polar perspectives, such as, internalized racial oppression and White privilege, because racial identity emerges as individuals make meaning around texts. If a teacher's range of responses reveals internalized oppression, this could again be inadvertently passed onto the students they are responsible for teaching. Internalized oppression can also be manifested in African American teachers who may have internalized the dominant message and thus have flawed or inadequate racial identity and understandings surrounding issues of race, color, etc. In other words, internalized racial oppression can cut both ways. It can affect an African American teacher or affect a student being taught by an African American teacher, as was the case in the narrative being told by Dick Gregory. At this juncture, it is pertinent and necessary

to examine literature that discusses the formation of racial identity and its impact on

racialized understandings and the meaning-making processes.

Racial Identity Formation

In understanding the complexity of racial understandings, we have to examine the

impact of racial identity on the development of African American identity and White

identity and how this translates into pedagogical practices of teacher educators and their

interpretation of textual materials or meaning-making processes.   Again, at this juncture

is pertinent and necessary to examine literature that discusses the formulation of racial

identity among both Black and White Americans.

Cross (1978) conducted extensive research on racial identity and created two

models which outline racial identity. Cross (1978) cites Thomas (1971) and introduces

the concept of "Negromachy" which is defined by Thomas as "confusion surrounding

self-worth and shows dependency upon White society for the definition of the self."

Cross (1978) writes:

> Inherent in this concept of approval is the need to be accepted as something other
>
> than what one is. Gratification is based upon denial of self and a rejection of
>
> group goals and activities. The driving force behind this need requires Afro-
>
> Americans to seek approval from whites in all activities to use White expectations
>
> as the yardstick for determining what is good, desirable or necessary. (p. 14)

Cross (1978) in his presentation of racial identity constructed what is termed a

descriptive model and his model moves through the five following stages of development

to include:

Pre-encounter stage of development involves refusing to embrace Blackness and cultural referents. The *Encounter* stage is the acceptance for action stage. In this stage, individuals have to accept reality. In the *Immersion-Emersion* stage, the individual becomes deeply involved in discovering his or her own African American heritage. In the *Internalization* stage, there is a resolution of the conflicts between what Cross (1978) references as old and new worldviews. An individual becomes confident in embracing his ethnic identity, and this is evident in interpersonal interactions. Finally, during the *Internalization-Commitment* stage, the individual internalizes the Black identity and embraces social activism (pp. 16-18).

Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) indicate that the model as established by Cross is helpful in outlining racial identity as a dynamic process. However, the authors indicate that the model has problematic elements, in that it is grounded in the argument that before blacks experience identity, which they must first be unaware of their race and the race of others. In other words, before individuals can move through the stages as outlined by Cross they have to be in conflict with their ethnic identity. In support of Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999), the need for conflict does not necessarily have to be present for individuals to move through these different stages of racial identity development as presented by Cross (1971, 1978). Others working in this same arena see racial identity as lifelong continuously changing process and can move from an unconscious state of racial identity to a conscious state of racial identity (Parham, 1989).

Regarding the development of White identity, just as observed in Black identity development, scholars have created a hierarchy for White identity development. The most widely cited model of White identity was created by Helms (1997) and describes six

levels of White identity development to include: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-independence, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy. In the first stage of *Contact,* the individual adheres to the "colorblind" motto. They see a racial difference, but lack an understanding of racism. Essentially, racial and cultural differences are unimportant, and these individuals do not see themselves as a part of a dominant group. In the next state of *Disintegration* the individual has new experiences which confront his prior conception of the world and because this conception is now challenged by this new information or experience, the person is often plagued by feelings of guilt and shame. The individual becomes increasingly aware of his Whiteness and may experience conflicting emotions, between choosing group loyalty and humanism. The next state is termed *Reintegration*, and this stage is marked by a "blame-the-victim" attitude. Individuals in this stage may feel that although Whites do have privileges, it is probably because they deserve them and in are in some way superior to minority groups. There is a firmer belief in White racial superiority, and other ethnic groups are blamed for their own problems. To move into the next phase of *Pseudo-independence*, the individual has to combat these feelings. This is the first stage of positive racial identification. In this stage, the individual attempts to understand racial, cultural and sexual differences and may reach out to interact with minority group members. In the *Immersion-Emersion* stage, the person makes a genuine attempt to connect to his/her own White identity and to be anti-racist. This stage is usually accompanied by a deep concern with understanding and connecting to other Whites who are or have been dealing with issues of racism. In the last stage of *Autonomy*, the individual is knowledgeable about racial, ethnic and cultural differences, values diversity and develops a nonracist White identity (pp. 218-220).

While Helms developed one of the first White racial identity models, it has been challenged by other scholars on the lack of conscious development of White identity. Helms argues that racial identity for whites is about their perceptions, feeling and behaviors toward blacks rather than the development of consciousness, in terms of actual White identity as was observed in the Cross Model (Chavez and Guido-DiBrito, 1999).

Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) in discussing racial identity write, "Racial identity development becomes an important concept, as students of color do not leave their racial and ethnic identities at the school door. Rather, they bring their language, style, movement, and cultural realities and differences to the school experience on a daily basis" (p. 283). Essentially, Sampson & Garrison-Wade (2011) are arguing and establishing a foundational basis for what will be referenced as the development of literate identities among African American students. Educators who fail to acknowledge this perceived reality are setting African American students up for failure, and this aligns with the "stereotyped threat" referenced by Steele, in their argument that failure for African American students becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Educators are who unwilling to embrace racial differences in their teaching are essentially validating White privilege and setting these students up for failure.

Whiteness Studies and Teacher Education

In examining the concept of whiteness, which is intimately connected to racial identity, Goodman, Moses, and Jones (2012) cite Roediger (2008) and indicate that European laborers viewed "personal whiteness" as something that could be owned as an asset (p. 45).

Twine (2008) continues this discussion and writes about the construction of whiteness as presented in the writings of DuBois (1903). Twine regards DuBois as being the principal and revered critical theorist in the field of whiteness studies. She indicates that DuBois laid the groundwork over 100 years ago for scholarship that would later evolve into whiteness studies. For DuBois whiteness operated as a normative apparatus and for many whites operates as an invisible identity (Twine, 2008). Thus, the material aspects of whiteness are not consciously considered by those that benefit from its status. McDermott and Samson (2005) indicate that scholarship on whiteness in the United States has highlighted several important characteristics of White racial identity: It is often invisible or taken for granted and it is rooted in social and economic privilege (p. 247). Thus, whiteness represents a binary to blackness, which is also considered in terms of the lack of social and economic privilege, for those at the opposite end of the spectrum, such as African Americans and other people of color. Lipsitz (1998) in his book the *Possessive Investment of Whiteness* writes, "Contemporary whiteness and it rewards have been re-created by policies long after the emancipation of slaves" (p. 5). Lipsitz (1998) advances the argument that even after slavery and Reconstruction, policies were enacted that re-created slavery-like conditions to include: sharecropping, the peonage system, and Jim Crow. Again, this represents the material rewards that are attached to whiteness and White supremacy. Even though slavery was abolished with 13th Amendment, it was re-created to secure the material aspect of being White, through sharecropping, peonage, segregation and now educational practices. Bonilla-Silva (2003) further asserts "whiteness is the manifestation of "embodied racial power…. whiteness is the visible uniform of the dominant racial group" (p. 346). The scholars presented here have

addressed various aspects of the stabilizing force of whiteness and how it is maintained

and perpetuated through institutionalized racism and educational practices (Dubois, 1903;

Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Twine, 2008).

Construction of whiteness and White Privilege is very apparent in educational

practices and the study at hand. Research by Haviland (2008) reveals that studies of

whiteness continue to privilege Whites and oppress people of color in our classrooms as

well as in society (p.40). Here, Haviland is arguing that White privilege in an educational

context is similar to the "White is right" ideology present in society as a whole. In

Trainor's (2005) examination of "White talk," she discusses how students in an

Introduction to Literature class started to rationalize racism and started to view whites as

the victims. In their reading of a multicultural text, the White students created an identity

that absolved them from any liability in their interpretation of historical events in the

readings, and this translates into White privilege. Additionally, Trainor argues that

"White talk" also has a persuasive element that allows other Whites to align themselves

with the values and beliefs of other whites, even if there is an overt indication that a

particular interpretation may be incorrect. This collective role perpetuates racism, as an

ideology and posits the need for racial literacy. The scholarship as presented by Trainor

presents the argument that "White talk" serves to insulate White people from examining

their own individual and collective role in the perpetuation of racism.

Alice McIntyre (1997) has also written extensively about the concept of "making

meaning of Whiteness." She writes:

The lack of self-reflection about being a White person in this society distances

White people from investigating the meaning of whiteness and prohibits a critical

examination of the individual, institutional and cultural forms of racism…..For

white educators, in particular, this invisibility to one's own racial being has

implications in one's own teaching practices--- which includes such things as the

choice of curriculum materials, student expectations, grading procedures, and

assessment techniques—just to name a few. (pp. 14-15)

This scholarship, as advanced by Trainor and McIntyre presents very concrete

examples of how White teachers construct racial meanings. These examples of the

construction of whiteness and "White talk" provide evidence to support the arguments

made by critical race theorist, which is the perpetuation of the status quo, by those in

power in American society.

In research by Brown (2006) a powerful argument is made about historical and

racialized meanings that teachers bring with them to teaching. Brown (2006) writes,

"Teachers bring these notions of the racial self, alloyed with class and gender meanings,

into classroom practice with tacit assumptions about the racial other" (p. 258). Thus,

Brown is arguing that for many White teacher educators there is a reluctance to accept

the notion of White privilege that they bring with them into an educational setting, which

also shapes their perceptions about a student who are different racially and ethnically. In

the study conducted by Brown (2006), she found that some of the teacher education

students were conscious of their privilege status and others were in "denial' about any

perceived privilege. For example, she writes, "They expressed discomfort, resentment,

and resistance to the idea that race as a dimension of the self and inherited White

privilege shaped their identities and lived experiences" (p. 267). Brown (2006) quotes

one of the participants as saying "I don't feel anger of hopelessness because of my color.

I am proud of my accomplishments and I don't feel I received them because of my skin

color. I have plenty of mental freedom and it isn't because I see myself as White" (p.

268). This quote is an illustration of the *Contact Stage* of White identity as discussed by

Helms (1997). In this stage, there is no acknowledgment of racial differences, and there

is again this notion of colorblindness, as it relates to race. Additionally, these racialized

understandings can be transmitted into writings, as a manifestation of meaning-making

processes which represents the demonstrable evidence of thought.

Meaning-making in the construction of whiteness is not just an adult issue;

other researchers have studied its effect on children. Research conducted by Rogers and

Christian (2007) reveals how children's literature positions whiteness as the norm. Their

study revealed that many children's books paint negative portrayals of race in their

storytelling. The books perpetuate storylines and cultural models that portray African

American children as being untrustworthy, as was reflected in the story of "The Jacket,"

where the African American character was accused of stealing a jacket. This portrayal

fosters values and beliefs that contribute to negative perceptions of people of color.

Haviland (2008) indicates that when teachers perpetuate a cultural model of whiteness as

the norm, it continues the cycle of oppression and domination. It plants values and

beliefs in the mind of a malleable child, and these views may become difficult to

eradicate when formed at young impressionable ages. Essentially, on one end of the

spectrum, you have values and beliefs of supremacy, and at the other end of the spectrum,

you have values and beliefs of inferiority, which are the seeds for internalized oppression

and White privilege.

While literature can perpetuate negative portrayals, it can also be used to explore positive aspects of meaning-making, through pedagogical practices that incorporate racial literacy activities, which should continually question how race and racism inform beliefs and practices. Literature in the form of book clubs or other literacy activities can be used to explore meaning-making among young children. Research by Martinez and Roser (2001) found that children can use literature as a lens through which they can better understand their own personal experiences and their world (p. 413). Even at a young age, these children can challenge negative portrayals and the construction of whiteness as the norm as presented in some children's literature.

Research conducted by Michael-Luna (2008) found that the construction of whiteness crosses ethnic groups. The study conducted on Mexican children found the same construction of whiteness, as was observed in the research conducted by Rogers and Christian (2007). The study as presented by Rogers and Christian (2007) found that discourse in children's text between White characters normalized Whiteness over the exclusion of people of color. The study as presented by Michael-Luna (2008) involved a critical discourse analysis of a literacy event surrounding the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Analysis of the transcript revealed that "in the moment to moment interactions" the Mexican immigrant students identified themselves as White. The researchers noted that the text presented a binary of Black and White. The students were positioned by the text and the pedagogical practices to define themselves as non-White. However, they chose to identify with being White. The researcher noted that students verbally asserted their non-blackness by choosing to identify themselves with the people in power in the text as well in their educational experiences. This study illustrates the

importance of using racial literacy to combat internalized oppression and White privilege, in terms of attitudes and beliefs. In many cases, these beliefs are formed at a young age. Hence, even at a young age, children can understand the social nature of literature and make changes in their thought process. Teachers can use literature circles and book clubs to help understand, describe and explore racialized understandings. Martinez and Roser (2001) cite Eeds and Wells (1989) and write "Participants relied upon one another as they constructed meanings, even changing as they encountered different perspectives" (p. 413). This study illustrates how teachers can effectively impact the racialized understandings of young children and promote positive thought or talk.

Discourse, Race and Teacher Education

Racist meanings are also constructed and perpetuated through the use of symbols. In an examination of racial identity among Southern whites, researchers found that Southern whites closely identified with the cultural and symbolism attached to the Confederate Flag. In research conducted by Holyfield, Ryan and Bradley (2009) on the study of racial discourse and the Confederate Flag, the researchers were seeking to discover how discourse patterns shaped racial identity or whiteness. The study revealed that many Southern whites justified the symbolism of the Confederate Flag as representing their Southern heritage and did not represent an overtly racist ideology. Holyfield, Ryan, and Bradley (2009) write, "We found using the Confederate Flag to solicit discussions of race a helpful strategy to further examine the social construction of "Whiteness" in the American South" (p. 533). The symbolism of the flag during the American Civil War represented slavery and after slavery represented segregation, as

pointed out by the researchers of the study. When questioned on this point, many of the

participants did not equate the legacy of slavery with allegiance to the flag. Holyfield,

Ryan, and Bradley (2009) quoted one of the participants in the study as saying, "It

doesn't remind me of slavery and all the trouble they [Blacks] went through and that" (p.

530).   This statement represents the crux of the dilemma because one person's heritage

may be another person's enslavement and in the interaction, one can clearly see the

disconnection from the historical implications of slavery and the use of the pronoun

"they." White Southern identity for many of the participants in the study meant

maintaining a social order based on White supremacy while this point was not directly

expressed it was implied, in the study. The discussion of the symbolism and discourse as

outlined in this study is significant for Southern educators because it allows educators to

have an opportunity to disrupt and challenge White privilege and hegemonic structures

that serve to reinforce the status quo.

As mentioned previously, racism is perpetuated in subtle, symbolic and discursive

ways through everyday talk and text. Scholarship by sociolinguist Marcelle Haddix

(2012) takes a close look at critical race theory and discursive practices of women of

color. Specifically, in addressing these discursive practices, Haddix (2012) writes, "I

define language as discursive practices that we use to make meaning of self and others"

(p. 169).   Haddix argues that African American Language (AAL) represents the

historical, political and social experiences of African American people. In her research,

she closely examines the discourse of women of color and uses it to challenge hegemonic

structures that are inherent in many teacher education programs. She argues that the

voices of many preservice teachers are intentionally silenced and thus marginalized

through these discursive practices. She uses critical race theory as her overarching

theoretical framework and methodology to illustrate how this silence takes place and

operates as a vehicle of oppression.

Elaine Richardson (2007) also adds her "voice" to the discursive practice of

meaning-making of self and others. However, in opposition to Haddix (2012),

Richardson examines the lucrative hip-hop industry and examines the relationship

between the hip-hop industry and the exploitation of women of color. Richardson (2007)

argues that hip-hop videos paint pictures of women of color that reinforce hegemonic

views of inferiority.   For example, she further asserts that these hegemonic structures are

attempting to maintain the correct social order. In this social order, African American

women are placed at the bottom of the social ladder. Additionally, Richardson argues

that these images work to subvert the intellectual ability of women of color and

perpetuate the belief that the African American woman functions more effectively in a

sexual role.   Thus, if African American women internalize this message, they will not

perceive themselves capable of becoming independent and intellectual individuals. This

mind-set takes the African American woman back to the times of slavery when black

women were deemed as not being suitable for anything other than being sexually

exploited.   This modern sexual exploitation serves as a vehicle of oppression and further

perpetuates internalized oppression and White supremacy.

Racial Literacy and Teacher Education

Guinier (2004) further supports the use of race as a lens to view social, historical

and economical inequities about African Americans in an educational context. Guinier

(2004) defines racial literacy as "an interactive process in which race functions as a tool

of diagnosis, feedback, and assessment" (p. 110).   Additionally, racial literacy is used as

a framework to disrupt hegemonic discourses surrounding race. Guinier discusses and

cites Bell (1980) argument titled "interest convergence." In this context, Bell postulated

that "The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when

it converges with the interests of whites" (p. 94). Essentially, Guinier is suggesting that

Bell (1980) contended that racial equality for African Americans was a panacea and was

not fully intended to remedy inequality but to pacify civil rights activist and secure the

status quo of dominance for White Americans. Thus, there was no widespread,

systematic redress of grievances for African Americans; rather there was a limited redress

of inequitable educational conditions of African Americans, as was the outcome in

Brown vs. the Board. The ruling of Brown resulted in this notion of racial liberalism,

with an inherent belief that racial segregation damaged the psyche African American

children and to ameliorate this condition desegregation was necessary. Another outcome

of Brown was this notion of a colorblind society that promoted the belief that African

Americans were on equal footing and on a level playing field when it came to educational

policymaking. Guinier (2004) argues that the Brown decision did not remedy the system

of stratification or the racialized hierarchy of American society, which is heavily based

on a system of domination and oppression. Furthermore, the Brown decision as Guinier

(2004) asserts did not change the thought process of many Whites, which is still rooted in

Black inferiority. Guinier (2004) writes, "But the myth of racial inferiority remains

embedded in the fabric of our culture" (p. 110). Essentially, the Brown ruling

redistributed some of the inequality but continued to allow Whites to remain in control

and a dominant position when it comes to the restructuring of assets, educational

policymaking, and ultimately pedagogical practices.

Scholarship by Mosley and Rogers (2011) illustrates how the use of racial literacy

as a lens to examine productive racialized discourse can become problematic at times.

The authors of the study found that White pre-service teachers were ambivalent in terms

of discussing issues of race and racism. The researchers conducted a study of pre-service

teachers in a book club format. The setting was a teacher education class at a Midwestern

university. The participants in the research exhibited conflicting views around issues of

race and racism. The book club format revealed some confusion around issues involving

racial identity for some of the participants in the book club. For example, Mosley and

Rogers (2011) write:

> Using a racial literacy lens, however, led us to wonder if their unwillingness to
>
> accept the racist/anti-racist or passive/active racist positions could have reflected a
>
> fear that they themselves might be judged by such criteria. Those dilemmas that
>
> were held longest in the conversation were the ones around racial identity
>
> development, perhaps evidence that supports this conclusion that they were
>
> indeed wrestling with their own racial identity.
>
> (p. 319)

The above authors take the position that whites are reluctant to position

themselves as having racist views and are essentially unwilling to interrogate the

possibility of having such thoughts. This reluctance to hold a point of view and

succinctly present a viable argument demonstrates feelings of ambivalence and often

confusion, surrounding racial identity. As argued earlier, if teacher educators have

confusion surrounding their own racial identity and racialized understandings this ultimately is passed along to the students.

In contradiction to the above research, other researchers have found that it is possible for White identity to be restructured, after discussions around race, racism and anti-racism have been presented. In a related study, conducted by Rogers and Mosley (2006), on the teaching of racial literacy and children's literature, the researchers found that young children understood the construct of whiteness. The researchers were able to develop an effective racial literacy framework in a second-grade classroom. By developing their sociocognitive awareness, children were able to disrupt instances of White privilege and engage in antiracist processing. This work with children holds promise for working with older children and adults.

In addition to book clubs and literature circles, Smith and Singer (2006) used reader response in an online format to examine race and racism with teacher education students, as they read and interpreted a book titled *The Friendship*. The project was divided into groups with a diverse pool of participants. One group represented urban students and the second group represented suburban students. In the project, the authors were using children's literature to examine meaning-making around issues of race and segregation. In the previous studies, researchers were examining how young children interpret themes in the text. In this project, the researchers were examining how teacher educators interpret themes in children's literature. The study is extremely salient becomes it demonstrates how teacher educator's lack of familiarity with racial understandings can contribute to their meaning-making processes. For example, the

researchers noted that many of the White suburban teachers felt that the subject matter of racism and segregation as revealed in the book was too sensitive for young children, and may have represented an attempt not to address the subject-matter. However, the urban teachers did not share the same sentiments about the use of the book with young children. Again, this could be construed as avoidance on the part of the White teachers to deal with issues of race in their classrooms. Additionally, when issues of race and culture emerged in a reading, there were instances of value judgments being placed on some of the characters in the story was observed in the following example.

One of the participants in the project interpreted the characters in the story as being poor and lacking education. Smith and Singer (2006) write, "Other students noted what they took to be indicators of poverty and lack of education. Theresa, another White student from the suburban campus, listed dirt roads, bare feet, and the use of nonstandard English" (p. 329). The authors noted that a Black student from the urban campus took issue with the White students' racialized understanding and responded by writing, "I'm sure the people in this story were probably poor, but wearing no shoes may be another part of that culture. I was raised in Jamaica; my family wasn't considered to be poor, but I also walked without shoes" (p. 329). I found this discussion to be extremely relevant in terms of cultural differences because as a child visiting my relatives in the South we often walked down the dirt roads without shoes. This story illustrates how racial understandings can be shaped by ethnicity, culture, and class.

Roberts, Bell and Murphy (2008) conducted a similar research project utilizing secondary students' interpretations of race: using *Stock stories, Concealed stories,*

Resistance stories and *Counter stories* to discuss race and racism. *Stock stories* are considered mainstream stories of the dominant white racial group, passed on through historical and literary documents. The *Concealed stories* coexist alongside *Stock stories* and are told from the perspective of the group being marginalized. The *Resistance stories* are both historical and contemporary and relate how groups have resisted racism. Finally, the *Counter stories* are new stories deliberately constructed to challenge the *Stock stories*. The storytelling project caused the students and teachers to examine their interpretations of *Stock stories*, *Concealed stories*, *Resistance Stories* and *Counter stories* in the teaching of race and racism and to pay closer attention to language as revealed in students' interpretation of the stories. For example, Roberts, Bell, and Murphy (2008) write:

> In the interviews and observations discussed below, we hear the voices of young people of color, caught between daily encounters with racism and a societal color blindness that negates their experiences, grapple with the dynamics of race and racism. One strategy they employ is racialized jokes and name-calling, one that although filled with contradictions, also reflect comments on, and attempts to challenge the persistent, racial, social, economic, and political injustices that permeate their lives. Through these dialogic forms they 'flip the script,' compelling us to listen closely to and enact curriculum that closely connects more readily to their concerns. (p. 337)

Essentially, Roberts, Bell and Murphy (2008) are arguing that it is necessary for teachers to have an in-depth understanding of language, particularly as it relates to

resistance to dominant patterns of discourse. If teacher educators do not have an understanding of language in a racialized context and how today's youth use it to challenge the status quo, it will be difficult to construct curriculum or teach racial literacy and use it as a mechanism to capitalize on their use of language.

In the process of developing racialized understanding, it is also necessary to examine racial narratives and reader response, as it relates to teacher educators. Cosier (2011) in conducting a study on narrative inquiry writes, "We are always on the lookout for curricular routes our student can take to examine the influences that have shaped their identities, and that will influence the way they think of themselves as teachers" (p. 42). Cosier is arguing that teacher education students are often unaware of the significance attached to the social construction of identity. The use of narratives to construct identity is a viable mechanism to help teacher educators to come to grips with their identity and subsequent meaning-making processes. The use of narratives to explore an individual's interpretation of the world is a very poignant point because it illustrates how teacher educators can have a flawed understanding as it relates to race and this ultimately impacts how they interpret the text and their pedagogical practices.

In concert with research conducted by Rogers and Mosley (2006), Brown (2011) found that dialogue surrounding race is completely necessary for the creation of a more equitable educational system. She contends that social and economic structures that privilege and maintain the status quo have to change. Educators and other researchers must recognize the complexity of race relations and more importantly, they have to understand the significance of racialized discourses, in the teaching of students of color.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky and sociocultural theory also play a critical role in meaning-making, in terms of cognitive development. The sociocultural theory places an emphasis on the role that the social environment plays in the learning process.   In Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, learning is thought to occur through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration (Scott & Palinscar, 2013). Essentially, Vygotsky believes that language influence the co-construction of knowledge. From Vygotsky's perspective, individuals learn from their engagement in shared activities. Sociocultural theory emphasizes meaning-making through the experience. In addressing sociocultural theory in the development of conceptual understanding, research by Meacham (2001) argues:

> Comprehending of texts, therefore, requires cultural connections between the context of the book and the context of the reader. By extension within multiple diverse classrooms, reading comprehension necessarily becomes a process of intercultural connections, where connections are made across multiple cultural contexts. (p.192)

In the utilization of sociocultural theory in the above research, the emphasis was placed on literacy acquisition as a process to support meaning-making in children. This process involved checking for meaning, clarifying, and extending understanding across different reading activities. In the current study of the development of racial literacy of teacher education students, the same process is taking place, only with adults. The use of a layered process across the written responses, semi-structured interviews and focus groups is meant to clarify and extend meaning across different contexts.

This exhaustive review of the literature complemented the findings of the current study. This literature review found there was interdependence among racial identities, historical and pedagogical practices, across the various domains of knowledge, in the study of racialized understandings. At this juncture, it is now necessary to present the findings of the current research and its application to the field of racial literacy.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This basic qualitative study explored, described and analyzed the range of racialized understandings that teacher education students articulated as they read and responded to texts that had explicitly racialized themes. The following research questions guided the study:

- In what ways do teacher education students evoke, interpret, construct or misunderstand race, racism, and anti-racism? And how do these understandings change over time, as participants revisit the readings?

- In what ways do participants describe the emotionality associated with revisiting racialized texts at different points in time?

- What might this layered approach to reading texts offer to the field's understanding of racial literacy?

At the core of this basic qualitative research design was the analysis of teacher education students' reading and responses to texts in a required core course in a Master's of Education social justice graduate class. Merriam (2009) indicates that a qualitative research study helps individuals understand, describe and explore the meaning of social phenomenon in its natural setting. I alternated between being an observer as participant and participant observer to help me understand the range of racialized understandings that teacher education students constructed through their engagements with explicitly racialized texts. There were times when I assumed an active role by leading some group discussions, and other times when I remained on the periphery. I collaborated with a teacher education professor who is a tenured faculty member to integrate readings or

texts into a graduate course on social justice. The professor, who is also an anthropologist and has an extensive background in ethnographic research, served as the steward of the course. At the time of the research project, an African American female who is an adjunct professor was teaching the course. The adjunct professor used the syllabus of the regular instructor of the course. Because race is a core topic in this graduate course, the professor and I discussed including two core readings and a short video into the curriculum. The texts, which are described in full below, included: "The Wife of His Youth" by Charles W. Chestnutt, (1899) a video clip titled "Shades of Black: Colorism, Skin Color Discrimination," by Reginald James, (2011), and "Shame" an excerpt from the autobiography of Dick Gregory, (1964). Students in the class were asked to read and revisit the texts through a variety of responses (e.g. in class discussions, writing and through interviews). While the readings were a part of the course requirements, only students who agreed to participate in this research were interviewed and had their written responses included in the data set.

The research design specifically invited potential participants to engage and reengage with issues presented in the selected texts; I referred to these tasks, following the research of McClune, Alexander and Jarman (2012) as "critical reading tasks." I have designed the "critical reading tasks" to include the constructs of, racial identity/positioning, historical timeframe, characters/personal attributes, language, class, intersectionality and questioning the author. I chose these constructs because they were apparent in the readings themselves and represented core ideas in the field of racial literacy. In the development of these constructs, careful attention was paid to racializing

issues that kept emerging and re-emerging in the various readings and were also present

in the different readings and contexts. The development of these constructs was of

particular importance to the research project because they illustrated the complexity and

converging of these different constructs on students' interpretive processes. Additionally,

the questions that teacher education students were responding to were layered in such a

way to elicit different kinds of responses.

Next, following scholarship in Reader Response Theory, I designed questions to

evoke different kinds of responses including, literal interpretations, aesthetic responses,

interrogations of critical social issues and personal responses to questions about

interrupting racial inequities. Each question expanded on the previous question and

allowed for deeper probing in a different context, such as written responses, semi-

structured interviews and focus group exploration. The overall aim of my research

design and methodology was to capture the thought processes that participants used when

responding to racialized texts. The observations, semi-structured interviews, written

responses and a self-reflection journal allowed me to capture the complex ways in which

teacher education students made sense out of race. Table 1 below provides an overview

of the qualitative research design and data sources.

Table 1: *Qualitative Research Design and Data Sources*

Data Sources	Data Collection	Purpose of Collection	Analysis of Data

Texts/video	2 Readings and 1 Video	Examine language used by writers to interpret, construct, evoke and understand race.	Grounded Theory Open and axial coding for themes Strauss & Corbin (1998)
Field notes	Written Field Notes	Capture in-class context to enhance analysis of the responses.	Grounded Theory Strauss & Corbin (1998)
Written responses	18 open-ended questions	Examine language used by writers to interpret, construct, evoke and understand race. Build, refine and reconstruct theory.	Grounded Theory Strauss & Corbin (1998)
Autobiographical Survey (participants who consent to study)	8 open-ended questions	Examine sociocultural influences of language used by teachers to interpret, construct, evoke, understand race. Creates themes and build a theory inductively.	Ground Theory Strauss & Corbin (1998)

Semi-structured Interviews (6) Participants	Audio-tape and transcription of individual interviews (60-90 minutes)	Examine sociocultural influences of language used by teachers to interpret, construct, evoke, understand race. Build, refine and reconstruct theory.	Grounded Theory Strauss & Corbin (1998) Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA) (Gee, 2005;2011; Fairclough, 1992;Van Dijk,1997)
Focus Group (6) Participants	Audio-tape and transcription of group interview	Examine sociocultural influences of language used by teachers to interpret, construct, evoke, understand race. Refine and expand on theory.	Grounded Theory Strauss & Corbin (1998) Critical Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2005;2011;Fairclough, 1992;Van Dijk,1997)

Context

The setting of the proposed study was on the campus of a Midwestern university located in a suburban setting. The suburban area that houses the university has undergone dramatic demographic changes in the last decade and is considered an inner suburban ring. In the last 50 years, the metropolitan area has lost over half of its population. Most of the population has fled to the further suburbs that surround the urban core. The study consisted of teacher education students enrolled in the "Social Justice in Education" course, required as a part of a Master of Education degree at this university.

In order to promote diversity and address issues of social justice, graduate level students are required to take a class that deals with themes of anti-racism, and equity pedagogy. The course was designed to address issues of inequality and promote discussions around issues of dominant ideology and mainstream values in teacher education. Additionally, the course requires students to develop a cultural understanding of their previous school, community and family experiences and apply those findings to their current work as educators. Students are required to develop an understanding of the historical foundations of American education and the role of the teacher to be a catalyst for change. The course also specifies that instruction and learning will be examined through a variety of lenses including race, class, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation and religion to help teacher education students become culturally responsive teachers.

Recruitment/Participants

Creswell (2007) indicates that the idea behind qualitative research is to select participants purposefully, that will help the researcher understand the phenomenon being

studied. Participants in the study at hand were recruited from a graduate-level social

justice class that constituted a convenience sample because the sample was readily

available. However, I sought out diversity in terms of participants within the sample

population. It is of note that I accepted all that agreed to the study.

Participants were either pre-service or in-service teachers. While the majority of

graduate students were in-service teachers, there were some pre-service teachers enrolled

in graduate-level coursework.   A pre-service teacher is someone who has never taught in

an educational setting and is working toward earning either an elementary or secondary

education degree. An in-service teacher has experience in an educational setting and is

returning to earn a graduate degree or to fulfill professional development requirements.

All of the students in the class were required to read and respond in writing to the texts

because the readings were incorporated into the syllabus of the course. However, only

the students who agreed to participate in the study had their responses included in the

data set and were given a consent form to complete. Of the 20 students enrolled in the

course, 15 agreed to the study.

Procedures

I used an autobiographical survey as a pre-screening measure, before the selection

of participants for the semi-structured interviews. These students were assigned a study

code to be placed on their surveys. From the survey, I obtained autobiographical

information, such as years of teaching, whether teaching in a rural, suburban or urban

environment and how the teachers defined their own racial or ethnic identity. During this

informal screening process, I narrowed the selection process to six primary participants

for the semi-structured interviews. These participants were then assigned pseudonyms.

As indicated above, while the sample was a convenience sample, I also attended to issues

of diversity and maximum variation in the selection process. I specifically sought out

variation in gender and race and years of teaching (see Table 2 below). I elaborate more

extensively on the rationale for the use of pseudonyms in the "Research Ethics" section

of the proposal.   Additionally, all participants were informed of any risks associated

with the project and issues involving confidentiality. Since any feelings of discomfort

talking about race would be experienced as a normal part of the class, it was felt that

being a research participant would not add substantially to this risk. This issue is also

elaborated on in the "Research Ethics" section of this proposal.

Table 2*: Demographic-Characteristics of Participants*

Participants'	Gender	Racial Group	Degree Prog	Teaching
Jennifer	Female	African American	MEd: Special Ed	5yrs
Matthew	Male	White	MEd: Secondary Ed	6yrs
Esther	Female	White	MEd: Secondary Ed	1st
Kyle	Male	White	MEd: Special Ed	6yrs
Karen	Female	White	MEd: Elementary Ed	None
Darla	Female	African American	MEd: Special Ed	None

Researcher's Role

As the primary researcher in this study, I am an African American literacy teacher

at a local community college and a doctoral student at a local university for the past eight

years. As an African American female, I did not necessarily have racial identification

with the teacher education students I was studying. As previously indicated, current statistics indicate that the majority of teacher education students are White and there is a lack of diversity in many teacher education programs. Additionally, the professor that teaches the course and I are both of African American descent. As African American female researchers, we bring racialized frames to bear on our work. We both possess culturally specific knowledge and have culturally informed theory and practice. Tillman (2002) writes, "Emerging paradigms in qualitative research have presented opportunities for collaboration, insider perspectives, reciprocity, and voice" (p.3). Additionally, Schachter and Galili-Schachter (2012) write, "To understand, one needs to have the background knowledge that is taken for granted and understand it in a culturally appropriate manner" (p. 6). This essentially means that our culturally sensitive knowledge and experience assisted in providing additional insight into the phenomenon being studied and allowed us as researchers to effectively transmit this knowledge to the participants in the study.

I also possess an outsider's perspective as well. Upon entering middle school, my family moved to a suburban community. Often, I was the only African American student in many of the accelerated or advanced placement classes. This was also the case upon entering graduate school, and teacher education classes. I often felt like an outsider in dialogue surrounding issues of race. I was called upon to provide the African American perspective or experience. Additionally, as a researcher, I take a culturally responsive and anti-racist pedagogical position. I want to model pedagogical practices that advocate for socially just and responsible pedagogical practices.

Data Collection and Sources

Data collection took place over a four-month period, beginning in August of 2014

and ending December of 2014, in a teacher education social justice class (see Table 3

below). As the primary researcher in the study, I attended all of the scheduled class

sessions and took written field notes over the course of the semester. While I was not the

instructor of the course, I was responsible for introducing the readings that resulted in the

"critical reading tasks." The artifacts from the "critical reading tasks" were collected at

four points during the semester (see Table 3). The collection of data was set for weeks 2,

3, 7, and 16. The social justice class typically met evenings for 2 hours and 40 minutes

for 16 weeks. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled for weeks 3, 4, and 8 of the

semester, during a time agreed upon by this researcher and the individual participants.

The semi-structured interviews occurred after all of the written responses had been

generated. The focus group was set to occur during week 16 at a time agreed upon by me

as the researcher and the participants.   The total estimated amount of data collected was

somewhere in the range of 22 hours of classroom data, plus 20 minutes for completion of

the survey to obtain autobiographical data, for some 15 participants, and 60-90 minute

interviews with six participants.

*Timeline-*Table 3

Tentative Dates-Types of Data Collected	Samples of Data	Analysis

2nd Week- September 2nd Topic: History of Race and "One drop rule." "The Wife of His Youth"	Written Field Notes Written Responses (1 sample each student)	Open-coding/Axial Coding
3rd Week-September 9th Topic: Skin Color Video Clip: "Shades of Black"	Written Field Notes Written Responses (1 sample each student) Conduct Semi-Structured Interviews (6 participants) on Reading of "The Wife of His Youth."	Open-coding/Axial Coding CDA 6 Semi-structured Interviews transcribed Researcher Interviewed on "The Wife of His Youth" and transcribed.
4th Week –September 16th	Written Field Notes Conduct Semi-Structured Interviews (6 participants) on viewing of "Colorism."	Open-coding/Axial Coding CDA 6 Semi-structured Interviews transcribed Researcher Interviewed on "Colorism" and transcribed.
5th Week-September 23rd	Written Field Notes	Open-coding/Axial Coding
6th Week-September 30th	Written Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
7th Week- October 7th Race to Class "Shame"	Written Field Notes Written Responses (1 sample each student)	Open-coding/Axial Coding

8th Week- October 14th	Written Field Notes Conduct Semi-structured Interviews (6 participants) on "Shame."	Open-Coding/Axial Coding Critical Discourse Analysis 6 Semi-structured Interviews transcribed Researcher Interviewed on "Shame" and transcribed.
9th Week-October 21st	Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
10th Week-October 28th	Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
11th Week-November 4th	Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
13th Week-November 11th	Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
14th Week-November 18th	Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
15th Week-November 25th	Field Notes	Open-Coding/Axial Coding
16th Week-December 2nd Focus Group	Focus Group Interview and 1 Transcribed	Open-Coding/Axial Coding Critical Discourse Analysis
Text: "Shame," "The Wife of His Youth" and "Shades of Black: Colorism, Skin Color Discrimination"		Critical Discourse Analysis

Data Sources

The data sources included the racialized texts, participant observation field notes,

students' "critical reading tasks," an autobiographical survey, audiotapes of both semi-

structured interviews, and one focus group session. The following is an explanation of the data sources.

Texts/video. I purposely chose three texts to serve as the basis of the "critical reading tasks." These texts were also treated as data sources, as I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the transcripts of the texts for racialized themes. The first text, "The Wife of His Youth" Chesnutt, (1899) is considered a historical narrative, and a classic by literary scholars. The story as written by Chesnutt addresses the issue of skin color discrimination following the Civil War. The story was written during the Post-Reconstruction era of the 19th century and addressed issues of race, skin color, class and power issues, during the time of Reconstruction.

 The second text, an excerpt from an autobiography titled *Nigger* by Dick Gregory (1964), is considered contemporary literature but has historical underpinnings. It is used as a short reading in many Introduction to College Literature classes.   The reading of "Shame" addresses issues of poverty and social class, during the Great Depression.

The two texts of "Shame" and "The Wife of His Youth" were intentionally chosen." These texts were chosen because they represented a means of gauging historical and contemporary sources of knowledge. Thus, students offered responses from different times to respond to historical and social frames of reference and tensions surrounding issues of race during these respective times. In each of the readings, participants were attending to issues of, race, skin color, power, identity and voice.

The third text was a video selection of "Shades of Black: Colorism, Skin Color Discrimination." The video produced by Reginald James (2011) deals with issues of skin color and discrimination within the African American community in a contemporary

context. Participants in the video describe the effects of skin color on their lives and the

overall impact of the concept of "colorism" on the African American community.

Field notes. During each of the scheduled class sessions, I took written field notes

of the participants that agreed to participate in the study.   I utilized an ethnographic

tradition as cited by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, (2011). These authors indicate that the

field researcher sees first-hand how people come to grips with ambiguity and how

meanings emerged through talk and collective action.   Given their interpretation of the

ethnographic tradition, my field notes were comprised of the verbal descriptions, within

the setting of the course, the people, and activities.

Critical reading tasks. I collected a range of responses for each of the texts noted

above, with the idea that each response was meant to dig deeper into issues associated

with race. I referred to these responses also as "critical reading tasks." I developed seven

constructs for each "critical reading tasks." These constructs include racial

identity/positioning, historical timeframe, characters/personal attributes, language,

classes, intersectionality and questioning the author. Each of these constructs was

layered across the "critical reading tasks" for each reading.   For example, students read

"The Wife of His Youth," "Shame" and viewed the video "Shades of Black: Colorism,

Skin Color Discrimination."   The participants then responded in writing to a series of

open-ended questions, so they would integrate these constructs into their written

responses and semi-structure interviews (see Appendices B-D).

A week after the students turned in their written responses they participated in a

semi-structured interview about the readings that probed further into their constructs.   I

integrated the participants' responses from the written protocol into the semi-structured

interview. There were roughly six semi-structured interview questions for each reading.

During the interview process, the participants had access to the texts and were asked

further probing questions, while revisiting the text in light of new understandings or

intertexual connections.   Toward the end of the interview, participants were asked to

participate in a later focus group, which probed collectively more deeply into the same

constructs. In the following sections, I described in detail the logic of the three

components of the "critical reading tasks," the written responses, the semi-structured

interviews and the focus group.

Written responses. The purpose of the written response was to capture

participants' understanding of the text, particularly their understanding of the racial

dynamics of the text.   Additionally, written responses allowed for the capturing of

thoughts of students who were hesitant to express their views in public forum openly. All

of the written responses were take home assignments and submitted during the next class

period. The two readings and video clip were integrated into the syllabus, during the

weeks that aligned with topics being covered in class. "The Wife of His Youth" and

written response were integrated during week 2 when the "One Drop Rule" was being

discussed. During week 3, when "Colorism" was being discussed, the video clip of

"Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination" was discussed, and the written responses

were integrated into the readings. During week 7 when "Race to Class" was being

discussed, the reading of "Shame" and written responses was integrated into the

discussion.

The student written responses comprised a response to 18 open-ended questions given after the readings and video. The readings and responses were worth 150 points out of a total of 600 points and were considered as a core assignment for the course. Again, I generated unique codes for each student's survey and written responses. On the survey and each written response, participants were required to write their study code and not their names. Participants' responses were then separated from student responses. Participants were asked to make two copies of their written responses. One copy was turned into the professor of the course, and the another copy was turned into me. As the researcher in the project and not the instructor of the course, I only had access to the surveys and the ungraded written responses of those who signed consent forms. Additionally, if a particular student was chosen for a subsequent semi-structured interview, I asked permission to discuss and follow up on their written responses by matching their particular responses with their unique codes. Additionally, I did not have access to the final grade of participants in the class. The professor of the class graded their responses, and no comments were shared with this researcher surrounding grading protocol. Any faculty/student correspondence was shared only between the instructor and the student. Additionally, the instructor's comments were not a part of the data set because of the necessity for maintaining confidentiality and ethical considerations at all times to ensure the research component would not affect the students' grades.

Autobiographical survey. As noted above, students who signed consent forms were given an autobiographical survey to complete. I administered and collected 15 surveys after the participants completed filling out the requested information. The survey functioned as a pre-screening tool prior to the conducting of the semi-structured

interviews. The surveys contained autobiographical information, such as years of

teaching, whether teaching in a rural, suburban or urban environment and how teachers

define their own racial or ethnic identity (see Appendix F). Again, from this informal

process, I narrowed the selection process to six participants for the semi-structured

interviews, who were then assigned pseudonyms.

Semi-structured interviews.   The next phase of the "critical reading task" was a

semi-structured interview to probe more deeply into racial constructs as they pertained to

each reading. As previously noted, I chose participants from the pool of consenting

students to participate in the semi-structured interviews and focus group. The optimum

number of both semi-structured interviews and focus groups was six participants. This

number of participants represented a manageable number given the nature of qualitative

research. Researchers such as Mason (2010) indicate that there are no hard and fast rules

in terms of how many semi-structured interviews to conduct because qualitative

researchers are seeking to explore and understand a particular phenomenon. For my

purposes, it took more than a few interviews to explore the complexity of the studied

phenomenon. Thus, I conducted the preliminary interviews with six, which represented a

manageable number given the density of the semi-structured interview questions and the

necessity of probing around these areas of inquiry. Additionally, the saturation point was

reached when no new concepts emerged during the coding process.

Again, semi-structured interviews were the qualitative interviewing technique

utilized for the study. The semi-structure interview is more conducive for exploring or

probing within certain areas of inquiry, as opposed to structured interviews, which do not

allow for deep areas of exploration. Merriam (2009) cites Patton (2002) and explains:

We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and previous points in time…We cannot

observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to

what goes on in the world…The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to

enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 88)

The semi-structured interviews were conducted during three points in the

semester during weeks 3, 4, and 8 on the campus of the university in a reserved

conference room. The semi-structured interviews were conducted after class and after

the written responses had been turned into the professor for grading. As noted, the

process of conducting the semi-structured interviews occurred one week after the reading.

I designed the semi-structured interviews to include constructs about race, such as, racial

identity/positioning, historical timeframe, characters/personal attributes, language,

classes, intersectionality and questioning the author. The logic was that with this second

part of the "critical reading tasks" participants would revisit the original text (e.g. "The

Wife of His Youth," "Shame," and "Shades of Black: Colorism, Skin Discrimination")

and have an opportunity to reexamine their thoughts in light of the same stimulus and

reflect on their views about race and racism. All of the semi-structure interviews were

conducted during this three-week period. The semi-structured interview protocol for

each of the readings can be found in Appendices B-D.   Moreover, the semi-structured

interview was the forum where I asked the participants to reflect on various aspects of

their written responses. The purpose of this strategy was to make sure that I attended to

areas of ambiguity that may have arisen in their particular responses. Patton (2002)

writes, "Probes are used to deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and

depth of responses, and give cues to interviewee about the level of response that is

desired" (p. 372).   My particular interest was in their understanding and emerging

understanding surrounding issues of race as presented in each of the texts that they read

and revisited.   The interviews were audiotaped, and some of the participants were

recorded before class and some participants after class. Each interview took roughly

between 30-60 minutes.

Focus group. The third component of the critical reading task was the focus

group. Only the participants who participated in the primary analysis in the semi-

structured interviews were asked to participate in the focus group. The logic surrounding

this particular design feature was to ensure continuity across the various "critical reading

tasks." The questions for the focus group were an extension of the two previous "critical

reading tasks." The questions were again organized around the central constructs of,

racial identity/positioning, historical timeframe, characters/personal attributes, language,

classes, intersectionality and questioning the author. In the focus group, the participants

were asked to revisit these constructs, yet again as their understandings evolved. My

rationale was that each time I invited the participants to revisit the text using the

constructs as probes, they would arrive at new understandings, surrounding issues of race

and racism. The focus group was audiotaped and conducted at the end of the semester.

The estimated time for conducting the focus group was around 60 minutes. Again, the

purpose of the focus group was to revisit constructs bringing tensions from previous

responses and ask participants to scaffold or incorporate that information with their new

understandings. They also had an opportunity to hear others' views. It was my hope that

the participants would reflect back on the constructs in light of current information and

educational realities. My overall intention with the use of the focus group was to

facilitate the process of new understandings, as participants explored central constructs and as they interacted with their peers. The integration of written responses into the semi-structure interviews and then into the focus group connects back to Vygotsky. It is this process of scaffolding understanding from one "critical reading tasks" to the next that extends meaning across the various literacy activities, and builds racial literacy.

Researcher reflective journal and interview. I also kept a reflective journal as a data source. These notes included my thoughts about the areas of discussion that provoked serious discussion, as well as tension surrounding certain pieces of dialogue that emerged after the readings and video clip. This allowed me to examine my personal biases and assumptions in the data collection and analysis process. It also allowed me to document my thought process and reduce potential researcher subjectivity and bias. As Clegg and Stevenson (2013) note:

> Most research about higher education, and, more broadly, tertiary education, is produced by academics, who, by virtue of their position, have insider knowledge of the systems they are researching…She is a fish in the water, part of the habitus, with a feel for the rules of the game. (p. 7)

This process of reflexivity allowed me as the researcher to maintain an objective stance and minimize my own biases to influence how I viewed the participants' interpretations, given my insider status. In other words, strong researcher reflexivity increases the quality of objectivity.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously with data generation throughout the study. The interviews were transcribed utilizing the Jeffersonian transcription notation method (Jefferson, 1984). The transcription process is designed to capture what was being said, also how it was said. The notation process captured overlapping speech, dialect, and attention to a rise in intonation using arrows to illustrate the rise and drop in speech. Additionally, I used Strauss and Corbin's (1998) method of developing Grounded Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2005; 2011; Rogers, 2011; Van Dijk,1997). Each of these analytic procedures is explained in the following sections.

Grounded Theory is an inductive process of constant comparative analysis, whereby a theory is inductively built based upon the emerging data. Merriam (2009) writes, "A grounded theory consists of categories, properties and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties" (p. 199). Thus, grounded theory is an iterative process whereby the repetition of collapsing and merging categories and properties produces a theoretical model to explain the phenomenon being studied (see Appendix E).

Developing codes and themes. Using the constructs embedded with the critical reading tasks as a guide, I conducted open and axial coding on the three components of the students' "critical reading tasks." I read through each source of data, circling or highlighting sections of the text or phrases that I found particularly interesting or relevant to the constructs. For example, of the predefined areas of interest such as constructs of racial identity, racial positioning, I made notes of patterns found in the different

participants' responses during the semi-structured interviews. During the process of

coding, I read through the document and made notes in the margins. I was looking for

certain phrases or wording. A color-coded process was used while coding or collapsing

the various categories that were then merged into different themes. I began to look for

patterns or themes that started to emerge across the data sets. Themes that emerged from

my analysis of the first component of the "critical reading tasks" were then integrated

into the next set of semi-structured interviews. Codes from my analysis of the interview

data were further integrated into the focus group, asking participants to revisit and clarify.

After all of the "critical reading tasks" were completed, I started a new cycle of analysis,

analyzing each of the constructs within the "critical reading tasks" and then looked across

the associated "critical reading tasks" for patterns and themes. This process of constant

and comparative analysis involved analyzing responses, and interpretations across time,

reading and discussions. Themes that emerged were themes of "Historical and

Contemporary Understandings of Colorism," Misreading of the Racial Dynamics of the

Text," "Deficit Social Constructions," Demonstration of Empathy," and "Willingness to

Develop Literacy." Themes were measured in terms of high, medium and low frequency

based on the level of occurrence.

Critical discourse analysis. For a closer analysis of themes that I generated from

the "critical reading tasks," I drew on the tools associated with Critical Discourse

Analysis (CDA) (e.g. Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2011; Rogers, 2011; & Van Dijk, 1997;

2001). Regarding Critical Discourse Analysis, Rogers (2011) explains:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a broad framework that brings critical social theories into dialogue with theories of language to answer particular research questions. As such, critical discourse analysis is generally considered with a critical theory of the social world, the relationship of discourse in the construction and representation of this social world, and a methodology that allows them to describe, interpret and explain such relationships. (p. 3)

The semi-structured interviews were coded and the transcripts from the interview were subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2011; Rogers, 2011; & Van Dijk, 1997; 2001). These frameworks were used to build discourse models for the six participants in the study. Their collective analytic lens as the framework for the dissection of transcripts, attending to issues of power, identity, and voice, as these racialized understandings were explored.

Again, after segmenting the interviews, I turned to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Gee, 2011; Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1997; 2001). Trainor (2005) indicates that CDA offers a crucial lens, in terms of seeing how racism is embedded in ordinary classroom talk. The conceptual frameworks as presented in Chapter 2 include tools of social language, situated meaning and figured worlds. However, in the research at hand, using six participants as a sample, The Faircloughian method (1992) of CDA includes the frameworks of "ways of representing," and "ways of being." These frameworks illustrate examples of "power and domination," "voice" and identity." Paramount to discourse analysis, as presented by Fairclough, is this concept of power and domination, which also incorporated Van Dijk's (2001) position on racism and power. With these frameworks in mind, I analyzed the readings and the transcripts to get some sense of the discursive

features found including the tools the participants used in responding to the text. This

intricate and detailed analysis exposed the complicated nature of racialized

understandings. More importantly, how understandings can change over time and across

the various "critical reading tasks." Also, by using a Vygotskian sociocultural approach,

participants were able to weave new understandings across the different contexts.

I also looked for places in stretches of discourse where the participants' responses

were particularly consistent over the various "critical reading tasks." Bakhtin (1986)

indicates that discourse is constantly in motion, and the mechanism of this motion is

referenced to as dialogism. Thus, dialogism is a process of bridging different kinds of

text or stretches of discourse against an individual's internalized values. More

importantly, the individual is moving in and out of these various perspectives and

constantly creating new interpretations. Given this concept of dialogism, it was critically

important to examine areas of discourse that were constant and appeared to be resistant to

the incorporation of new understandings.

Case analysis. A modified case portrait was used to present a fine-grained

description for each participant in each reading, and across the readings. This was

combined with an ethnographic observation from the class. Merriam (2009) writes,

"Case studies which have as their goal to convey understanding, must contain enough

description to provide various experience for the reader" (p. 49). In this study, I have

chosen to present a description of the participants followed by analysis and interpretation

of the findings. The findings of each participant are represented in the same order across

each of the chapters to ensure the flow and continuity.

The current analysis encapsulated how the participants were integrating their new understandings across the "critical reading tasks." This process of meaning making and refining their understandings was documented in the analysis of the transcripts. The analysis unearthed how the layered process of moving from written response to interview and then the focus group was instrumental in creating new levels of understandings.

Reflections on Researcher Subjectivities

As indicated above, I first became interested in studying racialized understandings when I noticed how many of my students at the community college had a varying, and often contradictory understanding on issues about race, racism, and anti-racism. I found it quite interesting how many of my students' meaning-making around issues of race differed from my own. While I was an insider in terms of race and culture, I was also an outsider in terms of life experiences and circumstances, which I believed contributed to their perspectives surrounding issues of race.

Indeed, in the current study at hand, I possessed an outsider's perspective, and it differed from many of the participants that I was studying. These points of difference in some situations prevented me from fully understanding their life experiences and circumstances, as was reflected in the literacy students I describe above. Additionally, I was conducting frequent member checks, by discussing the emerging findings with the primary participants in the study and other colleagues. Merriam (2009) writes, "The process involved in member checks is to take your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation rings true" (p. 217). As a current literacy professor and a person of color, I have to be conscious of my subjective

interpretation. Moreover, how this influenced my perspective of participants in the study. Thus, making sure that the interpretations were their interpretations, and not mine was of the utmost importance. Member checking the participants allowed me to make sure that I got their interpretations correct. Maintaining an objective frame of reference was also important to the overall goal of my study, which was the exploring, describing and understanding of racialized understandings of teacher education students.

Research Ethics

All prospective participants were informed about the procedures and the risks involved in the project before they could participate, per IRB guidelines at the beginning of the course. In the consent form, participants were assured of confidentiality in data collection, storage, report writing, using pseudonyms and student codes.

All data was secured in a locked cabinet and password protected site on my computer. Risks for participation was explained as minimal, and participation was completely voluntary and revocable at any time. Participants were advised of the necessity of recording the interviews. Essentially, after the semi-structured interviews, if the participants did not want to continue with the interviewing, their information was removed from the data set. Participants were advised on the storing and destruction of data after transcription. Before involvement in the focus group, participants were read a script outlining the necessity of complete confidentiality of discussions that took place during focus group participation. Moreover, participants were advised that it would be a breach of confidentiality to discuss conversations that took place during focus group activities or repeat issues in class that was discussed during the focus group.

Another ethical issue involved whether or not participants would respond truthfully to issues of race when being led by someone of a different race. Leonardo and Porter (2010) contend that pedagogies that address racial power are most uncomfortable for those who benefit from power. Leonardo and Porter (2010) write:

Safety discourses on race are a veiled form of violence, and it will require a

humanizing form of violence to expose contradictions in the discourse of 'safety'.

As a result, a new system of violence is introduced…A humanizing form of

violence is a pedagogy and politics of disruption that shifts the regime of

knowledge about what is ultimately possible as well as desirable as a racial

arrangement. (p. 140)

The above authors advocate for a Fanonian approach (Zeus & Porter, 2010) to race-based dialogue. This approach was deemed by some as radical, but others indicated that it advocated for what is referenced as a "humanizing approach." This approach argues from the point of the practice of full engagement as opposed to avoidance. Thus, in the process to ensure honest responses, it would be necessary to define the classroom as a place of risk and self-understanding. There was no more risk than what would be encountered in the normal course of classroom discussion involving race. However, if issues arose, participants were still given the opportunity to speak with counselors or referred to the counseling center on campus, due to the sensitive nature of the discussion.

Discussion of Trustworthiness and Limitations

A clear strength of the methodology and design was the triangulation of the data. The data included multiple perspectives and included a variety of texts, field notes, and

the reflective journal kept by the researcher. Triangulation increased the trustworthiness of the data. Merriam (2009) writes, "Strategies that a qualitative researcher can use to ensure consistency and dependability or reliability are triangulation, peer examination, investigator's position and the audit trail" (p. 222).

The limitations of the study included the location of the university and the lack of diversity in teacher education programs. The composition of the class included majority White women, with only a few White males. Additionally, there were a few African American females. In the sample at hand, I had four White women, two White males, and two African American women. I attempted to incorporate a wide-range of perspectives from the student body. However, with the majority of the student body in teacher education classes being composed of predominantly White women, this was problematic in some respects. Another limitation was the issue of believability or candidness of the students' responses. A White woman interviewed by an African American female may feel reluctant to discuss her views on race openly and honestly. Other researchers have cited how White students are reluctant to position themselves as having racist views (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). However, the types of questions in the semi-structured interviews were meant to solicit an emotional response. Therefore, even if students were not candid in the written responses, their feelings could be captured during the interviewing process. Additionally, students who volunteered were more likely to be open to honestly discussing their views about race, racism, and anti-racism. The layered nature of the design was intended to capture continuity and or change across the different reading tasks. However, students whose intention was to be deceptive

would likely continue to be deceptive, regardless of the best intention of the interviewer and design of the study.

Thus far, I have presented the design of this qualitative study, the analytic techniques employed and the trustworthiness of the data to discuss this important phenomenon of teacher education students' responses to racialized texts. At this juncture, it is now necessary to turn our attention to the forthcoming chapters that describe the in-depth findings. Each of the texts used to answer the research questions is presented in the forthcoming chapters. In Chapters 4 to 8, I present the results of the study. Chapter 4 describes the different responses that were used by the participants in their responses to the "The Wife of His Youth." The participants' responses across the different chapters were transcribed and subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the video "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." Again, the responses of the participants were analyzed and represented in multifaceted ways including the use of critiques, personal narratives, and counter-narratives, etc. Chapter 6, turned the microscope on the reading of "Shame," and once again placed the participants' responses under the review. In Chapter 7, there was a discussion surrounding themes that were found during the process of open and axial coding. I looked across the different participants and examined converging and digressing responses in the various "critical reading tasks." Chapter 8 is where I discuss the implications and future directions of this research.

Chapter 4: "The Wife of His Youth"

This chapter begins with a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the participants'

responses to the reading of "The Wife of His Youth." This text was written by Charles

W. Chesnutt in 1899. The reading focuses on issues involving the color-line or what

Chesnutt refers to as mixed-raced individuals and their struggle with racial and social

identity. The text was read as a homework assignment during the second week of class,

during the session on "Race and Ethnicity" in a social justice course. After reading the

text, I invited participants to respond in writing, and also conducted interviews that

expanded on the written prompts. I was interested in the participants' range of responses.

Again, were they responding with a personal narrative, counter-narrative, critique of the

text, humor, direct quotes, use of distancing language, superficial language,

deconstruction of the text? Did the text evoke a catalytic response or contradictory

responses? I present six case portraits to help me understand students' racialized

understandings. I drew upon the theoretical frameworks of Racial Literacy (Guinier,

2004; Haddix, 2008; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; & Winans, 2012), Critical Whiteness

Studies, (Twine, 2008), Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1992 & Hylton, 2012) and Reader

Response Theory (Allen, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978 &) to help me in my analysis of the

diversity of responses to text that are racialized in nature.

The story opens with the author Charles W. Chesnutt (1899) telling a fictional

account of a society of mixed-race individuals or mulattoes known as the "Blue Veins,"

that resided in a certain Northern City following the American Civil War. From a literary

perspective, these mixed-race individuals embody certain characteristics of sadness,

confusion, and tragedy. Hence, "The tragic mulatto," is a theme which appears in

significant American Literature following the Civil War. The "tragic mulatto" is a phrase

that was coined by Harlem Renaissance writers, such as Langston Hughes. The term

appears in many fictional accounts of Southern plantation life. Davis (1995), in

analyzing the works of Langston Hughes writes, "let us understand the term 'tragic

mulatto' …it denotes a light-colored, mixed–blood character (possessing in most cases a

white father and a colored mother), who suffers because of difficulties arising from his

bi-racial background" (p. 195). The "tragic mulatto" is a victim of a society divided by

race.   As a result of this division, the "tragic mulatto" suffers, because of his ancestry.

He fits neither completely in the Black world or the White world. Generally speaking, he

is portrayed as troubled, because of problems with his racial and social identity. The

story of "The Wife of His Youth" is a variation on this notion of the "tragic mulatto"

narrated by the fictional character of Mr. Ryder. Chesnutt's character of Mr. Ryder is

confronted by a visitor from his past and has a fateful encounter with destiny. As a result

of this encounter, Mr. Ryder faces a moral dilemma, which threatens his elite status, as

leader of the "Blue Veins." In describing criteria for admission into the "Blue Vein

Society," Ryder noted that envious outsiders would suggest that criteria for membership

were based on one being white enough for the blue of their veins to show through their

skin:

> The Blue Veins did not allow that any such requirement existed for admission to
>
> their circle, but, on the contrary, declared that character and culture were the only
>
> things considered; and that if most of their members were light-colored, it was

because such persons, as a rule, had had better opportunities to qualify themselves for membership. Opinions differed, too, as to the usefulness of the society. There were those who had been known to assail it violently as a glaring example of the very prejudice from which the colored race had suffered most; and later, when such critics had succeeded in getting on the inside, they had been heard to maintain with zeal and earnestness that the society was a life-boat, an anchor, a bulwark and a shield, a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, to guide their people through the social wilderness. (Chestnutt, 1899, p.1)

Charles W. Chesnutt, in this opening narrative, was addressing the contentious issue of racial identity and the color-line that was prevalent in the late 1800's in American society.   In addition to the theme of racial identity, Chesnutt's "The Wife of His Youth" also has other major themes that include issues of assimilation and social class bias. During this time period, there was a legal and social principle that was adopted in American society and was referenced as the 'One Drop Rule.' Hickman (1997) writes:

For generations, the boundaries of the African American race have been formed by a rule, informally known as the "one drop rule," which, in its colloquial definition, provides that one drop of Black blood makes a person Black. In more formal, sociological circles, the rule is known as a form of 'hypodescent' and its meaning is basically the same: anyone with a known Black ancestor is considered Black. (p. 1163)

Hence, the "Blue Veins" were considered black, even though they were light enough to pass for White. Chesnutt (1899) writes, "But we people of mixed-blood are ground between the upper and the nether millstone. Our fate lies between absorption by the white race and extinction in the black. The one doesn't want us yet, but may take us in time. The other would welcome us, but it would be for us a backward step" (p. 3). In Chesnutt's presentation, the "mulatto" is a bridge between both races. He is a combination of privilege and rejection. He extracts his privilege by identifying with his whiteness and rejecting his blackness. Moreover, in Chesnutt's characterization, the "mulatto" is truly "a bridge over troubled waters." While current interpretations of "mulatto" infer a derogatory intent, Chesnutt's explication was more nuanced, in that he intimated a deeper analysis of the term, which involved the bridging of the two races.

The "Wife of His Youth," was introduced during the second week of class during the discussion about "Racial Formations and The One Drop Rule." The instructor of the course explained that all of the students were required to read "The Wife of His Youth," because it was an actual manifestation of "The One Drop Rule." Moreover, it supplemented the readings as presented in the course textbook. She aligned the reading with general foundation knowledge about the system of constructing differences based on race during the late 1700's in American society. During her discussion, she weaved her narrative into the general discussion about ethnocentrism, and creation of racial differences. At the end of the class discussion, she introduced the reading of "The Wife of His Youth."

Jessica's Responses to "The Wife of His Youth"

As a reminder, Jessica is an African American graduate student pursuing a Master of Special Education degree. She works with disabled students of color in a local school district (Demographic data for all participants is presented in Table 2). For Jessica, "The Wife of His Youth" evoked a strong written response. She was asked, "How does the concept of the 'One Drop Rule' pertain to the reading of 'The Wife of His Youth?' She responded by writing:

> The one drop rule is a principle used to identify racial classification. The idea behind the theory was that if a person had one drop of African blood in their system then the person was considered "black." In the text of, 'The Wife of His Youth' the members of the Blue Vein Society were all African American individuals with fair skin tone. The individuals in this group were considered for more opportunities because of the color of their skin. They couldn't identify with African Americans, because of their fair skin, but they couldn't identify with whites because they were African American. (Jessica's, Written Prompt)

In this stretch of discourse, Jessica explained her understanding of this notion of "The One Drop Rule." In her response, she presented the duality of the racial identity conflict. She postulated that members were torn between both races. She specifically wrote, "They couldn't identify with African Americans, because of their fair skin, but they couldn't identify with whites because they were African American. In her utterance, she used the verb "identify" to denote the "Blue Veins" inability to connect with both groups of people. The use of the term "fair" reflected her associated understandings, as they

pertain to skin color, in the context of race. Fair is defined as "being in accordance with rules or standards" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2016). A more complicated definition defines "fair," as "pleasing to the eye or mind especially because of fresh, charming or flawless, quality; not dark." (Merriam-Webser.com, 2016). Interestingly, a more nuanced definition defines "fair skin," as "a person, not necessarily African or biracial, whose complexion is lighter than black and darker than White. "Light skin is not to be confused with a person that has fair skin" (Urban Dictionary.com, 2016). The use of the term "fair" to describe skin tone dates back to the era of Shakespeare and before. During Shakespeare's era, it takes on a cultural and socio-political referent. It is being used as a juxtaposition to dark. Moreover, essayist Autumn Whitefield-Madrano (2011) argues that the term "fair" "historically is encoded in a color reference." She argues, "fair is a less racially-charged way of saying White" (p. 1). In Jessica's discourse, she is using the terms interchangeably. Jessica's use of "fair" as presented in her discourse is encoded with racial underpinnings. Thus, the use of the term "fair skin" in her written and verbal discourse about the "Blue Vein Society" denoted some level of adherence to a Eurocentric standard of beauty and her discourse contained the supposition that "fair-skin" is better. Essentially, this is indicative of her racialized understandings or how she "reads" skin color in her everyday discourse.

In responding to the above passages in the "The Wife of His Youth" and similar responses in Chapter 5, in the reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination, Jessica both recognized and critiqued the color-line. At times, she evoked light skin privilege, when she used the term "fair skin," as exemplified when she discussed the

color line that affords lighter-skinned individuals advantage over their darker-skinned

counterparts when she wrote:

> Physical appearances play a large role in the text. Members of the Blue Vein
>
> Society were chosen based on their physical appearance. For many years there
>
> have been issues among the African American race based on the complexion of
>
> one's skin. Individuals with fair or light skin were seen to have an advantage over
>
> those who had darker colored skin. Individuals with fair colored skin were given
>
> better advantages over people with darker colored skin. Due to that disturbing
>
> fact, there is separation within the African American race. (Jessica's, Written
>
> Response)

In her critique of light versus dark skin, she referenced this concept of internalized

oppression. Her language suggests that the skin tone debate has a long and divisive

history in the African American community as was being depicted in the "Wife of His

Youth." While Chesnutt was addressing this issue of colorism, during the 19th century,

in Jessica's meaning-making it remains a very controversial, and salient topic in the

current African-American experience. Jessica's discourse attributed much of this

division to the remnants of slavery, when she wrote, "Individuals with fair colored skin

were given better advantages over people with darker colored skin. Due to that

disturbing fact, there is separation within the African American race." The discourse

revealed a feeling of angst within Jessica, on the issue of colorism and the African

American experience in America. However, there are tensions and contradictions in

Jessica's social positioning, as manifested in her language. While on the one hand, she

laments the division, with the use of the adjective "disturbing," which represents a

negative appraisal of this division. The use of the term "fair skin" denotes some level of

adherence to the very same Eurocentric standards that she is castigating. Her social

positioning reinforces and embraces light-skin privilege, when she states, "She thinks

she's cute because of my fair skin." In this utterance, she switches from the third person

to the first person. This is aptly displayed in her use of the possessive adjective "my."

In this context "my" is indicative of her ownership and proud possession of "fair skin."

One of the hallmark themes in "The Wife of His Youth" is this issue of racial

identity. I asked Jessica, "What are your views when you witness people like Tiger

Woods, or Mariah Carey placed in a position where they are required or forced to choose

one racial identity over another?" She responded with the following powerful personal

narrative:

I had a difficult time identifying with African American girls.

Um, I'd I'd say that I think that it is unfair.

I think that people should be able to identify

with who they feel comfortable

//comfortable identifying with,

like I said growing up,

I did//I had a difficult time identifying with African American girls.

And I had an easier time forming friends outside of my race,

and that's who I felt comfortable with.

I'd never at any point in time did I feel like

I was not an African American girl,

because I definitely did.

I just had a hard time forming connections//

forming those bonds within my race.

(Interview transcript, September 15, 2014)

In the above narrative, we hear Jessica discuss the pain of being judged by racial affiliations. She discussed her difficulty with forming bonds with African American females. She made a point of acknowledging that she never rejected her identity, but found acceptance outside of her race. She explicitly stated, "I'd never at any point in time did I feel like I was not an African American girl, because I definitely did." Essentially, she is suggesting that she understood the associated issues involving the color-line or colorism, because she has lived it. Jessica uses her prior experiences to make meaning out of the text. More importantly, she presented a position that denoted a particular identity claim in the above utterance. In her utterance, she emphasizes actions over identity, because she discusses forming close bonds outside of her race, regardless of racial or social identity. This also reveals the multiplicity of Jessica's social construction. She affirms her status as an insider in terms of African American identity, yet her discourse demonstrates tension in relating to other persons of color. Her discourse suggests that race does not necessarily correspond to racial identity. More importantly,

her discourse reveals a complex, and at times contradictory position on this issue of racial identity.

In responding to the written prompt on how language was being used in the text, Jessica provided the following written response:

> The language in the text was very descriptive and painted a clear picture of the story and the setting of the text. The conversation section in the text was very difficult to read, but it gave a clear understanding of the differences in the education levels of Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. I appreciated how the author wrote the text from a conversation stand point and I could hear Liza Jane speaking as I read the text aloud. (Jessica's Written Prompt)

Jessica's response referenced the division that Chesnutt used to contrast the educational level and social class of both Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. Moreover, her response illustrated her facility with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or dialect. In Chesnutt's presentation, he used Liza Jane's own language to tell her story. Jessica was able to imagine or "hear" the pronunciation of the various words in the passage. She wrote, "I appreciated how the author wrote the text from a conversation stand point and I could hear Liza Jane speaking as I read the text aloud." Jessica was able to understand the speech patterns and hear the speech come to life, by sorting out the unfamiliar spelling patterns into pieces of sound that made sense. Her understanding of the dialect and understanding of phonemic and phonological awareness aided in her interpretation of Liza Jane's speech.

As noted, Jessica's discourse is an embodiment of tensions and contradictions. At times, she challenged and attempted to disrupt whiteness, by commenting on the origins of internalized oppression and its relationship to slavery. Her discourse suggests a certain level of confusion. While she recognizes that colorism is not fair, there are times when she evokes light-skin privilege with her use of the term "fair-skinned." It's her tacit acknowledgment of how lighter skin affords advantages in a color-conscious society. Jessica's representation of internalized oppression is expanded upon in more detail in the reading of "Shame," in Chapter 6.

Both internalized oppression and white privilege operate on a continuum and influence an individual's racialized understandings. Where individuals lie on the continuum is dependent on their anti-racist work, life experiences and historical frames of reference. From a historical perspective, Jessica did not appear to struggle with the historical timeframe in other aspects of the reading of "The Wife of His Youth." However, evidence in the following transcripts suggested that some participants did struggle with the nature of the reading. This was based on their life experiences, racialized understandings and historical frames of reference.

Overall, Jessica's language revealed a fluid and evolving sense of the "self." The more tensions and contradictions manifested in discourse suggested that individuals or Jessica, in this case, may be amenable to change or transform a particular social position.

Matthew's Responses to "Wife of His Youth"

After returning to college to pursue a Master of Education degree, Matthew, a White male in his mid-twenties, finds himself enrolled in a graduate level social justice

course, grappling with the complex issue of race. Many of Matthew's responses to "The

Wife of His Youth" were superficial, contradictory and at times tinged with the evocation

of White privilege. Often, Matthew did not fully integrate himself into this moral

dilemma. He stayed on the periphery, with the use of distancing and superficial

language. On the construct of "Questioning the Author," Matthew used dismissive

language or avoids analyzing the structural dimensions of race and racism, presented in

the story. He was asked in the written prompt, "What questions would he have for the

author?" Matthew wrote, "Even if he was simply writing a whimsical tale in the setting

of his day for an audience that accepted these social roles, knowing his intent would help

in our understanding of his text." The definition of "whimsical" is "fanciful or playful"

((Merriam-Webser.com, 2016). His discourse suggests that he finds the story to be

amusing and not to be taken seriously.

There were many other instances where he did not attempt to deconstruct the

social narrative being presented in the reading. In responding to questions about the

"One Drop Rule" in "The Wife of His Youth," he used the language of the era. He

wrote, "The narrator described this society as consisting 'of individuals who were,

generally speaking more white than black' Even though this organization was only for

'colored person,' you find that its members might be outwardly identifiable as colored."

In this written response, he uses the language of the time period, as opposed to saying

African American or Black. To use the term "colored" as a noun is construed by many

African Americans and Whites as a racist or offensive term, even in the written

expression. Matthew had difficulty transitioning from the turn of the century language to

the present. More importantly, he failed to recognize the racism in language. Robert

Moore (1976) in his scholarship on racism and language wrote:

> Many white people may still be unaware of the disdain many African Americans
>
> have for the term 'colored,' but it often appears that whether used intentionally or
>
> unintentionally, 'colored' people are "good" and know their place, while "Black"
>
> people are perceived as 'uppity' and threatening to many whites." (p. 166)

Joyce King (1991) champions this argument and coins the phrase dysconscious

racism. She writes, "Dysconscious racism is a form of racism that tacitly accepts

dominant white norms and privileges" (p. 135). When Matthew failed to recognize or

problematize the racism in language, this represented a form of his silent acceptance of

dominant white norms. Interestingly, in responding to the use of the term "thick," which

denoted a level of sexual objectification of African American women in "Shades of

Black: Skin Color Discrimination," Matthew rephrased the term of "thick."   Instead of

saying "thick," he used the term "voluptuousness."   However, in the aforementioned

reference, he does not problematize or contextualize the use of the term "colored," except

to put it in single quote marks.

Related, in an interview on the same construct, again, there were again

underpinnings of White privilege. I asked Matthew, "How the reading made him feel

about race and post-Reconstruction America? What are the parallels between post-

Reconstruction during this reading and the many references in our current American

society to being a post-racial society under Obama's presidency?" Matthew responded

with the following:

MT: Uh//let me think. Um//I don't know if I could say that it had influenced my thoughts about post-Reconstruction, uh, America too much. There's a lot that seems to be within the article or within the story that historically, that historical perspective that I've gained, you know, through the years of, you know, being educated. Uh//so//I don't know if there is anything in there that, uh, was necessarily a big surprise///

MT: Um, if I could say it like that. Um, well, I think///well, one of things I guess that maybe stood out a little bit was this idea that there were, uh, you know, individuals who, depending upon the color of their skin, were trying, I guess for lack of a better term, pass as///um, a member of white culture or white society.

MT: And that was something that I don't think I had really thought about or considered as being a/a really prevalent thing.

CF: Okay.

MT: Like it was//you know, thinking that, you know, well, there's either black or there's white, and people fit into one of those two categories///

CF: I see.

MT: //And if they tell, right, you were black, then that was the lifestyle you had to live, or if they knew about your ancestry. And there seemed to be plenty of people here who were trying to defy that or///

CF: Absolutely.

MT: //Um, at least///I//I don't know if sneaky would be the word that the author

might have used, you know, trying to sneak their way in//

CF: Yeah. Yeah. (Interview transcript, September 15, 2014)

In this dialogue with me, Matthew used dismissive language when describing the

concept of assimilation. We hear how Matthew struggled to respond to my question of,

"What are the parallels between post-Reconstruction America and our current society as

being post-racial under Obama's presidency?" His talk was punctuated with many

hesitations and pauses. In trying to articulate his views on the subject of assimilation, he

used the verb "sneak." He specifically says "I don't know if sneaky would be the word

that the author might have used, you know, trying to sneak their way in//." To sneak and

do something underhanded denotes a level of dishonest activity. In his interpretation,

members of the "Blue Vein Society" were trying to "sneak" into a closed society. This

closed society only allowed certain groups full admittance. This admittance was based on

the prerequisite of White skin. Matthew is critiquing the secretive nature of the "Blue

Vein Society," and their quest for assimilation. However, he totally misses the tension

of identity politics in individuals like Mr. Ryder.

In describing members of the "Blue Vein Society," Chesnutt used the literary

device of characterization to foreground the reader into the appearance and character of

Mr. Ryder and his fiancé Molly Dixon. Mr. Ryder was described as a very sophisticated

man, with impeccable manners and diction. He was considered one of the most desirable

bachelors in the fictional city of Groveland. Chesnutt described Mr. Ryder as essentially

being a self-made man. He was able to work himself up from a lower status of a

messenger to operating in an administrative capacity. More importantly, Chesnutt took

considerable time in describing the appearance of Mr. Ryder. He talked about his

appearance as being almost White with particular deference to his hair and other physical

attributes. Most importantly, Chesnutt used the adjective of "refined" to describe Mr.

Ryder's features.

In his appraisal of Chesnutt's characterization of Mr. Ryder and other elements in

the reading, I asked Matthew how do you feel about the use of the term "refined" to

describe Mr. Ryder's features?

MT: Um//I think with refined, uh, it's supposed to be talking about, um,

that//that concept of bettering himself.

CF: Mm-hmm.

MT: That by having this refined type, or his refined hair or him being neatly

dressed, I think it says, "His hair was almost straight,"

CF: Yes.

MT: //as opposed to curly I suppose.

CF: Right.

MT: And he was always neatly dressed. Um//the fact that he's trying to pull

himself up or he's representing a different class or style of person.

MT: Mm-hmm

MT: Right? Refined seems to be more white///

CF: Okay.

MT: //possessing that, um, that other class or that, um//really sorry. I'm having

trouble [chuckles] coming up with some words as I'm/// (Interview transcript,

September 15, 2014)

In responding to this question, Matthew conceptualized "refined," along with the

supporting and descriptive details, in the passage to be synonymous with being White.

The pauses and hesitations in his speech suggested that Matthew was struggling with his

response. He was not quite clear on whether or not vocalizing this particular response

was appropriate. He posits it with a question. He asked, "Right? Refined seems to me

more white." The pauses after this utterance suggested that he was waiting for me

confirm his suspicions. His next utterance also was indicative of "White Talk." Again,

we see the pauses and laughter, when he stated, "possessing that, um, that other class or

that, um//really sorry. I'm having trouble [chuckles] coming up with some words as I'm."

Again, Matthew was struggling with the subject matter and appeared to be uneasy in

discussing issues that are racialized in nature.

When I asked Matthew, "What did he notice about the intersecting social

identifications at play in the reading?" Matthew responded by discussing the huge

dichotomy or binary between someone who was uneducated and spoke a dialect or

African American Vernacular English and someone who spoke Standard American

English. He responded by stating:

MT: This is not the goal, right? This is not what you want. You wanna kinda pull

yourself up from this. So it could've been, um something that was seen was very

negative in-in that respect. I think from an educational standpoint----

CF: Mm-hmm.

MT: -It's something that seen as negative, right? That here's someone who didn't

have the ability to learn the proper way of speaking

CF: Yes.

MT: The problem there is defining who, you know, what is the proper way? Who

sets that [chuckles]?

CF: Yeah. Absolutely

MT: Who sets those rules? With language, it's just a little bit tougher, um to

narrow that down I think, or it's easier just to say that language is the way it is

and it's –it's no one's fault in a way. (Interview transcript, September 15, 2014)

In the above exchange, Matthew grappled with the function of African American

Vernacular English (AAVE) that Chesnutt used to tell Liza Jane's story. At some point in

the conversation, he did begin to challenge his own thoughts. He even vacillated between

critiquing the language as having negative implications and then critiquing society for

stigmatizing language patterns of certain groups. He stated, "Who sets those rules? With

language, it's just a little bit tougher, um to narrow that down I think, or it's easier just to

say that language is the way it is and it's –it's no one's fault in a way." This commentary

suggests that he may be on the verge of expanding his racialized understandings. He

started to question the role of society to judge language patterns, as a result of revisiting

or rethinking about the racial dynamics presented in the text. This again connects back to

Vygotsky's concept of "unfurling." Matthew is opening up the text and incorporating

new perspectives. This point will be elaborated on more extensively in the "Analysis

across Participants" section of this dissertation. Similar to Jessica, there are spaces where

Matthew demonstrates some level of fluidity, as observed in the above exchange, which

may be an anchor to develop his racial literacy.

Overall, in his written responses, Matthew tended to present with surface-level

understandings. At times, he struggled with the depth of the political, social and cultural

understandings of the time period. In his oral responses, he maintained his position on

the periphery. He tended to use humor and evasion to avoid critical inquiry. He did not

attempt to deconstruct, critique, or present personal narratives to the social and political

dynamics taking place in the reading. The next participant also responded superficially in

many of the written responses. However, she dove deeper into the political, social and

cultural issues, depicted in the reading, during the course of revisiting the text.

Esther's Responses to the "The Wife of His Youth"

Esther presented the enthusiasm of a first-year White graduate student in much of

her classroom discussion, and overall engagement with the subject-matter. However, in

responding to "The Wife of His Youth," Esther's written responses were brief and only

one or two sentences in length. In responding to the "One Drop Rule," Esther wrote,

"The drop of blood rule" states that if a child's father is African American and the mother

is European-American, then that child will be placed in a segregated school. This

concept pertains to the reading of 'The Wife of His Youth' in that the article was about a

group of people who were also mixed-race and their separation from aspects of society."

However, when revisiting the text during the interview on the same construct, Esther

provided significant illumination on her responses. For example, I asked her, during the

interview, "How did the reading make her feel about race and post-Reconstruction

America under President Obama's presidency?" Esther provided a very detailed and

nuanced response, but never really fully answered the question. She deconstructed the

influence of what she noted as "mainstream values." She categorized students by their

orientation to "mainstream values." She stated the following during the interview:

> Ah///so one of the things that I thought was extremely interesting about the issue
>
> of race and racism in// um// the "Wife of His Youth" is just his attitude, how his
>
> attitude towards his wife changes in this story/how/ah/ towards/ the end of the
>
> story he's like accepting of his wife more//but you know// it almost gives the air
>
> that he's like he is embarrassed of her, which is applicable in a lot of different
>
> racial and cultural situations today//uh//there's definite/ I mean//in any kind of
>
> culture there always like the people who are very extreme about their culture very
>
> //proud of their heritage and I almost feel that some people who are trying to be
>
> like more quote unquote mainstream are embarrassed (inflection) by that kind of
>
> attitude//uh// and not only in the African American community, but also in other
>
> cultures as well//ah//for example where I teach//I teach in a very rural
>
> community// where //ah///I mean/there are some people who //like the country
>
> culture//which I have just only recently been exposed to myself//ah//is very

prevalent out there, but only with certain people/there's people who live in

subdivisions and people who live on farms and people who live on farms on very

much into the country culture, they wear the Confederate Flag on their belt

buckles. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Esther may be suggesting that those who have extreme views are trying to

overcompensate for not being a part of mainstream culture. Another way to look at it

they are trying to compensate for not being White, upper middle class or mainstream in

their values. Her social construction is rooted in what she views as embracing of

"mainstream values." Individuals who do not embrace "mainstream values" or White

values are embarrassed and trying to overcompensate. She applied this mind-set to not

only African Americans but Whites who live in rural areas, as well. In responding to a

question about the way language was used to signify or represent social class, Esther

made a distinction between what she viewed as mainstream White suburban identity and

what she referenced as "country culture." She saw "country culture" as a deviation from

mainstream culture, in terms of whiteness.   Esther specifically stated, "There's people

who live in subdivisions and people who live on farms and people who live on farms are

very much into country culture." In this utterance, her reference to "country culture" and

the previous referent to the Confederate Flag presents rural "red-neck" stereotypes.

While she does not directly express these microaggressions, they are emblematic in her

speech pattern. Essentially, rural behavior or country behavior is not in line with what

Esther notes as White upper middle mainstream values. Perry (2002) writes, "White,

American, middle class and normal were synonymous" (p. 90). Subsumed in Esther's

discourse is this dichotomy between country and suburban, in terms of how she viewed

"mainstream values," which was considered normative in her social construction of

whiteness.

In this discourse, Esther discusses the normative aspect of whiteness. She created

a division between suburban and rural, in terms of her student population. She appeared

to be on the boundary of suggesting that "country culture" is indicative of individuals

with "conservative" and not what she referenced as "mainstream" values. She mentions

them wearing the Confederate Flag on their belt buckles. Indeed, she does not

problematize or associate this behavior with racism. She sees this as more a part of their

culture and not necessarily embracing a particular ideology. Similarly, research by

Holyfield, Ryan and Bradley (2009) on allegiance to the Confederate Flag reported that

participants in their study did not equate the legacy of slavery with allegiance to the

Confederate Flag. Participants in the study noted that their allegiance to the Confederate

Flag was more connected to their Southern heritage. In discussing her students, Esther

presented a dichotomy between suburban and rural students. In this dichotomy, her

discourse presented supposition of stereotypes about people who live in rural areas as

being unsophisticated, but not necessarily possessing bigoted values. Therefore, Esther's

failure to problematize this behavior suggest that she may not fully understand the

implications of the Confederate Flag and its associated with whiteness ideology.

In the semi-structured interview on "The Wife of His Youth," I asked Esther,

"What are your views when you witnessed people like Tiger Woods and Mariah Carey

being placed in a position where they are forced to choose one racial identity over

another?" Esther stepped collectively into her White identity. Her language suggested

that she relished the fact that she was not forced to choose or embrace one identity over

another. She presented an impassioned narrative when she stated:

> **Since I am a White American,**
>
> I am able to identify with
>
> you know the multiple heritages that I have.
>
> Ah, for example my dad's side is very Irish.
>
> And my mom's side is very German.
>
> So I am able to appreciate all of this heritage.
>
> (Interview Transcript, September 22, 2014)

She specifically stated, "My mom is very German and Dad's very Irish." Her use

of the adverb "very" is a signifier of the purity of that link. Ore (2003) indicates that

scientific racism sanctioned the notion that real Americans were White and real Whites

came from Northwest Europe. She writes, "Northwestern European ancestry as a

requisite for Whiteness was set in legal concrete" (p. 87). In addressing ties to European

ancestry, Perry (2002) indicates that there are two types of ethnic options:

> One way was the ethnic option or symbolic ethnicity. These terms refer to the
>
> ways that multi-generational White Americans in the absence of ethnic
>
> community and cultural practices such as language, will choose an ethnicity and
>
> embrace it largely in name only. (p. 92)

Esther's discourse suggest that those heritages strengthen her whiteness, regardless if it is only symbolic in nature.

In the following exchange and to create a level of parallelism with the other participants, I asked Esther, "How do you feel about the use of the term "refined" to describe Mr. Ryder's features?" Esther responded with the following exchange:

EH: Um//ah//in this context, I feel that refined was very much//ah//objective. Ah//I mean

What one person views as like high class or ah//very much like upper class

CF: Ok

EH: Might be depended upon what culture they live in and when reading this it was almost like//when they were describing his features of a refined type they were trying to say well look at how White he can be

CF: That's interesting

EH: That's// that's, I mean that's the context I got because I mean// the previous sentence even says while he was not as White as some of the Blue Veins, his appearance was you know, such as to confer distinction upon them. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Esther reads in between the lines and suggests that Chesnutt was truly arguing that while socially Mr. Ryder was Black, his phenotypical appearance and sophistication were indicative of someone who possessed White characteristics. This is a compelling

illustration of how she is trying to make meaning out of the racial dynamics in text. More importantly, it reveals how close reading while revisiting the text can expand or develop one's racial literacy.

In terms of language and class differences, Chesnutt intentionally created a binary between Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. He also created a binary between Molly Dixon and Liza Jane. Chesnutt (1899) provided detailed imagery to paint a mental picture in the mind of the reader on Liza Jane's appearance. He discusses her physical appearance and the harshness of her life. When he writes, "her face was crossed and re-crossed with a hundred wrinkles…She looked like a bit of the old plantation life, summoned up from the past by the wave of the magician's wand" (p. 4). Additionally, he painted Liza Jane through her speech pattern, with extensive use of Liza Jane's dialect. Again, he wants the reader to experience Southern plantation talk through Liza's authentic language. Chesnutt (1899) in using the literary device of imagery and characterization writes, "W'en I wuz a gal I wuz married ter a man named Jim. But Jim died, an' after dat I married a merlatter man named Sam Taylor" (p. 4). In translating her dialect, she stated, I was married to a mulatto man named Sam Taylor. Sam Taylor (Mr. Ryder) then escapes, because Liza Jane alerted him to his impending sale. In this stretch of speech, she sets up the circumstances of her search for him, over the next 25 years.

I asked Esther, "How was language being used to illustrate their class differences?" She stated:

Yes, so the way language was used to signify social standing the more proper/the more properly you spoke, the like higher your social standing was//ah//is what I

understood//ah for example when he says' "good afternoon madam" and she says "good evenin suh." You know there is a big distinction between the dialects that they have ah//that signify their class differences. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

In this excerpt, Esther does critique the significance of the language in creating the binary between Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. Similar to the next participant, Esther viewed the language through more of a classist lens. She specifically made a note of how Chesnutt used the dialect to create a division between someone who was sophisticated versus unsophisticated in their language patterns. Mr. Ryder's use of the term "Madam" denotes some level of exposure to politeness conventions when addressing a stranger. Liza Jane, on the other hand, using the term "suh," and leaving off the ending "g" on "evenin" suggest a Southern pronunciation. Esther's use of these examples illustrates some degree of familiarity with the function of dialect to create a context for characterization.

In "The Wife of His Youth," Esther started to show some level of expansion of racial literacy. She discussed how the language in "The Wife of His Youth" was being used to create a context for social class, but did not recognize it as a rhetorical device being used by Chesnutt to create empathy for the character of Liza Jane. Overall, Esther struggled with the historical context of "The Wife of His Youth." The next participant responded similarly to Matthew and Esther, in terms of, at times, viewing the reading through the lens of White privilege, and an ahistorical background. However, Kyle's

responses were dissimilar, in that he responded more extensively in both the written expression and while revisiting the text.

Kyle's Responses to "The Wife of His Youth"

Kyle is a young White male and presents with gregarious optimism about undertaking graduate work. This was evident in how he responded to the reading of "The Wife of His Youth." He was not reticent or reserved in providing in-depth responses to the text. At times and similar to the other participants, there were evocations of white privilege. When asked about the "One Drop Rule," Kyle wrote:

> The "One Drop Rule" is used to separate the rules governing society during the time of the Wife of His Youth. The culture looked upon any interaction with an individual falling under the 'One Drop Rule' as not binding or legal. Therefore, the marriage between Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane was not seen by society as legally or culturally acceptable agreement. (Kyle's Written Response)

In this utterance, Kyle is attempting to critique the concept of miscegenation. Miscegenation is defined as "the marriage or cohabitation between two people from different racial groups" (Merriam-Webster. Com, 2016). Kyle took Mr. Ryder's White identity for granted, based on the way he was being described in the text. Even though the text explicitly stated that Mr. Ryder was of "mixed-blood," Kyle's language suggests that he totally glossed over that point. He believed that the marriage was one between a White person (Mr. Ryder) and person of color (Liza Jane).

As with the other participants, I asked Kyle, "How do you feel about the term "refined' to describe Mr. Ryder's features." He responded with the following commentary:

Refined is about the way he presents himself to the public

Yeah, and as I said,

refined is about the way he presents

himself to the public

//uh for them to see.

The way he puts on his clothes//

uh//you know he takes care of his skin//

takes care of his face, his hair.

(Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

In the above narration, you can hear and feel the admiration that Kyle has for Chesnutt's character of Mr. Ryder. He provided a very detailed description of Mr. Ryder and his characteristics and talents. He made strong personal connections to Mr. Ryder. He talked about being "refined" in the context of personal appearance and hygiene. He further extended his appraisal to Mr. Ryder's character. He specifically stated, "because that's what is expected of someone who is refined." Kyle associated "refined" with being a character trait. In his discourse, he associated "refined" with being White.

Similar to some of the other participants, Kyle struggled with the racial identity conundrum, and the use of dialect by Chesnutt in presenting the character of Liza Jane. Liza Jane in describing her search to Mr. Ryder discusses how she searched for her

husband from New Orleans to Richmond, Virginia. Essentially, she went from one part

of the South to the other in her search for her long-lost husband. Chesnutt writes, "Den

de wah broke out, an' w'en it wuz ober' de cullud folks wuz scattered" (p. 4). Chesnutt

goes onto say that after the Civil War ended, Liza Jane continued her search for her long-

lost husband. Keenly, Chesnutt described how Mr. Ryder listened intently to Liza Jane's

story. Mr. Ryder, given his sophistication and upwardly mobile status, appeared to have

no difficulty in understanding her speech pattern. Chesnutt used this level of ingenuity to

display that Mr. Ryder was not that far removed from his own former life.

I asked Kyle, "What are your thoughts and feelings about the way the language

was used to signify social standing?" Kyle responded by stating:

> You can see the disparity between his language which is very, very clear and the
>
> adjectives are very, very descriptive and her sentences, which are very very//
>
> don't use as many adjectives//the words are all out of place and mix matched and
>
> you can see his//interaction of those creates that feeling that there is a huge
>
> crevice between language between her and him and that carries forward to the last
>
> part which kinda brings it all together and says that perhaps///all of this interaction
>
> was the reason that he did not want to interact with her beyond that meeting
>
> several years ago where they supposedly got married. (Interview transcript,
>
> September 22, 2014).

In this excerpt, Kyle's response revealed that he was struggling with

understanding African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the passage. He talked

about the contrast between the language of Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. He specifically

wrote, "//the words are all out of place and mix matched and you can see his//interaction

of those creates that feeling that there is a huge crevice between language." Here in this

utterance, he does not have a complete understanding of the nature of AAVE. Indeed, he

created a binary between African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and American

Standard English (ASE). He critiqued Liza's struggle with American Standard English,

as the reason that Mr. Ryder abandoned the relationship, which superimposes a negative

connotation attached to the use of AAVE.   Research by Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, et

al. (2006) writes, "A substantial body of scholarship has demonstrated strong connections

between teachers' negative attitudes about stigmatized dialects, lower teacher

expectations for students who speak them and thus lower academic achievement (p. 31).

Kyle's use of the adjective "mix-matched" placed a value judgment on Liza Jane's

dialect. His discourse essentially disempowers Liza Jane and other speakers of AAVE

but empowers the character of Mr. Ryder. Additionally, Kyle appeared to have difficulty

with the "reading" of race in the passage and literary devices that Chesnutt used in his

characterization of Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. Kyle socially constructed Mr. Ryder's

identity as that of an elite White person.   Kyle was asked in a written prompt, "What

ways did he see social identification interacting in the text?" Kyle responded by writing:

> The social identification is clearly shown in Mr. Ryder. As a white male, his
>
> status is clearly stated by his choice of his poetry. Tennyson's poems show
>
> Ryder's intellectual status and the strength of his commitment at the end of the
>
> story to his marriage shows his religious connection. (Kyle's Written Prompt)

As noted, Kyle "reads" Mr. Ryder as being White. This "misreading" will be discussed more extensively in the "Analysis across Participants." His social construction in this written response presents a telling aspect of Kyle's meaning-making around what constitutes a literate and well-informed person. Specifically, he uses a classist lens, to support his contention that, because Mr. Ryder was reading Tennyson, he was White, and highly educated. In expanding on the written response, I asked Kyle during the interview, are there other interacting social identifications at play in this reading? Kyle stated,

> Uh, I believe so//obviously there is a cultural one because obviously Mr. Ryder ask for acceptance of the rest of the group before he brings out the fact that he was married to this Lisa person//so there is obviously a cultural//acceptance that he wants//to// in order to take on this burden and I have a feeling that if he did not get//it we may have had a different result. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

This stretch of speech aptly displayed Kyle's interpretive comprehension of the cultural, social and political context. Further, he believed that Mr. Ryder was asking the other members of the "Blue Veins" to accept his recognition of his former wife. He used the noun "burden." He specifically stated, "in order to take on this burden." In this context "burden" means "load or responsibility." His language or his social construction suggests that it would be a cultural and social "burden" for Mr. Ryder to acknowledge his former wife. Acknowledging Liza Jane would thwart his own upper mobility or assimilation because it would be seen as a step backward.

Overall, in a historical text, Kyle demonstrated a level of indeterminacy, which related to his willingness to critique or recognize inequity in social structures, when presented. In his written response, he wrote, "As a white male, his status is clearly stated by his choice of his poetry." He used the adverb "clearly," translated to mean "without doubt" or "obviously." This supports his position that it was obvious that Mr. Ryder's social status was that of an upwardly mobile White male because of his choice of poetry. He made a sweeping generalization and tied it to the ethnicity of the character.

Additionally, he also presented subjective claims that dealt with the feelings invoked by the text. These feelings were manifested in the position that Kyle took up when discussing Mr. Ryder's choice between his fiancé Molly Dixon and wife Liza Jane. He stated, "I have a feeling that if he did not get//it we may have had a different result." In this instance, the noun "feeling" denotes a "belief or hunch." Here, Kyle is vacillating between what he perceives as societal pressure to reject an interracial relationship, which his discourse suggests he perceives as taboo. More importantly, Kyle's discourse illustrates a limitation of awareness, as it relates to the historical time period and miscegenation. The next two participants provided very detailed critiques, a deconstruction of social issues, narratives while the last participant introduced a counter-narrative. This was the first time a counter-narrative had been introduced to challenge a feeling of sympathy and a downward trajectory for Mr. Ryder, in choosing his formerly enslaved wife over his fiancée Molly Dixon.

Karen's Responses to "The Wife of His Youth"

Karen is a young White woman who presents with a soft-spoken newcomer's perspective, undertaking graduate-level coursework. Similar to the other participants, Karen struggled with some elements of "The Wife of His Youth." Most significant was the historical context and Chesnutt's use of dialect or African American Vernacular English (AAVE). In responding to the question about the "One Drop Rule," she struggled with the historical time period and the concept of assimilation when she wrote:

> The concept of the "One Drop Rule" is that any person with one drop of African blood was considered to be black. In the reading of "The Wife of His Youth," The main character of Mr. Ryder, who is known as the dean of "society of colored person" called the Blue Veins. It is interesting that the society is known to be for black people, yet the name itself was given to them because they apparently admitted only people who were white enough to show blue veins through their skin. So it seems that the "One Drop Rule" is present, in these people who are very light-skinned were still categorized as black, yet there was another hierarchy within that category, where light skin was value more than dark skin. (Karen's Written Response)

In the above excerpt, Karen's language suggests that she had an incomplete understanding of the American system of stratification and the systemic nature of racism, as perpetuated by the "One Drop Rule." While she could articulate the literal definition, she had difficulty in applying the definition to the social context. By definition, under the

"One Drop Rule" regardless of the whiteness of an individual complexion, they were still considered Black if they had any African ancestry.

During the interview, I asked Karen, "What are the parallels between post-Reconstruction and how many reference our current American society as post-racial under Obama's presidency?" She responded by stating:

> Um, I hadn't really thought about, you know, the issues. Because I'm sure that after the Civil War and once, um, you know, slavery was abolished that there probably was a strange feeling for people of not knowing, like how to relate to people in, like, in that different context. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Karen's use of the adjective of "strange" enacts an uneasiness in her attempt to understand the historical significance of the end of the slavery, and the racial implications. She suggests that it was "strange" or unusual for people to have to relate to one another in a different context. Her language suggested that there was no part of American society to prepare for sustained social change, when the roles have been changed. Moreover, Karen's discourse suggested that there was a degree of confusion and powerlessness because now there were unstructured roles and a cultural divide.

As with the other participants, I asked Karen how she felt about the use of the term "refined" to describe Mr. Ryder's features? She responded with the following dialogue:

KC: Mm-hmm, um, well it's interesting that what, you know, when it goes onto

define that it says, "His hair was almost straight." You know is, uh, I guess it

seems like, that makes me think that they're using the word refined to describe,

um, characteristics of more of a white person.

CF: Mm-hmmm

KC: His hair is almost straight. Um, so I guess that, yeah, and, and that example

refined to meant, to mean, um, sorry I can't really get my words together. Meant

to mean more like a white person, um---

CF: Okay

KC: ---and so then that's you know, also then saying that to have morals above

suspicion is more of white quality.

CF: Yeah

KC: You know, which is strange to think anyone would have thought that, so//

(Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

We hear aspects of White privilege in Karen's response. She stated, "that

example refined to meant, to mean, um, sorry I can't really get my words together.

Meant to mean more like a white person, um—." Again, similar to Matthew, she

struggled with articulating her thoughts. Her speech was punctuated with hesitations and

apologies as she tried to grapple with this concept. In Karen's critique of "refined," she

was suggesting that Chesnutt's description created an image of someone with White

characteristics. Karen's use of the noun "characteristics" underscores that those attributes

are "deserving or identified" with whiteness. Thus, her language presents the idea that whiteness is the gold standard by which all other things are measured. However, in the same utterance, she also challenged the thought that "having morals above suspicion was more of a white quality." Again, we see the fluidity aspect of social construction, which inferred the ability to enact new social positions.

Karen acknowledged the use of language to create a comparison, similar to the other participants. She created a juxtaposition between Liza Jane and Molly Dixon, in terms of social positioning. She suggested that she really did not know the depth of Chesnutt's use of language to create a binary between to the two characters. She did say that it made Liza Jane appear to be less educated, but she did not present it as a negative appraisal. She essentially was perplexed by Chesnutt's motives for using Liza Jane's authentic language. She even stated:

> KC: You know that she kinda speak in a, should I say a refined way. That, the same way the Mr. Ryder obviously did. And, um, so I don't know. I mean I don't know if that's a good thing to do. If that's like, politically correct. I guess it is. I, I remember thinking when I read m-, uh, Mr. Ryder retold the story---
>
> CF: Mm-hmm
>
> KC: ----to the people at the gala or whatever. I wondered if he had impersonated her speech. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Again, Karen's commentary suggested that she didn't understand initially why Chesnutt used African American Vernacular English to tell Liza Jane's story. Moreover,

she questioned why Chesnutt didn't allow Mr. Ryder to use the same speech pattern

when he was retelling his story to the guest at the "Ball."   Here Karen's discourse

reflected the significance of re-reading and revisiting text. She stated, "I wonder if he

had impersonated her." She is starting to question the function of AAVE and its

relationship to the racial dynamics in the story. This is an example of Karen's developing

racial literacy. More importantly, she is starting to grapple with the notion of about how

language encodes power, and how identity emerges as people make meaning around a

text. She stated, "If that's like, politically correct. I guess it is." In this utterance, she is

starting to question if it is politically correct to use a person's own language to tell their

story without "whitewashing" it or changing it to become more socially acceptable.

Karen's discourse does show evolving racialized understanding. However, she

did struggle with the historical time period and the use of dialect. However, she is

starting to make connections and critiquing important elements of the reading.   Again,

after revisiting the text, she questioned why Mr. Ryder did not use dialect to present Liza

Jane's story to the rest of the group. This level of questioning suggests that she is on the

verge of seeing the significance of how language is an important aspect of telling

someone's story and lends power or gives a "voice" to the person's experiences.

Darla's Responses to the "The Wife of His Youth"

Darla is an African American newcomer to graduate coursework. Darla similar to

Karen is undertaking graduate coursework for her own edification. She is not pursuing a

Master of Education as a part of professional development requirements. As with the

other participants, Darla brought a unique set of perspectives to the reading. She

responded passionately to many elements of the reading. Similar to the others, she struggled with her own interpretation of the "One Drop Rule." Indeed, each participant had a different interpretation of "The One Drop Rule." This point will be elaborated more extensively in the forthcoming "Analysis across Participants" Darla critiqued the "One Drop Rule" when she wrote:

> The One Drop Rule as depicted in the Spring text, states that a child born to a white mother and black father will be considered a black child and therefore a black mother and white father that child will be white. This is the depiction of the blood that resides through the child from his father's linage. This correlates to the text in, "The Wife of His Youth," by the constant reiteration of social standing because of the skin tone of the members of the Blue Vein Society. These people are clearly mixed and very fair skinned to be confused as to being fully white. In this text, Mr. Ryder, is able to ride the fence of passing for white by complexion which allows him opportunities and social growth that a darker tone person is unable to achieve. (Darla's, Written Response)

She breaks down the "One Drop Rule" into its constituent components. She discussed the lineage aspect of the "One Drop Rule," which also illustrated an incomplete understanding of the rule. The "One Drop Rule" clearly asserts that regardless, of maternal vs. paternal origin, any person with African ancestry is considered Black.

The story also provoked a catalytic response in Darla. In critiquing the characters of Mr. Ryder, Molly Dixon and Liza Jane, Darla wrote:

Mr. Ryder is described as refined type hair almost straight, neatly dressed, and not

as white as some of the Blue Vein members. Mrs. Dixon was described as whiter

than Mr. Ryder, about 25, and refined manners. Liza Jane was illustrated as a

very black woman that she was so black that her gums were blue, she had no teeth

was very old and look like she was part of the plantation life. These descriptions

are linked to racial identity and positioning by the portrayals of the ones of skin

color. It presents the cultured divide by race and color. He was presented as a

fair tone skinned black man who identified himself more to the white race. He

wanted that social position. He wanted and enjoyed the opportunities that came

his way due to his complexion. He turned his back on "black heritage" to belong

to a social group that is white washed so much that whites belong to it. Mr. Ryder

describes Mrs. Dixon in such a way it's clear that she is very fair skinned and

passable as white. (Darla's, Written Response)

In her appraisal, she rebukes Mr. Ryder for what she sees as him turning his back

on his "black heritage." Similar, to Jessica, she introduced this concept of internalized

oppression but did not name it as such. In her social construction of Mr. Ryder, Darla

perceived him to be a "sellout." He was viewed as someone who has abandoned his

Black identity. She goes on to critique him as pompous and arrogant. When Darla was

asked how was the language used in the text to indicate racial identity? Darla responded

by writing:

I noticed the language in the text was very pompous and arrogant from Mr.

Ryder's views but once Liza Jane entered her dialect and language showed how

education played a huge part in presentation within the culture. They both were from the same place but because he was born free and he was able to become educated due to his relocation north and skin tone; the difference between the two was drastic. (Darla's Written Response)

Here, Darla also created a binary. She interpreted Chesnutt's use of language to perpetuate the social class differences of Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane. She "read" Mr. Ryder as being pompous and arrogant, which she equated with his desire for full assimilation into White society. This brings insight into how Darla views language and its relationship to class. In Darla's social positioning, she credited Mr. Ryder's fleeing to the North as result of his upward mobility. Indeed, both Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane were positioned as products of their environment. As a result of his escape and skin tone, he was able to become an educated person and elevate himself. As a result of her skin tone and inability to pass, she was unable to overcome her circumstance. This is what Darla meant when she wrote, "they both came from the same place."

In expanding on this point about language patterns during the semi-structured interview, I asked, "Darla "What did you notice about the language in the text?" What are your thoughts and feelings about the way the language was used to signify social standing?

DC: Okay. I noticed that the language in the text from Mr. Ryder's point of view was very pompous and arrogant, so---then Liza Jane, hers, with her dialect and her language---

CF: Mm-hmm

DC: Like readin' the text, which I was surprised I could actually understand everything—

CF: Wow

DC: that she said---

CF: Mm-hmm

DC: -but it showed like a lack of education that she had.

CF: Okay. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Here in this dialogue, Darla, similar to Jessica, was able to perceive and sound out the accent regardless of the spelling, based on her phonemic, phonological awareness and understanding of AAVE.   More importantly, she recognizes the shared cultural and familial presentations in the dialect that occur when certain words or phrases are passed down culturally, from people with shared characteristics.

I asked her how she felt about the use of the term "refined" to describe Mr. Ryder's features? She responded by saying:

DC: Hmm. I would think that term "refined" is kinda trying to present a type of guy that's pulled together, clean,---

CF: Mm-hmmm

DC: Dress nice appropriate, but it's also taking away---like the same time it probably was other black men that weren't refined, wasn't dressed appropriately or things, because they couldn't afford the nice tailored clothing and things like that. So it paints a picture, of he's a dress-nice dressed fellow. His hair is really straight, He's neat, his manners are awesome and appropriate. And it kinda lets

you know he was educated, that he knew linguistics, that he knew all of those

worldly things and worldly subjects, and you know, like they're ---they talk about

him wantin to throw a ball and things of that----

CF: Mm-hmmm

DC: --sort and it's just to let you know, like he—the—here's a man that has

wealth, has knowledge, has reputation that he has to look the certain way and a

certain part. (Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Different than the other participants, Darla conceptualized "refined" as more of a

character trait. The other participants associated refined with White characteristics. For

Darla, refined took on the characteristics of a sophisticated person, beyond moral

reproach, regardless of ethnicity. She described his appearance, education, and social

class. Additionally, Darla in describing Mr. Ryder stated, "And it kinda lets you know he

was educated, that he knew linguistics." In this stretch of speech, she is critiquing Mr.

Ryder's linguistic ability. In other words, he knows Standard American English that is

generally used in professional communication. Moreover, there is a relationship between

language and social power. Subsumed in Darla's commentary, there is a presumption of

power attached to discourse. Those who speak African American Vernacular English are

considered to be deficient in their linguistic ability, hygiene, and intelligence. His ability

to speak Standard American English suggests that he is appropriately educated because

he knows about the structure of speech in both the verbal and written presentation.

The most compelling aspects of Darla's presentation was the use of a counter-

narrative that rejected the notion of sympathy and honor, in Mr. Ryder's choice of Liza

Jane over Molly Dixon. Essentially, Darla rejects the notion that Mr. Ryder chose Liza

Jane out of sympathy. Darla was able to read in between the lines and beyond the text.

She was able to extract Chesnutt's overall message of self-love and identity, as the

affirming tenet of his narrative. She responded with the following powerful narrative:

Love is love, regardless of where you from,

I think he chose Liza because

at the end of time,

that-that was his first love.

That-That was who he was with in the beginning,

before he was able to get this education, get his lifestyle.

Even though he was born free

and he was livin' there,

he was part of the slave nature out in the fields

……love is love, regardless of where you from,

what's your education or anything.

(Interview transcript, September 22, 2014)

Darla presents a powerful line that sums up Mr. Ryder connection to his blackness

when she wrote, "He was part of the slave nature out in the fields." Essentially, he

possessed the shared characteristics of the other slaves. Even though he was light-

skinned, he was still working in the fields and other parts of the culture of slavery.

Darla started to take on new social positioning on the character of Mr. Ryder.

Initially, she perceived his character to be that of a "sell-out." Darla in her written

description depicted the character of Mr. Ryder as being pompous and arrogant.

However, ultimately she rejected this conclusion and took on a different social

positioning. This illustrates her willingness to expand her racialized understandings,

which is a critical part of racial literacy. Indeed, she introduced the concept of self- love,

as a counter-narrative. She was the first to reject Mr. Ryder's sympathy for Liza Jane.

Essentially, her position was that regardless of the skin tone debate, loyalty and love were

powerful determiners. She qualified her position by saying "love is love, regardless of

where you from." Darla's interpretive comprehension as she read in between the lines is

one of acceptance of racial and social identity. Her response anchors the tenets of

Critical Race Theory, which support the notion of counter-narratives to reject dominant

narratives of Black inferiority.

Overall, Darla's responses in "The Wife of His Youth," were laced with critiques,

personal narratives and the introduction of a powerful counter-narrative of self-love.   She

also was able to make intertexual connections, and recognized the dynamics of the skin

color debate, from a historical perspective, and her lived experience.

In a literary juxtaposition, Chesnutt and the character of Mr. Ryder are two sides

of the same coin. In presenting this moral dilemma, Chesnutt is in a quandary similar to

Mr. Ryder, in that they are both searching for acceptance of their own Black heritage.

Chesnutt in his literary genius used Liza Jane as a metaphor for acceptance of his racial

and social identity. In order to display to the world that he was proud of his racial

identity, Chesnutt used a love story to champion the argument that true acceptance is

manifested in self-love. Mr. Ryder's recognition and acceptance of Liza Jane are a

display of his own self-love. It is Liza Jane who helps Mr. Ryder in resolving his own

"Double-Consciousness," which refers to this conflicted sense of self. The character of

Liza Jane brings visibility and acceptance of Mr. Ryder's blackness, which was

essentially shrouded by his phenotypical whiteness.

In concluding thoughts, many of the participants struggled with the racialized and

historical nature of the reading. They often socially constructed Mr. Ryder to be White,

even when the reading explicitly stated he was bi-racial to use a contemporary term. This

illustrates the powerful prism of race and how individuals see the world around them

through their own racial lens. Additionally, the majority of participants had varying and

contradictory interpretations of the "One Drop Rule," which caused them to misread the

racial dynamics in the text. This point will be discussed more extensively, during the

"Analysis across Participants." There are also important pedagogical implications for

teacher education students. Racial literacy can be the mechanism to create a space for

new understanding for teacher education students as they grapple with issues involving

race, racism, and anti-racism.

Chapter 5: "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3IzTyjhHLc

In this chapter, I provide a description of each of the participants' responses to the reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." This seven-minute video was produced by Reginald James (2011) and focuses on the concept of colorism. The video was shown during the 3rd week of class in a social justice education course. I was interested to know what meanings each participant made after watching the video and responding to it in writing and in an interview. Were they responding with a personal narrative, critique of the text, humor, direct quotes, use of distancing language, superficial language, deconstruction of social issues or did the text evoke a catalytic response? I present six case portraits to help me understand the phenomenon. I used the lens of Racial Literacy, Critical Whiteness Studies, Critical Race Theory, and Reader Response Theory, to guide me in my analysis of the diversity of responses to text that are racialized in nature.

During the third week of class on "Social Class/Reflections," the instructor of the course introduced the video of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." She started a discussion on a taboo subject in the African American community, which is this concept of colorism. She talked about her own personal experiences with colorism, and different students chimed in on the discussion. The professor relayed how she was made to feel "othered," because she was darker-skinned. Moreover, a relative suggested that she was not her father's daughter because of her skin-tone. Jessica sitting toward the front of the class chimed in people questioned whether she was her mother's daughter

because she was light-skinned. Both of their comments provided a compelling segue into the introduction of the video and this notion of colorism or light-skin bias.

Jessica's Responses to Colorism

The video of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination" begins with Educator/Social Activist Dereka Blackmon discussing how she has been called many different names related to skin color. She stated, "Most of the time people think the things they are saying are a compliment, even when I find them to be really offensive." The video continues with other participants describing their experiences with skin color discrimination, which is often referenced as colorism. Towards the end of the video, one of the participants presents a profound and thought provoking commentary by stating, "Color can be currency, there is a meaning attached to how we look."

Jessica Moore (all names are pseudonyms) in her multi-layered responses appeared to experience a deep personal connection with the video of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." Jessica's personal history is that of a young light-complexioned African American female, who is returning to college to pursue a Master of Special Education degree. She has been working for the last five years in her school district with disabled students of color. In her "Autobiographical Survey," (see Appendix F). Jessica revealed that race was a significant part of her identity in working with students of color. She specifically wrote, "Race, as a part of identity, plays a large role in the students of color that I interact with daily." She continued by writing, "Race was never a part of my identity growing up. I grew up in a small town where everyone knew everyone. Growing up though and moving to the city, I was given a reality check and

began to understand that race plays a large role in who I am." When asked to talk about

the concept of "color-blind ideology," she wrote, "My views on embracing a 'colorblind'

ideology vary from agreeing to disagreeing with the ideology. I support the idea of not

seeing color, but also think it's important for people of color to know the history of their

race. I think it's important for everyone to embrace their culture, but not be judged by

it." In this stretch of discourse, Jessica is lamenting over the color versus culture divide.

She implies that there are preconceived or implicit biases attached to race and more

specifically skin color within the race. This is aptly noted in the part of the utterance

where she states, "I think it's important for everyone to embrace their culture, but not be

judge by it." Jessica's definition of blackness applies to identity, culture, and heritage.

In this utterance is not viewing blackness in isolation of socio-political dynamics attached

to race.

During various class discussions on colorism, Jessica indicated that she could

relate to the different readings. She relayed that, because of her light skin tone, she was

made to feel different by her African American peers (Field notes, September 29, 2014).

As she reflected on the video, Jessica stated the following:

It was um—it was kind like a light bulb went off; kinda—

CF: Wow

like, that's exactly, you know, the words that I'm thinking' just came ri-you know

came

CF: Yes

right out. Um, I think that it's unfortunate that we live in a world where um your

skin color plays such a large role in who you are to become, who you are

supposed

CF: Interesting

To bec-

CF: Absolutely

You know, who are supposed to become. Um, it's just—

it's unfortunate, it's unfortunate (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

Jessica's uses of the metaphor of a "light bulb" going off to describe how the

video put into words the concept of colorism, which we learned she has experienced all

her life, but did not have the language to describe. In this excerpt, she described how, to

her, the participants in the video were using "the words that I'm thinking." She moved on

to negatively appraise a society structured by skin color saying "it's unfortunate we live

in a world where your skin color plays such a large role in who you are to become." She

ended this thought by repeating the phrase "unfortunate" two additional times. We see

her fluctuate with the use of pronouns. In this excerpt she referred to "your skin color"

and "who you are supposed to become" as if she is not impacted by privilege or

oppression by the color of her skin. Later, we hear her identifying as a light skinned

African American who recognized the privilege associated with her skin color and also

the contentious nature of how colorism is viewed within the African American

community.

Indeed, her response to this video is marked with emotions and pain. Her familial narrative included her recognition of the privileges associated with light skin in America and the emotional pain that comes from being singled out in her own family because of her skin tone. In her written response to the video, she wrote:

I've been labeled as "light skinned" my entire life

As an African American woman

I've been labeled as 'light skinned" my entire life.

I've experienced colorism since a very early age.

As many of the participants from the video

there are many negative things said

regarding the skin color of African Americans

that are backhanded compliments that truly offend.

I've been called

"high yellow"

"light bright"

"red bone,"

"yellow banana,"

"vanilla"

And the list goes on.

I've also experienced the attitudes from others

stating, "she thinks she's cute"

because of my fair skin.

I've also been defending my position

within my family all of my life

because my mother and sisters have darker skin than I do.

It's been suggested that I'm adopted

or that my sisters and I have different fathers

because of the difference in our skin color.

Although I find the difference

in the skin color of African Americans beautiful and unique

there are many people who discriminate against people

with darker skin color.

The "light is more attractive" notion dates back to slavery

when lighter skin slaves

were treated differently that slaves with darker skin.

Slaves with light skin were allotted the "privilege"

of working in the slave master house

occupying jobs as nannies, maids and cooks

while slaves with dark skin worked in the fields,

which was a harder more strained job.

(Jessica's Written Response)

In this narrative, we hear her identify with the participants in the video who talk about their experiences with colorism. She offers a counter-narrative which espouses the beauty of African American skin tones. She wrote, "I find the differences in the skin color of African Americans beautiful and unique," Similarly, in her interview, she expanded on this counter-narrative stating, "I think that um the African-American race is just so beautiful, just the s-different skin colors—skin tones. It's just—it's beautiful to me."

In her written response to the video, she amplifies her critique of colorism,

America has a horrible track record regarding people of color.

Many minorities have been tortured by "White America."

For many years, the "white is right" mentality

Has structured how minorities have been treated within the United States.
(Jessica's Written Response)

Here, she referred to the history of racism in America and drew on a metaphor of torture to describe the experience African American people have endured. She uses scare

quotes around the phrases "White America" and "white is right" to signal her critique of

these ideas. She presents the start of an idea that is not yet developed: the material

consequences associated with colorism in the United States. In the video, Media Studies

Professor Farmer says, "it used to be that you would get a job if you were light skinned,

but also if you weren't black enough, that would work against, you, too." Here is the

complex and nuanced nature of colorism, it has both inter-racial and intra-racial

dynamics, which frames the views of both Whites and Blacks.

The video also had a catalytic impact on Jessica. When asked, "After viewing the

video, have you come to new understandings regarding the issue of colorism…?" she

responded that she wants to examine why this kind of internalized oppression continues

to exist, even though the formalized institution of slavery ended.

I just don't understand why it continues

I think that um after viewin' it, I-

I personally wanted to kinda go back

And just understand what has gone wrong—

-within our race and—

-um it-it-it's sad,

Um that's there

And um I know that it definitely,

You know

Came from slavery and—

You know, dark-skin slaves

Bein' in the field and under—

You know treacherous conditions,

And light skin li—

So the separation was not on us, bu—

-I just don't understand why it continues.

(Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

Jessica is troubled by the continued existence of colorism as a type of internalized

oppression. She expressed that she understood the emergence and history of colorism as

a product of slavery, but she admits, "I just don't understand why it continues." In this

narrative, we hear her step into a collective identity. She stated "our race" and "we're the

only race" and "so the separation was not on us." She struggled with the implications

and consequences of intra-race hatred. Her response makes intertexual connections to

reading of "The Wife of His Youth."

Jessica's discourse reflected the different tools that she brought to her

interpretation of the text. At times, she responded with a person narrative, critique, and

counter-narratives. Moreover, you could feel a call for action in her discourse. In

contrast to Jessica, the discourse of the next participant involved a response that stayed

on the periphery. He utilized critiques, narratives, humor and social deconstruction, as

interpretive tools. However, his use of humor and distancing language kept him on the perimeter, in terms of his social positioning. Fairclough (1992) indicates that language is intimately connected to the social practices and positioning of an individual. Matthew's language reifies Fairclough's argument.

Matthew's Responses to Colorism

Matthew Thomas is a White male graduate student, who is returning to college to pursue a Master of Education degree. Matthew presented the image of being quiet, reserved and a deep thinker. He graduated from a Midwestern university in 2007, with a degree in Foreign Studies. Currently, Matthew has been teaching language at a private Catholic high school, for about six years. In class discussions, Matthew indicated that he came from a small homogeneous community with very limited exposure to African Americans, until going off to college. He described his teaching experience as one where he had limited interactions with students of color, "only one or two every year" (Autobiographical survey, 9/15/14). In his survey, Matthew indicated that he worked in a predominately upper-middle class environment, with minimal exposure to students of color. He specifically wrote "The majority of students who I teach are white, upper class, though not all are privilege."

In most of the class discussions, Matthew appeared to be very reticent to openly express his views. However, during one discussion on ethnocentrism, Matthew talked about integration into dominant White culture. He stated, "if you teach from an ethnocentric perspective, people question whether you are setting students up for failure" (Field notes, 09/15/2014). Matthew also revealed in his survey that race played a

significant part in shaping his overall identity. Additionally, he responded by writing, "I think it plays a huge role in having shaped who I am today. The opportunities available to me and the environments I have grown up in are all a part of who I am." In responding to the question of embracing colorblindness, Matthew, stated "I am glad that we seem to be moving, as a society, away from the 'color-blind' attitude. People are different, and it seems counter-intuitive to try and pretend otherwise. However, if we can respect and celebrate those differences, we can attempt to build bridges between them and find common ground" (Autobiographical Survey, 9/15/14).

After viewing the video, "Shades of Black Skin Color Discrimination," I asked Matthew, are there other interacting social identifications at play in the video, to include: race, class, gender, sexuality, language? He responds by stating, "They did make reference to the darker-complexioned African American women. I think one of the participants said that they had to be thick, and when I//and/and when he mentioned thick, I think he's denoting or associating that with voluptuousness." It's interesting to note, Matthew did not elaborate or make reference to the intersection of race and gender in his response. His use of the adjective voluptuousness was race neutral, even though the respondent in the video explicitly stated that "thick" had skin tone underpinnings.

Matthew's discourse is in response to a statement made by David Philoxene in the video where he juxtaposed the "lived experiences" of light and dark-skinned African American women. Philoxene, a doctoral candidate at the University of San Francisco, discussed the difference between light and dark-skinned females, as it pertained to colorism. Philoxene responded by stating, "The light-skinned girls were always the cute

girls that everyone was trying to holler at. It was acceptable if you were dark-skinned if

you were thick." In an urban context, "thick" has a different connotation. The Urban

Dictionary 2004, defines "thick" as "a good body specifically for sex." Philoxene stated,

"The young brothers would be on the dark-skinned young thick sisters." Philoxene

continued by saying, "The darker you were, the more objectified you were as a female."

In Matthew's response, he did not attempt to deconstruct the sexual or racial implications

as presented in the video. When the speaker stated that darker-skinned African American

women were objectified or viewed as objects of sexual exploitation, Matthew revoiced

the statement. He did not deconstruct the significance of the participant's statement

about sexual objectification. He simply interchanged voluptuousness for "thick."

Voluptuousness is more race neutral and can be used to describe either a black or white

female. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, his language mitigates the significance

of the sexual objectification of the subject. Essentially, Matthew avoids the skin tone

debate and racial implications of the participant's argument. He avoids interrogation of

the term "thick" as a form of sexual objectification, for darker-complexioned African

American women.

Related, in many areas of his responses to the video, both in the written

expression and verbally, Matthew has a tendency to engage with the video in a superficial

manner. In the following exchange, when I asked Matthew how he felt about this notion

of colorism, he presented a personal narrative on how he first learned about the notion of

colorism.

Um, and I///this was something that I'd actually heard from my wife

when she was///when we///when I met her in college.

She went to a mostly black high school.

She's white herself.

Um, she went to McCluer.

Um, and I//I don't even know how it had come up,

but that was something that I learned from her

//you know, 20-21 years of age

that I'd never known before about *[chuckles]*.

But it was///it's, uh, very//very striking.

I mean it was something that to me,

uh, I mean people judging people

is something that//that does happen///

But, you know, people are people *[laughs]*. (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

In the above narrative, Matthew's language suggested that he was somewhat ambivalent in his responses to this notion of colorism. The pauses and laughter suggest that he was lost for words in his attempt to explain his lack of exposure to the concept. He stated, "Um, and I//I don't even know how it came up, but that was something that I learned from her/////you know, 20-21 years of age that I'd never known before about

[chuckles].” In this utterance, he positioned his wife as the “voice” or expert on how he

came to learn about the concept of colorism, as if he should have had prior exposure to

the concept.

Indeed, his language suggests that he really does not know how to feel about

colorism. He introduced a statement, but does not evaluate extensively, as when he

stated, “But, you know, people are people.” His language with the lack of specificity,

and failure to expand on a particular statement suggest that he was engaging with the

subject-matter in a superficial way, or not completely comprehending the text. He did

not seek out additional clarification or guidance. He continued to distance himself from

the issue of colorism and race, by noting, “I mean people judging people is something

that//that does happen///.” Again, his lexical features with the use of the verb “judging”

suggest that not really having an opinion or remaining neutral on the subject is

acceptable. As indicated, he introduced a statement but made no attempt to deconstruct

the social implications of colorism.

Superficial engagement is also noted with his use of distancing language. The use

of pronouns gives the impression that Matthew is attempting to distance himself from any

personal connections to the text. When I asked Matthew, how he felt about the views of

one of the participants in the video when she says she has been called different names

related to skin color, he provided the following response:

> MT: Uh, I think *[chuckles]* the young woman has a right to, uh, to feel
>
> the way she feels about people calling her *[chuckles]*///

CF*:*	Mm-hmm.

MT:	//um, you know, names, whether they are supposed to be

compliments or not. Um///

CF:	Okay.

MT:	//I guess it depends on what you would consider tactful///

CF	Yes.

MT:	- you know? In society would you walk up and compliment

someone for, you know, um, for whatever? Like, where///I guess where's

that line? If she's uncomfortable with it, then///

CF:	Mm-hmm.

MT*:*	//then she has that right. (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

Matthew continued to distance himself from any personal interactions with the

text, with pronoun uses of "she," "her," "someone," and "you." These pronouns position

Matthew on the periphery, in terms of interaction with the text. Moreover, they serve to

insulate Matthew from his own critical inquiry. In the above utterance, he stated, "In

society would you walk up and compliment someone for, you know, um, for whatever?

Like, where///I guess where's that line? If she's uncomfortable with it, then///…then she

has that right."   The neutrality of Matthew's discourse tends to negate the concerns of

the speaker, as not having a legitimate form of a grievance.

Additionally, Matthew's language evoked "white talk." McIntyre (1997) described "white talk" as evading questions, remaining silent, stereotypes, collective laughter, etc. In this context, Matthew's laughter illustrates his uneasiness with the subject-matter. Indeed, Matthew's laugher demonstrated his lack of comfortability, or an attempt to ease stress, addressing a racially-charged topic. He stated, "Uh, I think *[chuckles]* the young woman has a right to, uh, to feel the way she feels about people calling her *[chuckles]*////." Again, all these examples are instances of what McIntyre (1997) described as "white talk" where white people avoid sustained and substantive discussion about race, racism, and anti-racism and use discursive strategies such as evading questions, remaining silent, using stereotypes, collective laughter, etc.

Moreover, in his written response, Matthew articulated his stance on colorism, and more examples of "white talk," in response to the question, "What are your views on the social or cultural capital attached to colorism?"

> I think that it is wrong that a person might be judged solely on skin color, but regardless, "color is currency" is something that is practiced within our society. People can be judged based on the color of their skin, and clearly within the African American community it happens also. The other aspect of this "currency" is that one color or shade must have a greater value than the rest, and that appears to be the lighter shades. (Matthew's Written Response).

In his appraisal, he validates the significance of this notion that "color is currency" with the use of the scare quotes. Additionally, he speaks in a passive voice about colorism. He does say that it is wrong, but he does not question or challenge the notion of why some shades "have a greater value than the rest." Matthew avoids

interrogation of this notion that "color is currency." He used "but" as a qualifier. He

presented an explicit conclusion when he wrote, but regardless, "color is currency" is

something that is practiced within our society. On this particular construct, he does not

attempt to critique the morality of colorism and its concurrent discriminatory aspects.

McIntyre (1997) also argues that this superficial and dismissive language avoids a critical

inquiry, so necessary for today's teachers. She writes:

> The lack of self-reflection about being a White person in this society distances
>
> White people from investigating the meaning of whiteness and prohibits a critical
>
> examination of the individual, institutional and cultural forms of racism…..For
>
> white educators, in particular, this invisibility to one's own racial being has
>
> implications in one's own teaching practices--- which includes such things as the
>
> choice of curriculum materials, student expectations, grading procedures, and
>
> assessment techniques—just to name a few. (pp. 14-15)

Overall, Matthew had a distant and objective response to the video, as manifested

in his language. Matthew remained on the periphery, as he did with the reading of "The

Wife of His Youth," with humor and the numerous pronoun uses of, "she," "her,"

"someone," and "you." Additionally, his neutrality did not facilitate self-reflection or

moments for taking action, on the issue of colorism. His meaning making or interpretive

comprehension was vastly different from Jessica, who demonstrated many catalytic

moments to the video. The next participant presented with an array of responses, which

appeared to be more related to her social and moral agency, as it pertained to colorism.

Esther's Responses to Colorism

Esther Humes is a young White graduate student in her first year of teaching. She teaches in a predominantly white and rural environment. When asked in the "Autobiographical Survey," what significance does race, as a part of your identity have in your work with students of color?" Esther responded by saying, "None of my students are of color. My students are 99 percent White, which is the same race as mine. I would like to say it plays a little part but I am unsure of how they would respond to a teacher of a different race." Additionally, when asked in the survey, how significant was race, as a part of your overall identity? Esther responded by writing, "Very little, I was raised in a household that taught me to appreciate people for their differences and not to hold my qualities above theirs." In terms of a color-blind ideology, Esther stated, "I do not agree with the colorblind ideology. I feel that it is important to appreciate each other's differences without looking down on them. Different cultures are fascinating and without them life would be so boring" (Autobiographical Survey, 09/15/14). After viewing the video, Esther provided the following revelation:

People are classified in so many different castes based on their lineage

Ok, um, I mean//I have heard of colorism before,

but what I hadn't heard of is how many different names there were//

and so like I have heard people being called light skinned or dark skinned

or saying like oh she is more like a caramel color (inflection) or//

but I took it as a like compliment kind thing like//

oh what a pretty like mocha in like //colonial Latin America/

/how they were like classified// and

I don't know if like that in actuality// but how ah//

people are classified in so many different caste

based on their lineage//

it almost reminded me of that// color//you know.

But like hearing all of those different names//

I was like//it almost reminded me of//

 like how people are separated

and I just didn't realize how in depth. (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

Like Matthew, Esther admitted she has heard of colorism before. However, unlike Matthew she discloses what she has learned about race and racism in the video and the shortcomings of her previous understandings. Her acknowledgment of her lack of understanding is a refrain through this narrative. We hear her state, "what I hadn't heard of is how many different names there were." "I don't know if like that in actuality," and "I just didn't realize how in depth." This stance toward acknowledging her racial knowledge limitations is an important part of understanding her responses to this video.

To make meaning of the video, Esther drew on her background knowledge of the caste systems of India and Latin America and compared this to colorism in North

America. She positioned the participants as being a part of an American caste system.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2004) defines caste as, "A system of rigid social

stratification characterized by hereditary status, endogamy and social barriers sanctioned

by custom, law or religion." In her interpretation, she equated colorism with that of a

distinct caste system, as one being codified by law. Colorism is viewed as the process of

discrimination that privileges light-skinned people of color over their dark-skinned

counterparts (Hunter, 2005). Esther stated, "People are classified in so many different

caste based on their lineage." Thus, she makes meaning from this video by

contextualizing colorism to the history of India and Latin America, which may represent

her broader understanding of colorism as a form of inequity in the world. It is also

important to recognize that her responses demonstrated her understanding that inequities

are not just relegated to individuals. That is, she understands how systems of oppression

and privilege are encoded in culture and institutions.

In "Shades of Black-Colorism: Skin Color Discrimination" Elnora Webb,

President of Laney College talks about her brothers, who were much smarter than she,

but who were also very dark and were told that they would not amount to anything

because of their skin tone. She relayed how one of brothers internalized the message of

skin tone inferiority and spent the majority of his life in prison. In her written response,

Esther connects with the commentary of Elnora Webb and presents a critique of this skin

tone discrimination. She stated, "If a person perceives themselves to be less attractive

simply because of their skin color, it can be detrimental to their character. She presents

an empathetic and negative appraisal of colorism. She also responded deeply to the video,

similar to Jessica, with an impassioned narrative, driven by moral, ethical and political underpinnings. Esther expressly stated, "If a person perceives themselves to be less attractive simply because of their skin color, it can be detrimental to their character." Here in this utterance, she equated colorism to negatively impacting an individual's character.

Esther uses much critiquing or challenging of the issues being presented in the video. She critiques this notion of how people are "judged" based on personality traits. Additionally, she deconstructs the nature of intra-racism, within the African American community. She stated:

Yeah, so I thought it was interesting//like in the video from what I gathered at least//ah//like people will judge what a person's like//personality or characteristics like based on what shade their skin is. So I guess if their dark skinned they are supposed **t**o act more this way if they are light skinned they are supposed to act//I guess more like class or whatever is what I picked up on//ah//which is kind a crazy to me//because//I mean especially in the African American community there is so much that has gone on//I mean especially in the past hundred years to be treated equally to everybody else, but then there is so much more//it's almost like racism within a race. (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

She emphasized her point with the use of the adjective "supposed," she is critiquing the standards set forth by a dominant society, as it pertains to skin tone. More importantly, how African Americans have bought into the message of the dominant society. Esther continued with her critique of internalized oppression. She stated, "It's mindboggling to

me that people would like self-identity themselves in a way like this." She does not name it as internalized oppression, but her discourse suggests this is what she is referencing.

Ah//but I also thought it was interesting that it was based also on attractiveness//you know like//ah//you know// I mean it goes back to what does society think is//should the ideal person look like//but I mean are those standards really//no one believes any of those standards to be//reasonable standards or achievable but people are still held to those expectations." (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

She presents a negative appraisal of internalized oppression with the use of the conjunction "but." The conjunction of "but" is being used to contrast what has already been mentioned, which is this notion of what the "ideal person should look like. When Esther notes that "people are still held to those expectations." This pertains to this notion of "blue-eyed and blonds, which is the standard in American culture.

In responding to the question of intersectionality, Esther critiques the suitability of using the term "thick" to reference African American women. She stated:

I would hear students compliment another girl and call her like thick or something//and like they may have meant it as a compliment but it's not necessarily taken that way. And you know I feel like our culture has this mind-set of like what an ideal person should look like. And if you don't exactly fit that you are insecure about a lot of different things. And for someone to point out something//like//maybe they mean it in a very appreciative way//but for someone to point out a difference than what's considered the norm or ideal appearance is

very difficult sometimes for a person to hear whether or not that person meant it

in a positive way. (Interview transcript, September 29, 2014)

Esther steps into a collective interpretation of "thick," as it relates to body image and her stance as a woman. Again, she uses the conjunction of "but" when she states, "but" for someone to point out a difference than what is considered the norm or ideal appearance is very difficult sometimes for a person to hear…" Essentially, she contextualizes "thick" to mean overweight. Her interpretation of "thick," is more rooted in her own social construction of body image, regardless of ethnicity. She does not recognize the cultural connotations attached to "thick," and the concurrent sexual overtones, when it is being used to describe dark-skinned African American women.

Esther presented with a diversity of responses. However, in contrast to Jessica and Matthew, colorism had moral, political and ethical underpinnings, which will be elaborated on more extensively in the "Discussion" section of this dissertation. Additionally, she used her foundational knowledge or worldview of colorism to augment her understanding of colorism as a form of inequity in American society. However, this observation is not aptly noted in the reading of "The Wife of His Youth." The next participant had a plurality of responses, similar to those observed in previous participants. However, he brought a lens of individualism to his interpretation of the video. It is the first time we notice the duality of individual versus systemic racism.

Kyle's Racialized Responses to Colorism

Kyle Cunningham is a young White male graduate student who teaches in a suburban school district. He is returning to college to pursue a Master of Education

degree. Kyle works full-time for his school district and has been doing so for six years.

Kyle indicates that he works with a predominantly African American population**.** When

questioned about race as a part of his overall identity, Kyle responded by writing, "I am a

White male in a female dominated profession. My student population is African

American with many single parent low-income populations. It is sometimes difficult to

relate to my students because my background is different (Autobiographical survey,

09/15/14). When responding to the question of embracing a colorblind ideology, Kyle

writes, "Colorblind means no judgement based on skin. It means focus on the person's

background personality, actions and behavior. The focus should be on the individual and

their attributes." Often in class discussions, Kyle was vocal, animated and willing to

provide commentary on the various class readings. In one discussion on the colonization

of the "New World," Kyle discussed how the European settlers viewed the Native

Americans as inferior, and they immediately began imposing their superiority on the

indigenous people (Field notes, September 8, 2014).

   Kyle's responses to the video ranged from providing a critique of the video,

offering personal narratives, and deconstructing of the social issues presented in the

video. However, much of his commentary was viewed with micro-level of analysis. In his

written responses**,** Kyle deconstructed the notion that one of the participants made that

"color is currency." Kyle stated:

> For me, it seems that lighter skin equals more opportunity and acceptance. I mean
>
> look at Barrack Obama. We say that he is a black president. However, he is one
>
> of the lighter skin individuals of that race. I see all the time how society props up

lighter skin females in ads and shows. Darker skin seems associated with closer

to uncivilized. (Kyle's Written Response)

Kyle attempted to deconstruct society's acceptance of President Obama, based on

his skin tone. He further extended this acceptance to include light-skinned women, as a

whole. He then presented a conclusion of darker-skinned as being uncivilized but does

not provide support for this conclusion, as it is disconnected, from the first part of his

utterance.

In another excerpt from the same written response, on "Shades of Black: Skin

Color Discrimination," Kyle in an active voice deconstructed the notion of societal

acceptance of "light is more attractive." He stated, "I must admit skin color variety

doesn't sway my perception of attractive." In this utterance, Kyle continued to look at

colorism from an individual perspective versus a systemic one. He wrote:

 I can see how that view trends throughout society. Beyonce is a prime example

of a lighter skin female who is considered immensely attractive by men and

women. Often, television promotes this idea to the letter. I went through and

counted the main characters on local television shows for about an hour. In that

hour, there were two darker skin individuals both men. There were six lighter

skin individuals' five women and one man. So, if local shows at 7 o'clock p.m.

say anything, it's this notion is very true in society. (Kyle's Written Response)

Kyle was deconstructing the societal viewpoint that "light being more attractive," from

the lens of media programming. In his social construction, Kyle did not make the

connection that this level of discrimination was structural in nature. He viewed the

media's message in isolation, from how the larger mechanisms of society shape and reinforce racism in essentialist ways.

In responding to Dereka Blackmon's commentary of how she had been called "a lot of different names related to skin color." Kyle acknowledged that he had inadvertently made comments that he later realized were racially insensitive. In the narrative below, Kyle discloses a time when he used language that could be construed as biased:

Ah, it was very difficult for me to swallow

Ah, it was very difficult for me to swallow

--because I know in the past

I have probably done some of those things--uh—inadvertently.

I think a lot--of individuals like myself

who are--believe they are not racist//uh//

believe they treat everyone equally

///use those words and don't really understand the weight

they carry to individuals of other races

when we use them to describe them as an adjective//

we think ↑its ok we think we are being nice,

we think we are giving them a compliment and

we don't really understand how from person to person

the variation either hurts them or even

makes them feel good.

(Transcript interview, October 6, 2014)

In this narrative, Kyle presented an emotional response to the video and the

commentary of Dereka Blackmon. He acknowledged that he had made comments that he

didn't realize were racially offensive. He used the mental verb of "believe." He started

by saying "people who are" and then changed to "say believe they are not racist." Kyle's

language suggest that he is aware of the "elephant in the room" which is a metaphor for

race and racism. In this utterance, he recognized, but was reluctant to acknowledge how

race is the lens by which many view the world around them. Kyle's point here is that

people's language choices signal their positioning or experiences, in regard to race,

racism, and anti-racism. Essentially, he is also arguing that White privilege insulates

Whites from the critical examination of the individual, institutional and cultural forms of

racism (McIntyre, 1997; Haddix, 2008 & Winans, 2010).

Interestingly, Kyle's language does demonstrate a certain degree of empathy

when describing his views on colorism. He used descriptive language and adjectives to

convey his thoughts, along with the inflection in his voice. He stated, "You, you know as

a Caucasian it is difficult to accept the fact that you're trying to decipher what these

different rays// you know shades really mean to the other individuals that are//that's their

life and I just//you know those concepts//just// I, I was drawn to them." This

demonstrates that Kyle is developing an understanding of the significance of colorism.

However, he continued to struggle with the understanding of the systemic nature of

colorism and racism. In the excerpt, he was speaking in an active voice and making text

to life connections. He used the transitive verb "accept" to describe his difficulty with

acknowledging how his White privilege provided a shelter from the recognition that

colorism plays a significant role in the lives of people of color and dominant White

society. He locates the problem in the African American community, and glosses over

the reality that it was the dominant White society that created a racialized value structure

around skin color.

　　As Kyle responded to the video, he deconstructed many of the social issues

embedded in the storyline. When I asked Kyle if he had come to new understandings on

issues related to colorism, he discussed the discriminatory aspects of colorism, in the

workplace, as in the following dialogue:

　　　　CF: Ok, um, after viewing the video have you come to new understandings

　　　　regarding the issue of "colorism" in the African American community?

　　　　KB: Oh↑ very much so, I// you know//now//since that video I now see// I look at

　　　　//you know every individual that I worked with when I got back to the Airport//it

　　　　just like//wow this is so very, very true. Uh, a lot of the majority of the workers

　　　　are African Americans and a majority of the female African Americans that work

　　　　there are lighter skin individuals. Uh// and a majority of the male individuals that

　　　　work there are darker skin individuals and it just//it just screams that// how true

they say this is. It's just like in my own little world// you know when I went out to my job// I'm like// there's//this can't be one hundred percent true.

CF: Let me ask you in what capacity are those darker skinned males working in?

KB: There, they are in you know the service industry, maintenance, uh// janitorial work, uh//you know those kinds of things uh// baggage handling, uh/moving wheel chairs, so those server type of positions that are I guess a///staple in our society for the way that society perceives that's the role men should play and then the women are doing the more care taking kind of thing, you know um, you know plants that's you know female, uh, some of the majority of the// I guess// you know obviously//they do the majority of the work for the women's restroom and they also do the majority of the work for you know/// take the women through security, all that. It's like women are assigned to women only↑.

CF: What about the lighter skinned women, what are they doing?

KB: The lighter skin women uh// I see like// when// I see customers interact with them it seems like they are a lot nicer to them// it seems like they more uh courteous to the job that they have.   And they are more aware that they are there, than other individuals of the same doing the same job of the same race. (Interview transcript, October 6, 2014)

Here in this exchange, Kyle drew upon his own direct experience with colorism to support what he saw occurring in the video. In his interpretive comprehension, he made connections between the participants in the video and what he saw occurring on his job.

Indeed, he discussed at considerable length colorism and the different types of

occupations, employees were relegated to, as a result of their skin tone.   Again, he does

not critique or recognize colorism, as an outgrowth of policies and procedures embedded

in organizations and institutions. It is through these policies and practices that

discriminatory practices are being promulgated. As noted, Kyle brings a more

individualistic lens to the construct of colorism. More importantly, Kyle does not connect

colorism to the historical context of what was transpiring in "The Wife of His Youth."

This point will be elaborated on more extensively, during the "Analysis across

Participants."   In contrast, the next participant presents with a more systemic and

personal appraisal of the concordant effects of colorism. She responded with critiques,

narratives, counter-narratives and deconstruction of the social issues inherent in the

video.

Darla's Responses to Colorism

Darla Covington is an African American female who appears to be in her early

thirties. She is pursuing a Master of Education degree. From her "Autobiographical

Survey," Darla indicated that she is pursuing a graduate degree for her own edification, as

opposed to advancing in her field. Darla is at the opposite end of the spectrum, as

compared to Jessica. She is a dark-skinned, quiet spoken and reserved individual. In her

"Autobiographical Survey," Darla indicated that she has never taught before. When I

asked Darla, how significant is race, as a part of your overall identity? She stated, "Race

is significant in my identity. I believe as a Black woman that it's up to me to be

informed, educated and well-rounded in my community as well as in other cultures."

When responding to a question on embracing a 'color-blind' ideology, Darla stated,

"When it comes to 'color-blind' ideology I don't think it's possible. We can't ignore that

we are different races, but we can be open to learning about one another, accepting one

another as equals and strive to include everyone regardless what their race is." In the

video "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," Taylor Morgan, a Psychology

major at Laney College, stated, "People come to me and try to like get at me, you are

pretty to be a dark-skinned girl, you are the first dark-skinned girl, I have talked to. They

think that as a compliment, but it is really an insult to me as a person. Are you saying

compared to a light-skinned girl, I am not as pretty?"

In responding to the video, "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," Darla

presented powerful responses, which represented her multi-faceted interpretations, using

critiques, personal narratives, counter-narratives, deconstructing social issues and also

described both internalized oppression and White privilege without naming them, as

such. When I asked her, what are your views on the social or cultural capital attached to

colorism? She responded by saying, "Color is currency." "Color denotes a person's value

in our society and sadly the darker you are, the less valuable you become. White is a

power color for many and within the black community the lighter you are; the more value

or currency you have." In this stretch of speech from her written response, she is

critiquing the significance of colorism in the black community and broader American

society. In this excerpt, she referred to "within the black community the lighter you are,

the more value or currency you have." Here you can hear her castigate her own

community for their internalized oppression. She does not name it as such, but you can

feel her resentment for the intra-racism present within the African American community.

Also, in her utterance, she began to describe White privilege. She stated, "White is a

power color." Power in this context is viewed as "the ability to influence or exert force"

(Merriam-Webster.com). This is synonymous with the concept of hegemony. Mooy

(2005) indicates that hegemony is the power or influence of race in the classroom or the

replication of social order. Here in this utterance, Darla reifies this argument, using her

agency as an African American woman to support her contention that, "White is a power

color." In this context, Darla is asserting that "white" is the embodiment of all that is

powerful, in society. However, she did not critique this notion that "white is a power

color." She stated it as being the natural order of things.

Indeed, many of Darla's responses are closely related to the participant, Taylor

Morgan, in the video, who described her experiences with colorism. Darla in her written

response presented a narrative of rejection, similar to Taylor Morgan.

That chocolate skin isn't in for them

My views of the matter is that it's for real.

I've heard many black men and women state they prefer light skin people

that dark skin isn't attractive,

that chocolate skin isn't in for them.

Its's very prevalent in the black community.

you look at movies with black actresses or music videos

you will mainly see lighter skinned black women with

long weaves being glorified and darker skinned women

being talked down to and abused in films. (Darla's Written Response)

Darla's narrative is intoxicating. We can hear the pain as she expressed the injustice and abuse of darker-skinned African American women. She talked about the mistreatment of darker- skinned women in music videos and how they are relegated to a substandard position in these videos. She even uses the adjective of "glorified" to describe the superficial positionality of lighter-skinned women to a higher status, over their darker-skinned counterparts.

In interviewing Darla about colorism, she discussed the binary of light and dark skinned women and internalized oppression. Darla's commentary echoed the sentiments of Taylor Morgan, the participant in the video, as she described her experiences with colorism.

DC: So then it's like, I'm not pretty cuz I'm dark? So then that starts when they're young, so when they get older, it's still that same thing of, you know, I'm not pretty cuz

I'm dark. Or if you're pretty, they'll tell you you're pretty because-you're a pretty dark skinned girl. And it like, why do you have to add in—

CF: Yes

DC: -dark skinned girl? It's kinda like saying you're pretty cuz you're fat. You know, it's like, you're fat, but you're pretty.

DC: Cuz I-even among my friends, my sister is light skinned. Her best friend is dark skinned. However, if they go out, it kinda like, let's see who' gonna talk to who. So most people will approach my sister, cuz she light skinned, but most people will approach her best friend, because she not—cuz she's dark skinned. Because she's put her bazooms and stuff out on display. So it's kinda like, I can stream you this way if I make you more appealing. (Interview transcript October 6, 2014)

In this excerpt, Darla critiqued the exploitation of darker-skinned African American women. There are times when the sexual objectification is from an outside source, such as music videos producers. There are other times when the darker-skinned women themselves buy into the need to present themselves as sexual objects. As with other participants, Darla did not name it as internalized oppression, but in the excerpt, it is being described as such. Richardson (2007) argues that African American women are positioned in society, through various mediums that perpetuate the belief that the African American woman functions more effectively in a sexual role. She further argues that this mind-set takes the African American woman back to the times of slavery when black women were not deemed suitable for anything other than being sexually exploited. In Darla's critique, she amplifies this argument, particularly as it relates to the dark-skinned African American woman. In her dialogue, she discussed how her sister's friend has to advertise her physical attributes to garner attention. It also supports, what one of the

male participants in the video said about darker-skinned black women, having to be

"thick." Again, in this context "thick" is indicative of sexual characteristics.

Rockquemore (2002), noted that African American women have created a context in

which interpersonal interactions are shaped by competition. She continued by saying that

African American women's resentment turns not on the Black men that hold European

standards of beauty, but on each other. In Darla's discourse, she reifies this argument

because the friend who does not possess the light skin has to use her physical attributes to

compete with the friend who possesses the light skin tone.

When I asked Darla if she has come to any new understanding as they pertain to

colorism, she responded with a resounding "No!" She stated, "Because I live it." In this

one utterance, she has summed up her life experiences with colorism. She has effectively

demonstrated how colorism has and continues to play a significant negative role in her

life. Her statement of "I live it" was reminiscent of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye."

In Morrison's (1970) fictional account of colorism and American society, she writes,

"Racial beauty was not a reaction to the self-mocking, humorous critique of

cultural/racial foibles common in all groups, but against the damaging internalization of

assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze." (p. xi). The

"outside gaze" is a metaphor for American society. In other words, Darla's skin tone is

her lived experience or the rejection of her skin tone by a society that values the "Bluest

Eye." Darla has lived the real account of what the fictional characters experienced in

"The Bluest Eye" and the characters in "The Wife of His Youth," which are the

consuming effects of colorism. While watching the video, Darla's embodied experience

of colorism is played out on the screen. She connects deeply with words and pain of

people in the video, as they share a collective identity. Karen who I will discuss next also

connected deeply with effects of colorism.

Karen's Responses to Colorism

Karen Fields is a young White female who graduated in 2010, with a degree in

Elementary Education. Additionally, she holds a Missouri Teaching Certificate but has

not started her teaching career. She is returning to school to pursue a Master of

Education degree. In class discussions, Karen is very soft-spoken and quiet. She

indicated that she grew up in a small farming community in the Midwest, with very

limited exposure to African Americans.

When I asked her how significant race is, as a part of her overall identity, Karen

responded by saying, "I don't think race is a large part of my identity." In responding to

the question on her views on embracing a color-blind ideology, Karen responded by

saying, "I don't agree with the color-blind ideology. I think that one's color is a part of

their culture and plays a role in the prior experiences that students bring to class with

them. Ignoring a part of your students' culture is not helpful."

In her responding to the video of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination,"

Karen presented with multiple interpretations to the text. Sometimes she responded with

a critique, deconstructing of social issues, personal narrative or a counter-narrative.

In the video "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination" (2011), Jabari Shaw,

Former BSU President, Laney College, stated:

The light skin guys the pretty boys all the girls want him, but the dudes think he's

soft. The darker skin dude is cool with all of the guys, but the girls don't really

want him because they think he is uglier, the darker that he is. When I meet with

a woman, they just always after the light skin guy in the group. I approach a

female like what's up girl? She be like who is that over there?

On the issue of feminine versus masculine images and skin tone, as alluded to by

Jabari Shaw, Karen stated the following:

KF: Um, and so kind of what people would want is to have lighter skin. But when

it came to men, um, um, you know, if the men had light skin, then they might not

be masculine enough.

CF: Now isn't that interesting?

KF: Yeah, it's very interesting. And----

CF: Why do you think that I-, why do you think they would think that?

KF: I don't know. I mean I guess if the light skin is considered more attractive in

women, then it's just kind of like a considered feminine thing. (Interview

transcript, October 6, 2014)

The participant in the video made note that lighter skin African American men are

perceived as being soft, while the darker-skinned African American men are considered

to be more ethnic and hence stronger. In the excerpt, the phrase of "I don't know"

suggests Karen's willingness to stand in the space of indeterminacy. Her language

suggests that she is open to varying degrees of interpretation. Moreover, the mental verb

of "considered" also suggests that there are alternative perspectives or ways of

constructing this binary of masculine versus feminine. However, Harvey (1995) also

suggests that some "fair-skinned" black males face ridicule in the black community,

where they are perceived as lacking the physical strength and virility attributed to the

darker-skinned black males.

As with the other participants, the comment of Dereka Blackmon resonated with

Karen. Again, Blackmon states, "I have been called a lot of different names related to

skin color……" Karen responded to this statement about African Americans taking

offense to skin tone comments in the following narrative:

Where I feel like I've been sheltered

Yeah, I've heard that

I've heard that a lot in the

You know, not just in terms of race.

But, um, like, um, gosh I can't think of it now.

But, you know, I've heard that a lot.

People saying that.

And, um I know that's like, one of those

Things where, you know, too, I feel like coming

from a small community.

Where I feel like I've been sheltered, you know, that,

that's one of those things where sometime you don't

know how to relate to people.

And you don't know, like, what things

you might say that are offensive. (Karen's Written Response)

Karen's narrative demonstrated her developing awareness of the relationship between language and racism. She stated, "and you don't know, like, what things you might say that are offensive." Similar to Kyle, she is starting to understand how dysconscious racism (King, 1991) is encoded in language choices. This is similar to Kyle, whom we heard from earlier, who says, "use those words and don't really understand the weight." While Karen demonstrates an understanding of how words can be painful, which is a main point of the video, she continues to hide behind the metaphor of "sheltered," which seems to abdicate her from taking responsibility for her lack of racial literacy.

In her personal narrative, Karen recognizes that the lack of exposure to African Americans can result in Whites inadvertently saying racially insensitive things. Karen recognized that her isolation hindered her from understanding the complex nature of race and racism. Through her lexical features, we can see how Karen's verb uses of "sheltered" and **"relate"** demonstrate her limited understanding of the African American experience and the overall notion of colorism.

Interestingly, Karen also presented a counter-narrative on this notion of light-skin and White as being more desirable and attractive. She illustrated the irony of the skin tone debate, as she wrote, "And of course, in our country's history, white was considered the ideal and the pure race. It also seems a bit ironic to me. Being white, very light skin is often called, 'pasty.' Tanned skin is usually considered to be more attractive. So it is interesting the way that ideas of attractiveness develop differently." These moments of contradictions illustrate how the participants are rethinking their positions in light of new information. In this excerpt from her written response, Karen presented an affirming view of the affinity for darker or more tanned skin. She drew a line between what she described as "pasty" skin and darker-tanned skin. She is using "pasty" as an adjective to describe a "pale and unhealthy appearance" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2016).

Later, Karen expounds on the critique of the President of Laney College, when the President talked about her brother who internalized the message of skin tone inferiority and spent the majority of his life in prison, as in the following exchange:

CF: Um why did you choose to discuss those particular, uh, issues? Those social identifications, are there others that could be at play, um here in this particular video?

KF: Um, I think again here just the ones that really stood out to me and, um like it seemed so strange to me the one lady talking about how her brother had had very dark skin. And she had seen the way he was treated from such a young age. And, um, that, you know, and those are siblings, you know, coming from the same house even seeing that, being treated differently just because of, you know,

however subtle differences between their skin. So that just seemed kind of crazy

to me. And, um, then, so you know he's hearing those types of things from such a

young age. And, you know, coming from a background in, um, you know, in

education.

CF: Mm-hmmm

KF: I remember reading in classes, about you know, the importance of teacher

having high expectations for their students. (Interview transcript, October 6,

2014)

Her response in this excerpt critiqued the insidious nature of internalized

oppression. However, Karen attributes its roots to the family structure and educational

institutions. Her meaning-making associates colorism with origins in the family unit and

later being perpetuated and maintained by educational institutions. Karen's discourse

infers that teacher and other expect less from dark-skinned kids. Related, research by

Sealey-Ruiz & Green (2015) discusses what is referenced as a "deficit paradigm" and

"discontinuity paradigm." The "deficit paradigm" makes normal the academic failure for

Black students, particularly the Black male. Additionally, the "discontinuity paradigm"

postulates that "Black students' academic failure is connected to the schools they attend

and the incapability and unwillingness of teacher and administrators to embrace and

promote the cultural backgrounds of black students" (p. 314). Their research argues that

Black males are already operating in a deficit model by virtue of the intersection of race

and gender. Another complicating problem is the failure to address the compounding

nature of colorism on this particular dynamic. This is aptly illustrated in the above

exchange with Karen and the commentary of the President of Laney College. While the above research by Sealey-Ruiz & Green is not focused on the effects of colorism and academic achievement, it is well-supported in literature, academic research and film.   In the movie "Antoine Fisher," the true life story of "Antoine Fisher," is depicted as a victim of the foster care that discriminates between lighter and darker complexioned African American children. The film chronicles his struggles with rage and internalized oppression.   The main character "Antoine Fisher" discussed how the foster care system and how colorism influenced treatment and which children were to be adopted. He began by saying, "Light-skinned girls are the first to be adopted, then the light-skinned boys, next are the dark-skinned girls and finally the dark-skinned boys. Here in this retelling of his story, he amplifies the argument of the President of Laney College and Lisa Kilgour-Delpit's (2002) landmark analysis of colorism in her book titled, *The Skin We Speak.*

Karen's language suggests that she views the family unit as being an integral agent in perpetuating internalized oppression. Correspondingly, her language also suggests that the family unit should also be held responsible for mitigating internalized oppression. In Karen's discourse, she assumed that internalized oppression was universally present in all African American households when she wrote, "And, um, that, you know, and those are siblings, you know coming from the same house even seeing that, being treated differently…."

In concluding thoughts, each participant brought a unique set of tools, in how they responded to or comprehended the text. As noted, some responded with critiques, others with personal narratives, counter-narratives, humor and deconstruction of various

social issues being depicted in the video. More importantly, some of the responses

signified a call for action, as was observed in the cases of Jessica, Esther and to a certain

extent Karen. These case portraits represented unique opportunities to analyze both the

literate and subsequent teacher identities of the participants involved in the study.

Additionally, they offer pedagogical implications, in terms of racial literacy and what can

be done to support understandings of teacher education candidates, as they pertain to

race, racism and anti-racism.

Chapter 6: "Shame"

This chapter focuses on the findings from the critical reading tasks associated with "Shame" written by comedian and social activist Dick Gregory. The autobiography was published in 1964 and depicts the life of Dick Gregory and his struggles with growing up poor, in Depression era, St. Louis, Missouri. The excerpt was read during the 7th week of class, during the session on "Social Institutions: Education" in a social justice course. As with the other two readings, I was analyzing the participants' responses to the reading of "Shame." Also, similar to the other two readings, I was interested in their range of responses. Again, I drew upon scholarship in Racial Literacy, Critical Whiteness Studies, Critical Race Theory and Reader Response Theory to help guide my analysis of their racialized understanding of text that are explicitly racialized in nature.

Dick Gregory's "Shame" is a compelling narrative about institutionalized racism and the intersections of race, poverty and gender. Moreover, it is about the concept of "othering." Gregory was socially ostracized and made to feel inferior because of his fatherless status and because he lived in extreme poverty. In Gregory's descriptive narrative, he painted a provocative picture of the mores of poverty, and its complicit ally, educational institutions. He provided vivid detail of what it feels like to be powerless, stigmatized and discriminated against because of his race, gender and social class. The public school system where children are supposed to feel safe and nourished was complicit in aiding in his humiliation and shame. Significant research has been done on the role of the school in reproducing class identities and perpetuating social inequality

(Collins, 2005; Bruner, 1996 Leacock, 1969; Rist, 1970). Indeed, schools play a role in shaping a student's social identity, as was being depicted in Dick Gregory's "Shame." Gregory draws the reader into in his narrative, as he paints a foreboding picture of the extreme poverty that he had to endure as a young child. Gregory (1964) with his powerful use of tone and characterization draws the reader into his narrative when he discusses his infatuation with the character of Helene, he writes, I brushed my hair and even got me a little old handkerchief. It was a lady's handkerchief, but I didn't want Helene to see me wipe my nose on my hand" (p. 1).

In this opening paragraph Dick Gregory described the pain of growing up fatherless, powerless, and an outcast. He presented an emotional tone and used visualization to draw the reader into his lived experiences. He is the protagonist in this autobiography, and he drew inspiration from another seminal character, in that of Helene who is the muse in his autobiography. In the opening paragraph, he sets the context of his story. He tells of his day to day survival. He lives in a tenement slum without the basic necessities of life, from no running water, to eating paste to quell his hunger, to five children sleeping in one bed. Moreover, he discussed how he used chopped ice that melted into water for washing his clothes. He wants the reader to experience his hardships and extreme poverty with this vivid presentation. He wrote, "I washed my socks and shirt every night. I'd get a pot, and go over to Mister Ben's grocery store, and stick my pot down into his soda machine and scoop out some chopped ice. By evening the ice melted to water for washing."   He used additional metaphors to describe the heavy weight of poverty in his life. He says, "I was pregnant with poverty. Pregnant with

dirt and pregnant with smells that made people turn away. Pregnant with cold and

pregnant with shoes that were never bought for me…and pregnant with hunger.”

This reading invites readers to consider how social categories such as gender,

race, ethnicity, disability, class and nationality intersect within a historical context.

Intersectionality theory argues that social identities cannot be studied independently of

one another or from the social and cultural categories that maintain inequality (Knudsen,

2006). In Dick Gregory's narrative, we see the significance of these intersections of race,

class, and gender.

During the discussion of "Social Institutions: Education," I aided the professor of

the course discussing how social institutions perpetuate and maintain inequality. She

specifically asked the question to the larger group, "Are we shaped by society or does

society shape us?" She then goes to the chalkboard and connected the articles to the

reading of "Shame." She wrote on the chalkboard adjectives to describe the teacher's

character in "Shame." She wrote under the "teacher's character" adjectives provided by

the students to include being judgmental, and ignorant. When asked, "How would you

describe Dick Gregory's character, many of the students responded by saying, "dark-

skinned, poor, dirty unpopular, manners." I then reminded them that poor was not a

character trait, but a state of being.

Jessica's Response to "Shame"

Jessica is an African American female returning to college to pursue a Master of

Special Education degree. Her responses in the first two readings were markedly similar,

in terms of the language and tools that she chose to use in responding to the readings of

"Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination" and "The Wife of His Youth." The reading

of "Shame" evoked an empathetic response, albeit rife with tension and contradictions.

Jessica's emotionality is on display, as she responds to the written prompt on the

psychological trauma that Gregory suffered as a result of his poverty. Jessica in

responding to the written prompt gives examples of psychological trauma the author

suffered as a result of his race and social class:

> There are several occurrences where the author is placed in situations of
> psychological trauma as a result of his race and social class. The classroom
> environment was the place that kind of killed his psychological spirit. Dick
> Gregory already felt insecure about his social class. He spoke in the beginning of
> the reading about keeping a handkerchief as opposed to using his hand to wipe his
> nose. He spoke of his attraction to Helene because of her cleanliness and good
> manners. He also spoke about washing his clothes every night with melted water
> and wearing the clothes the next day regardless of rather or not they were dry.
> Dick Gregory was very aware of his social class and the things that he didn't have
> as a result of his financial limitations. It wasn't until he went to school, however,
> that his social class and race were negatively put on display to bring shame and
> public embarrassment into his life. (Jessica's Written Response)

Jessica's empathy and emotionality with the character are apparent when she

writes, "The classroom environment was the place that killed his psychological spirit."

She uses the verb "killed" to mean "to destroy." In this context, the classroom

environment destroyed him psychologically**.** Her discourse suggests that it was a grave

or mortal wound to his psyche or psychological well-being. Jessica's discourse gives a

voice to Dick Gregory's pain. She is able to articulate the mind and body connection of

racism. Jessica's response suggests while there was not a death of the physical body, his

psyche had been irreversibly damaged with the use of the verb "killed."

In his opening description, Dick Gregory juxtaposes his extreme poverty against

his extreme admiration, as he begins to describe Helene, who essentially represents his

muse. Gregory (1964) writes:

Everybody's got a Helene Tucker, a symbol of everything you want. I loved her

for her goodness, her cleanness, her popularity. She'd walk down my street and

my brother and sisters would yell, "Here comes Helene," and I'd rub my tennis

sneakers on the back of my pants and wish my hair wasn't so nappy and the white

folks' shirt fit me better. I run out on the street. If I knew my place and didn't

come too close, she wink at me and say hello. (p. 1)

In responding to the written prompt of, "What does the author mean, when he

writes everybody's got a Helene Tucker a symbol of everything you want?" "What

personal attributes are associated with his use of the term "symbol?" Jessica responded

by writing:

When the author writes, Everybody's got a Helene Tucker a symbol of everything

you want,' the author is referring to unrealistic desires. I think the author knew

that being with Helene would never happen, but he still had hopes and desires for

something he would never have. The personal attributes associated with the term

'symbol' are cleanliness, nice manners, goodness, popularity, smartness,

prosperity, empathy and understanding. (Jessica's Written Response)

A symbol is defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2004) as being, "A

material object having abstract components." In her written response, Jessica interprets

symbol as a metaphor for the many positive attributes possessed by Helene. However,

her language indicates that Dick Gregory does not necessarily possess the corresponding

attributes of what he sees in Helene. She stated, "The author is referring to unrealistic

desires." She continued by writing, "I think the author knew that being with Helene

would never happen, but he still had hopes and desires for something he would never

have." On the one hand, Jessica expresses empathy for the character of Dick Gregory,

but on the other hand, in her social positioning, she presents a negative appraisal of Dick

Gregory. She uses a deficit construction of Dick Gregory's aspirations as being out of

touch with reality, with the use of the term "unrealistic," which corresponds to mean "not

being compatible with reality or fact." Through her discourse, the possibility of Dick

Gregory bridging the social gap with Helene is unimaginable to Jessica.

In "Shame," there are many instances of internalized oppression, as being

manifested in the following dialogue when I asked Jessica, in reflecting back on the

readings and in the iterative process of revisiting and rethinking about texts, "What are

the connections between racism and shame for people of color? and are there any

connections, between racism and shame for white people? Jessica responded with the

following:

JM: Um, what I got from the text, um, that just---I guess, um, African Americans kind of relate to shame just based off of their race, period. Like, they, um---for me, like when they talked about the hate and the shame in the beginning, I felt like those are learned behaviors.

CF: Okay.

JM: And I think that, um, automatically, like there's just a connection with, um those two terms when it comes to African-Americans. And I think that, um, the white race or, you know-----

CF: Mm-hmmm

JM:-Caucasian race, uh, would be the complete opposite. (Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

Jessica references the internalized oppression and white privilege continuum. This represents her interpretive comprehension when she says, "hat I got from the text, um, that just---I guess, um, African Americans kind of relate to shame just based off of their race, period. Like, they, um---for me, like when they talked about the hate and the shame in the beginning, I felt like those are learned behaviors." She is referring to the effects of systemic racism in American society. One of the likely outcomes of this systemic racism is internalized oppression. She amplifies this argument when she says, "Caucasian race, uh, would be the complete opposite." Many African Americans internalize the dominant narrative of black inferiority and this shapes their self-perception. Jessica's reference as

"those are learned behaviors represents a breakthrough. In other words, it is not representative of naturalized characteristics.

She merges internalized oppression and negative appraisal of poverty in the same response. I asked her, how did the character of Dick Gregory describe the physical characteristics of the character of Helene, and how did he describe himself? How were both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exists in the story? Jessica provided the following response:

JM: Um, Helene was described with more positive, uh, attributes, with being clean and having good manners and being popular and smart and prosperous. Um and so I automatically just assumed that she-she was white-----

CF: Okay

JM: //um, when reading the text, And then, um, when Dick Gregory, I guess, was describing himself, um, he just talked about, um, being an old, you know, kind of ran-down clothes and, um, using an old dirty handkerchief///

CF: Okay.

JM: //to kind of wipe his nose and things like that, so////

        (Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

Interestingly, Jessica misread Helene as White because of the description the author presented. In the other readings, Jessica used her prior experiences and historical awareness to help her make sense out of the text. Indeed, in appraising Dick Gregory's description of Helene, Jessica did not use her own physical likeness to Helene or historical awareness to aid in her interpretation of the text. This denotes some level of inculcation of dominant norms of white stereotypes. More importantly, it indicated how Jessica there are contradictions and tensions surrounding her own racial identity.

Jessica introduced the concept of internalized oppression in her written responses, during this reading of "The Wife of His Youth," and expanded upon it in the responses to the reading of "Shame."   Jessica referenced internalized oppression as originating in slavery and its persistence in current culture. While Jessica appears to be evaluating the insidious nature of internalized oppression, some of her own discourse suggested that she was also displaying elements of internalized oppression, as observed her responses to the ethnicity of Helene in the reading of "Shame:"

> CF*:*   Okay. All right. And, uh, the third construct, racial character and personal attributes. In reflecting back on your written responses, um, can you describe how the author describes the physical characteristics of Helene Tucker? That would probably be question number three in your written responses. Um, so how - how did you interpret how he describes the physical characteristics of Helene, and what about how he describes himself? How are both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exists in the story?

JM: Um, Helene was described with more positive, uh, attributes, with being

clean and having good manners and being popular and smart and

prosperous. Um, and so I automatically just assumed that she//she was

white///

CF: Okay. (Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

In the above discourse, there were indications that she was exhibiting elements of internalized oppression, on some constructs and readings. This was evident when responding to the question about Helene's ethnicity because she did not use her own physical likeness to Helene to aid in her interpretation of the text.

Additionally, in this same discourse, she discussed the handkerchief that the main character said he carried with him to keep from wiping his nose on his clothes. In the reading, he explicitly wrote, "I brushed my hair and even got me a little old handkerchief, because I didn't want Helene to see me wipe my nose on my hand." In Jessica's semi-structured interview, she stated, "And then, um when Dick Gregory, I guess was describing, um, he just talked about, um being an old, you know, kind of rand-down clothes and, um using an old dirty handkerchief//to kind of wipe his nose and things like that///so." In this semi-structured interview, Jessica was struggling with her social construction of poverty and its connection to Dick Gregory's character. She was hesitating and pausing, which denoted some level of ambivalence in responding to the prompt. Moreover, Jessica's interpretive comprehension of the text with the use of adjective "dirty" and wearing "ran-down clothes," presented a negative appraisal of

poverty. In Dick Gregory's description, he never mentioned the type of clothes, nor the handkerchief being old. Her discourse situated poor people in a negative light.

As noted, Dick Gregory is the protagonist in this powerful autobiography and the antagonist is the teacher. Gregory provided a haunting description of the teacher's perception of him. He wrote, "The teacher thought I was stupid. Couldn't spell, couldn't read, couldn't do arithmetic. Just stupid. Teachers were never interested in finding out that you couldn't concentrate because you were so hungry, because you hadn't had any breakfast" (p. 2). The teacher is depicted as lacking empathy and being extremely disapproving of Dick Gregory and his social condition. He also writes, "The teacher thought I was a troublemaker. All she saw from the front of the room was little black boy who squirmed in the idiot's seat and made noises" (p. 2).

In response to the prompt about intersecting social identifications in the text and his desperate poverty, Jessica responded wrote:

The social identifications in this reading display the separations that are formed based on race, class, gender and ability. There is clear separation between the three characters within this reading. The teacher, Dick Gregory, and Helene are all from the same race; however, there is clear separation lines among each of these characters. Dick Gregory is automatically placed at the bottom of the barrel because he is assumed to be less due to his class and ability. It is assumed that Dick Gregory is uneducated and dumb because of his race and class. He is also portrayed as being incapable and an idiot. He is an outcast among his classroom

peers by his teacher as a result of her prejudices and Dick Gregory's social

identifications. (Jessica's Written Response)

Here, Jessica is recognized the intersectionality of race, class and gender and the

institutionalized racism that is taking place in the reading. In her response, she evaluated

the characters and how their class and social standing played a role in how they were

treated. However, her discourse also was rife with contradictions. Later, she revoiced a

term that is considered an example of "ableism" or language that is oppressive with

negative cognitive connotations, when she says "It is assumed that Dick Gregory is

uneducated and dumb." In this context, "dumb" has a stigmatizing effect, particularly

when being used to describe a child. While Jessica was revoicing the teacher's words in

the text, her failure to problematize or challenge the teacher's use of this term can be

viewed as problematic, particularly for an educator. On a more positive note, Jessica did

describe what she considered to be an example of institutionalized racism, when she

discussed the way Dick Gregory was being tracked by the school system. She did not

name it as institutionalized racism, but her language suggests that this is what was

occurring.

Following up on the written prompt, during the semi-structured interview, I asked

Jessica, "How do you feel about the way Dick Gregory was being tracked in the story?"

She provided the following commentary:

JM*:* It was very sad///

CF*:* Okay.

JM: - to see how, um, the teacher responded to Dick Gregory. She

    just automatically assumed that he was, um, stupid, that he, um, was poor,

    that he didn't have anything, um, almost like he wasn't worth, like, her

    time or worth///

CF: Mm-hmm.

JM: - um, worth getting the education that she was there to provide him.

CF*:* Okay.

JM: Um, so it was very discouraging to/// to see a teacher play that role in his life

CF*:* Okay. (Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

In the above passage, Jessica demonstrated strong empathy for the character of

Dick Gregory. She rebuked the teacher for her treatment of him. In her stance, she

discussed how the teacher intentionally sets up a scenario where she became complicit in

Dick Gregory's shame. She stated, "She just automatically assumed that he was um,

stupid, that he, um, was poor, that he didn't have anything."   This utterance

demonstrated Jessica's evolving racial literacy even within the same passage. In this

stretch of speech, she chastised the teacher for her treatment of Dick Gregory and was

starting to challenge her own thoughts on the intersections of race, class and gender.

Moreover, her reaction is emblematic of a call to action or presents a catalytic response.

Her discourse suggests that she now feels a need to give voice to others who experienced

the same treatment as Dick Gregory. She states, "Um, so it was very discouraging to///to

see a teacher play that role in his life." In this utterance, she recognized the role of the

teacher to be a change agent in the lives of their students.

Matthew's Responses to Shame

Matthew is a White graduate student in his mid-twenties. In the reading of

"Shame," Matthew dove deeper into this particular reading than he did in the readings of

Chapters 4 and 5, where he tended to respond superficially and remained on the margins

in many of his responses. In the reading of "Shame," Matthew responds with a degree of

empathy and emotionality that was not observed in the previous two readings. In

"Shame" Matthew's political perspective and social construction on poverty starts to take

shape. He makes numerous personal and empathetic connections. Perry (2002) writes,

"Knitting individuals to their social location requires a process whereby, on the one hand,

social-discursive processes exert pressure on individuals to take up certain subject

positions and, on the other, the individual responds by more or less internalizing a social

location into a definition of self" (p. 9). Perry's (2002) argument substantiates the

positioning of many critical discourse analysts in that language denotes a socio-political

stance. It is from Matthew's discourse that we derive his moral position on the issue of

poverty.

In his writing, Matthew provides very specific details, when describing the trauma

that the main character experienced, as a result of his poverty. Poverty now becomes a

social identity for the character of Dick Gregory. Matthew wrote:

> The biggest was the fact that he did not feel as if he belonged to the society he
> wanted to keep; he tried to hide his poverty from others and did not want to be
> associated with it. He talks about how he tried to get rid of the mackinaw jacket
> that was given by welfare was something he could not stand. That jacket was
> warm and had a hood was nice, but the fact that it would identify him as a child
> on welfare. So, as nice as it was, he threw it out (much to his mother's chagrin),
> hiding it under a large pile of garbage. The fact that he wanted to be somebody
> better, to be like Helene Tucker – good, clean, popular – haunted him even into
> his adult life. (Matthew's, Written Response)

In this stretch of discourse, you feel Matthew's empathy for the character of Dick

Gregory, which results in his ability to humanize him.

I asked Matthew to reflect back on the written responses and how the author

describes the physical characteristics of Helene Tucker, and also, how about how he

describes himself? How are both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity

that exists in the story? Matthew presents the following response:

MT: Um, um, a lot of the adjectives for Helene///

CF: Mm-hmm.

MT: //right, um describes her as-as good and clean, popular, daddy had a good job.
Um, and he um was-was really kind of a dirtier///

CF: Mm-hmm.

MT: //fellow. That's-that's the sense I got. Um, he used a handkerchief to wipe his

nose, brushed his hair, washed his clothes every night, ashamed of his poverty.

MT: //um and seeing a disparity between someone who's, y'know///who has a daddy,

who has a daddy with a good job um who can provide for the family, um Helene;

and Dick, who is///whose family just seems to be just getting by///

CF: Okay.

MT: /who we know is also on um welfare///

CF: Yes.

(Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

Here in this dialogue, Matthew presents a parallel between the characters of

Helene and Dick. His language objectively assesses each of their assets and liabilities.

Matthew is very careful and nuanced. He makes a conscious effort to soften his

expression, as when he states, Um, and he um was-was really kind of a dirtier///. He uses

the adjective dirtier to describe Dick Gregory's physical appearance. The suffix of "ier"

suggest that there were other people who were also dirty, but he was "dirtier." This

distinction tends not to isolate Dick Gregory, as being alone in his pervasive poverty.

In addressing the intersection of race, class and gender. Matthew does not

connect these social categories to institutionalized racism in the following dialogue. I

asked Matthew what are the connections between racism and shame for people of color

and White people if there are any? Matthew responded with the following:

MT: All right, Okay. I would say the obvious um---one of the obvious instances of shame between people of color was um between y'know, Dick Gregory and his teacher.

CF: Mm-hmm

MT: Um, it seem like, y'know the teacher says----or he s-he says, "The teacher thought I was stupid, couldn't spell, couldn't read, couldn't do arithmetic." Um, and up unto the incident, he thought the teacher had like him---

CF: Yes.

MT: -right, in the story. And it-it seems that the teacher is sort of projecting um her own—I-I assume it's her; I don't quite remember---um her own ambitions, maybe--

CF: Mm-hmmm

MT: -or her own ideas of what um, y'know, the colored youth should be, ---

(Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

 Matthew's response suggests that he started to recognize or understand the intersecting categories of race, class, gender, and ability, etc., as oppressive mechanisms. In the above dialogue, Matthew is starting to recognize institutionalized racism. Matthew uses an active voice as he attempts to understand the teacher's motivations for how she chose to interact with Dick Gregory. He steps into Dick Gregory's position when he says, "The teacher thought I was stupid, couldn't spell, couldn't read, couldn't do arithmetic."   As a result of revisiting the text, Matthew starts to see the teacher's behavior as problematic. Matthew makes the connection that the teacher is imposing her

value system on the character of Dick Gregory. She viewed Dick Gregory through a lens of social class, where those who are at the lower end of the social structure are looked down upon.

Related, on the issue of social welfare policy, Matthew responded to the prompt of, "How do you feel about the use of the term "relief" to describe these safety net programs?" Matthew responded with the following written prompt:

I assume that the terminology came about to describe what function the welfare system was performing: it was to be a relief to those families and or people who were unable to provide completely for themselves. A relief from financial hardship and poverty. From what we have read for class, as well as from Gregory, it seems that the perception by others of what these systems are providing does not necessarily equal the truth. For many participating in these systems, they are not freed from care nor even set on a level playing field as others. They are simply getting by, if that. It may be noble for these systems to try and bring relief to folk who might otherwise be even worse off, but we cannot pretend that they solve a problem. (Matthew's Written Response)

He presents an empathetic view on this concept of "relief." However, Matthew presents a conservative political interpretation on social welfare policy, with his use of the adjective "noble." Matthew suggests that social welfare policies are admirable, but highly inefficient in solving the longstanding problem of poverty in our society. In his appraisal, he sees social welfare policy as being ineffective on a systemic level.

Essentially, it is not an effective remedy for what ails the poor in the long-term. His appraisal suggest that it does not bring any sustained relief.

Essentially, Matthew's social construction is in a state of flux, which again is evidence of his willingness to expand in his racial literacy. In many of his responses, he interprets race and class as separate social identities. He tends to respond with a deeper and more empathetic understanding, on issues that involve classism and poverty than race. Additionally, he demonstrates an understanding of racism and classism at the individual level, as opposed to the institutional or systemic level.   The reading of "Shame" presented Matthew in a much more empathetic light, than in any of other readings. While Matthew struggled with the intersections of race, class and gender, he responded with more empathy and depth to the reading of "Shame" than the other two readings. He made more personal connections by speaking and writing in an active voice, as opposed to remaining of the periphery, as he did in the other two readings. The next participants also had visceral reactions to the reading of "Shame," as evidenced by their responses.

Esther's Responses to "Shame"

Esther is young White female graduate student who is pursuing a Master of Secondary Education degree. Esther responded to the reading of "Shame" with many evaluative statements, compared to the other participants and her responses to "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination and "The Wife of His Youth."   This type of response is indicative of her attitude toward Dick Gregory and the subject of poverty.

In discussing the nature of the welfare system and the use of the term "relief," Esther spoke in an active voice, with many evaluative statements, with the use of the phrase "I feel" being used repetitively to mark her stance. Indeed, it connects her to Dick Gregory on an emotional level. Esther is describing what she thinks about Dick Gregory's situation, without presenting a condescending appraisal, as illustrated in the following discourse:

> I feel that welfare is an extremely important resource for people to have access to. Sometimes when people are struggling, they don't have people to rely on for help. Often, people use the term "relief" when referring to welfare programs and I feel that this is an appropriate term to use because that's exactly what welfare should be used for: relief for someone who is down on their luck and struggling to make ends meet.

Esther presents an empathetic position when discussing Dick Gregory's plight. She presents a positive appraisal of the welfare system, and the use of the term "relief." She writes, "relief for someone who is down on their luck and struggling to make ends meet." Her responses denote someone who did not view "relief" as a negative social welfare policy. As indicated, she used "I feel" significantly in many of her responses and not just on the issue of social welfare policy. The nature of her evaluative statements suggest this is how the world should be when addressing social inequality.

Related, Esther also presents a positive appraisal, contrary to Jessica when she discusses the term "symbol." In responding to the prompt about what personal attributes

are associated with the use of the term "symbol," Her discourse suggests that she believes

that Dick's admiration for Helene is realistic and normal. She presents the position that it

is normal for children to see positive traits in other children and aspire to be like them.

Moreover, she presents a positive ability statement in her critique of Dick Gregory. She

makes the argument that even people that appear to be flawless may have imperfections

themselves. Again, in Esther's discourse you see the presentation of an evaluative

statement with the use of "I feel," as observed when Esther wrote:

> I feel that Dick's interest in Helene Tucker is something that every young person
>
> can relate to. In every person's mind there are people who are seemingly flawless
>
> and who are admired by countless peers. This symbol, or idealistic person, is the
>
> epitome of what a person desires to achieve or can even reflect the flaws they see
>
> in themselves.

As Gregory continues to tell his story, he paints an unsympathetic and foreboding

picture of his antagonist, the teacher. Gregory begins to recall the moment that he

realized his shame. He discusses how the school would take up a collection for poor

students and it was called the "Community Chest." Each student is asked to contribute to

those less fortunate, than themselves. Dick Gregory decides he is going to contribute

money to the "Community chest," in an attempt to impress Helene. Dick Gregory, (1964)

relays the following:

> The teacher begins asking each student how much their parents are willing to
>
> contribute to the students in need. When she gets to Helene, Helene answered by

saying "My daddy said he would give two dollars and fifty cents." The teacher

responded by saying, "That's very nice, Helene. Very, very nice indeed." The

teacher closed her book after she called every other student in the class. Dick

Gregory then stands up and states, the following, "you forgot me?" Dick Gregory

states, "She turned toward the blackboard. I don't have time to be playing with

you, Richard." My daddy said he'd .." "Sit down, Richard, you're disturbing the

class." My daddy said he'd give ...15 dollars." She turned around looking mad.

"We are collecting this money for you and your kind, Richard Gregory. If your

daddy can give 15 dollars you have no business being on relief. 'And

furthermore…. she said looking right at me, we know you don't have a daddy.'

(p. 2)

This was the moment that Dick Gregory said sealed his feeling of intense shame,

because he was poor, black, an outcast and invisible as far as the teacher was concerned.

He stated, "I walked out of school that day, and for a long time I didn't go back often."

This particular section of his excerpt conjured up painful memories for Esther as

she responded to the prompt: Are there examples of psychological trauma that the author

suffered as a result of his race and social class. She wrote:

He was ridiculed in from of his class and embarrassed

I feel that Dick does show evidence of social trauma

he was ridiculed in front of his class

and embarrassed in front of his peers.

I can recall events from my own childhood

where I was embarrassed as such

and I feel that what Dick experienced was more

detrimental than my own experiences. (Esther's Written Response)

In the above personal narration, she connects with Dick Gregory's pain. His experiences bring back painful memories from Esther's own childhood.   The ability to connect her experience with Dick Gregory's allowed her to step into his skin. When there are shared personal experiences, it allows for understanding and empathy to develop from those shared experiences. The ability to step into another's identity allows for deep understandings to develop. This level of recognition and shared experiences can challenge or rebuke preconceived notions, which again is critical for the expansion of racial literacy.

Moreover, Esther also started to make intertexual connections between the readings while revisiting "Shame" during the semi-structure interview. Esther started to see connections between race and social status that was observed in the video of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," and the topic of colorism. I asked Esther, "How did the author describe the physical characteristics of Helene, and how does he describe himself?" "How are both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exists in the story?" Esther responded with the following:

> Well, the racial differences that ah//are evident in the story are actually very
>
> reflective of the video that we watched on Colorism//where// um// cause Dick
>
> describes himself as being very dark-skinned//Helene is light-skinned ah//just
>
> those differences it's almost like those differences also notate their social or social
>
> economic class//even though I mean it doesn't really have anything to do with
>
> it//ah// but it also is a reflection of how the teacher treats them based on that
>
> standard, as well. (Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

Esther's is making connections between skin tone and racial bias. Moreover, she is

extending meaning through checking and clarifying. Although, still struggles with

naming it as internalized oppression. However, in the utterance she starts to recognize

the teacher's behavior as some form of intra-race discrimination. When I asked her,

"How do you feel about the way Dick Gregory was tracked in the story?" She responded

by saying:

> Ah//it made me feel really terrible for him// you know I just //I just felt really bad
>
> for him, because when you think of a subculture or group//like African American
>
> people you don't expect racism to be within that group and when you come to the
>
> realization in the story that the teacher is an African American woman//it's just
>
> kind of a sense of shock that ah// another black woman would treat a childlike that
>
> //ah//so just having that sort of ah// identification//ah as far as//ah///that racial
>
> construct within in the story//it really challenged//ah//a lot what I had previously
>
> thought. But then I got to thinking about it and every single group has some kind

of distinction that they find within their own subculture (Interview transcript, October 20, 2014)

This response illustrates Esther's growing recognition of the different levels of internalized oppression within the African American community. This is aptly displayed when she stated, "It's just kind of a sense of shock that ah// another black woman would treat a child like that." The next utterance represents a hallmark feature of racial literacy. Esther starts to challenge her previous racialized understandings. This is exemplified when she says, "It really challenged//ah//a lot what I had previously thought." However, the next utterance illustrates the tensions and contradictions, that are a part of her discourse, because she starts to vacillate between her first and second thoughts, as when she says, "But then I got to thinking about it and every single group has some kind of distinction that they find within their own subculture." This back and forth thought process with tensions and contradictions is indicative of the transformative nature of expanding one's racial literacy, as result of merging learning across different literacy conventions.

Esther makes the connection of skin color discrimination with class bias. She sees the intersection of these social categories and how they create a binary between Dick Gregory and Helene. In the reading of "Shame" Esther's racialized understandings and corresponding development of racial literacy were more evident than in the other two readings. Esther started to challenge existing thoughts and presented with more of a visceral reaction to the social inequity she saw occurring in the text. The next participant

responded with less empathy than the other two participants in his responses to the reading of "Shame."

Kyle's Responses to "Shame"

Kyle is a young White male completing his Master of Special Education His responses were very narrow and tended to espouse a very socially conservative point of view on this topic of poverty. Kyle did not contextualize the concept of "relief" to the historical time period. While Kyle was somewhat empathetic with the social condition of the main character, he did not associate "relief" as being a mechanism to aid poor people, during the Great Depression.

Kyle's interpretative comprehension of the concept of "relief" was more rooted in the contemporary or conservative definition of the term. He had a tendency to question or challenge this notion of "relief." He stated, "I take issue with the use of 'relief' for welfare. Exactly, what kind of relief do you think welfare is? It's not monetary relief in any significant amount. It barely qualifies as social, mental or emotional relief." Again, Kyle does not contextualize the concept of "relief" to the historical time period. At the time, the country was going through a Great Depression. There was significant hardship, unemployment and people were waiting in soup lines to be feed. He presents a more contemporary understanding of the concept of "relief," as it pertains to current social welfare policy.

Similarly, when examining the individual versus systemic nature of racism, Kyle remains on the edges of awareness, as observed in the following discourse. Kyle states,

"He portrays himself as someone who people were hard on, whether that was intentional or unintentional, but he only displayed this one class, this one teacher's depiction of himself, there is no evidence in the story that the cafeteria worker treated him like this…" In this stretch of speech, Kyle is questioning the validity of the author's experience, against the backdrop of his individual perspective on racism. Moreover, Kyle appears to lack empathy for the main character's plight. Kyle had difficulty showing empathy for the main character's plight because perhaps it was outside of his own experiences regarding poverty.

Kyle in addressing the intersection of race, gender and class discusses how these social categories are related to the teacher's perception of Dick Gregory. I asked Kyle, "What are the connections between racism and shame for people of color and White people if there are any?" Kyle responded with the following:

Well, for people of color is kinda of more ah/race//its//its// racism as a result of social and economic status/it seems that// the racism/ is not more of//a social ah//discrimination//than a racial discrimination//although there are sometimes that based on Dick being a darker color skin and the teacher//I'm assuming based on that //is a lighter color skin//uh//also the social economic status of the teacher and then Helene's character seem to be of the higher nature//you know they can afford more //they can get more. And then he assumed to// because he's//low economic status// that he's dirty unclean/all those things. Ah, for Whites// I think it///or very difficult to draw any kind of racism//because there aren't really any examples of

White racism in in this particular story//it's more black versus black //even though the skin coloration differences are there. (Interview transcript, October 27, 2014)

Kyle reads in between the lines but misses the connection of White privilege and internalized racism with race. He does not problematize that the teacher is biased against Dick Gregory because of his skin tone and the fact that he is poor. He also infers that the teacher likes Helene because she is light, of a higher social class and comes from a two parent home. Later, in his same discourse, he states, "I think it///or very difficult to draw any kind of racism//because there aren't really any examples of White racism in this story." This part of his discourse illustrates that Kyle does not understand the systemic nature of racism in American society. He presents a response that is rooted in white privilege, because he fails to recognize colorism as being an extension of systemic racism in American society.

As I did with the other participants, I asked, "Kyle how did the author describe the physical characteristics of Helene, and how does he describe himself?" "How are both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exists in the story?" Kyle responded with the following:

KB: Well, Helene is described as everything Dick wants// in life//she's beautiful, she has manners, she has class//she carries herself in a positive you know accepting way of Dick and everyone in society//so he views her as everything he wants//you know so that's like what he wants to be//that's what he wants to be like//he wants//or that's the way he wants to be treated//he wants to be treated//he

wants to be treated the same way he sees// so he//Helene's uh //status// is not

necessarily about her being a female//not necessarily about her physical attributes

and maybe even more so about the way she is treated// the way she is accepted.

Uh//how she's able to be herself without other people assuming that//the worse of

her (inflection) versus his character.

CF: Oh ex-excellent insight, uh//what about how he describes himself.

KB: Well, he describes himself as someone who///he///believes// he's smart//he

believes that he works hard//he believes that he's trying very hard to display that

he actually has some money he carrying almost $3.00 in his wallet uh//so he

trying to prove to people that he is more//than they assume or the teacher assumes

him to be

CF: Ok

KB: Uh, so he is very high on himself and//but no one else seems//besides Helene

cries after he is treated like that//uh//no one seems to be willing to accept that he

might have something to offer//even though he is trying to display that forward.

CF: Interesting uh// and in the last part of that question is, how are both of these

descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exist in the story?

KB: Well, the descriptions uh//very clearly show that the disparity of///how light

skinned higher social economic status are treated well//that are treated like they

have intelligence/they are treated like they have good manners//they are treated

like they are clean, treated like uh//society overall accepts them, versus Dick's

character which is treated like he is dirty, treated like he is poor, treated like one

of those that needs assistance//uh treated like he can't, um, offer anything because

he is not smart enough, he is not clean enough/ he is not accepted// so. (Interview

transcript, October 27, 2014)

In this dialogue with me, Kyle paints a very positive picture of Helene. He uses

positive ability statements about Helene. In responding to Dick Gregory, similar to

Jessica, he presents negative ability statements, particularly when he says "Uh, so he is

very high on himself." This statement illustrates Kyle's perception of Dick Gregory's

character, which his language suggests has an over-inflated sense of self. Related, Kyle

presents a negative appraisal of poverty. He language suggest that he associates poverty

with being unclean, when he says he is "treated like he is dirty, treated like he is poor,

treated like one who is need." He also uses evaluative language, similar to Esther.

However, in his social construction, the language takes on a negative connotation. He

uses the verb of "believes," which means to "affirm as true." He states, "he///believes,

he's smart//he believes that he works hard//he believes that he's trying very hard to

display that he actually has some money he carrying almost $3.00 in his wallet. Kyle's

language suggests that he inwardly challenges the views that Dick Gregory has of

himself. Again, his language does not present an affirming view of Dick Gregory's

perception of himself. Moreover, in the above dialogue with Kyle, you see significant

use of distancing language. He uses the pronoun "they" when he is discussing the issue of

colorism. He writes, that are treated like they have intelligence/they are treated like they

have good manners//they are treated like they are clean, treated like uh//society overall

accepts them. With the use of the pronoun "they," Kyle is talking about skin tone bias.

However, using "they" allows Kyle to remain on the periphery and not take ownership

with the broader society's view of colorism.

Overall, Kyle presents less empathy for Dick Gregory than the other participants

and makes no attempt to whitewash his language. In the written prompt, he was asked,

"What does the teacher mean when she says, "We are collecting this money for you and

your kind?" Kyle provides the following written response, "The teacher means that the

money is for individuals that are lower class. The money is for individuals who are

dumb, dirty, and without the ability to achieve." Again, the use of the term "dumb," is

considering an example of oppressive language which is devaluing in nature. Kyle's use

of the term "dumb" is an example of the powerful and oppressive nature of language and

is an example of ableism. Even though he is revoicing the language of the teacher, it still

presents a negative cultural assumption, and lowered expectations for Dick Gregory.

More importantly, similar to Jessica, Kyle's failure to problematize the use of "dumb" by

the teacher is problematic. Hehir (2002) cites Rauscher and McClintock (1996) who

define ableism as "A pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses

people who have mental, emotional and physical disabilities" (p. 3). Kyle's failure to

problematize this use of language suggests that he does not find it as troubling when used

by an educator in describing a child with cognitive difficulties. Indeed, Hehir (2007)

indicates that unquestioned albeit assumptions can harm disabled students and contribute

to unequal outcomes.

In terms of empathy, Kyle demonstrated the least empathy of any of the other participants to the reading of "Shame." In many stretches of his discourse, he presented a negative portrayal of Dick Gregory and of poverty in general. Indeed, similar to Matthew, Kyle had difficulty problematizing individual vs. the systemic nature of poverty. Overall, many of Kyle's responses were similar to those of Matthew, as he remained on the periphery and failed to deconstruct many of issues prevalent in the previous readings. This point will be elaborated on more extensively in the "Analysis across Participants" The next participants also presented empathetic views of the intersection of race, social class and poverty.

Karen's Responses to "Shame"

Karen is a young, soft-spoken White graduate student, with no prior teaching experience. She is returning to pursue a graduate degree for her own enlightenment. In the written prompt on the psychological trauma that the author suffered as a result of his race and social class, Karen responded very empathetically with the following:

> The author was traumatized, don't know that it is fair to say that it was because of his race and social class, so much as the prejudice of the teacher and others in his life. The time where his teacher humiliated him in front of his entire class was certainly traumatizing, and it was obviously something that stuck with him for the rest of his life. As a result of his race and social class, he had also had many other humiliating experiences relating to the clothes that he had to wear and the way he had to get rotten peaches to eat, eating paste to fill his empty stomach, etc. These

were things that made him feel ashamed of himself and his station in life.

(Karen's Written Response)

Karen's commentary is rife with descriptive detail. In her discourse, you can feel the empathy in her discourse, for Dick Gregory. She paints a very sad and empathetic picture of Dick Gregory with her describing the rotten fruit that he had to eat, along with the eating of the paste. Karen, similar to the other participants, struggles with this concept of intersectionality. She states, "The author was traumatized, don't know that it is fair to say that it was because of his race and social class, so much as the prejudice of the teacher and others in his life." She does not recognize the intersections of race and social class and how these identities represent multiple forms of oppression. More importantly, she has an incomplete understanding of the systemic nature of racism.

Similar to the other participants, there is tension and contradictions in Karen's social positioning. In responding to the written prompt on, "What personal attributes are associated with the use of the term symbol?" Karen, similar to Jessica, presents with negative ability statements or deficit language, when she writes, "For the author, Helene Tucker was a symbol of everything that he was not and could not be. She was wealthy, had a family with two parents, and she was light-skinned and beautiful. In the article, the author mentions "goodness," "cleanliness," and "popularity." More than simply being a person that he had a crush on, she was a representation of all things unattainable to him." In Karen's discourse she associates symbol with things unobtainable, whereas Esther presented "symbol" as things that you can aspire to become. Karen's meaning making presents a negative appraisal. She makes note of this when she writes, "Helene Tucker

was a symbol of everything that he was not and could not be." She presents a deficit
construction of Dick Gregory.

As noted above, Karen struggled with the question of the intersections of race,
gender and class. However, after revisiting the text, Karen's discourse depicts an
evolving sense of self. When responding to the prompt on the intersecting social
identifications at play in the reading, Karen responded by writing:

> The author is black and attended a segregated school. So you would not think that
> racism would play into the reading, but intersected with class in the way that the
> author was very poor. The combination of his race, class and gender affected the
> way that the teacher saw him and the low expectations that she had for him.
> Because he was black and came from a broken home with no money, the teacher
> made assumptions about his ability and believed that he was not going to succeed
> in the academic setting. She completely ignored other character traits that would
> refute these ideas she had of him, such as how hard working he was, and instead
> focused on those outward categorical traits."

In the above response, Karen articulates a clearer view of the intersections of race,
class, and gender. She illustrates how those multiple identities influenced how the
teacher saw Dick Gregory. This demonstrates that she is starting to expand her racialized
understandings. She rebukes the dominant social construct that devalued the character of
Dick Gregory, when she says, "She completely ignored other character traits that would
refute these ideas she had of him, such as how hard working he was, and instead focused

on those outward categorical traits**."** In this utterance, you can see Karen is challenging preconceived biases, which denotes an expansion of her racial literacy.

The revisiting of text allows Karen to make intertexual connections, between the different readings, as evidenced when, I asked Karen, "What are the connections between racism and shame for people of color and White people if there are any?" Karen responded with the following:

KC: Well, I did notice in this one, you know, like when he spoke about Helene. Like he mentioned, I think, at least I think he did, that, um, like she was lighter skinned. And so that you know, made me think of what we had, um, talked about in the other readings where that was a higher status, I guess.

CF: Yes.

KC: And so, then the things where he described himself as being, um, I don't know. I guess I always just associating, like, him feeling that way thinking, like his darker skin played into the shame felt even though I don't think that was----but you know, things like he was also poor.

CF: Yes (Interview transcript, October 27, 2014)

Karen makes note of the concept of intersectionality and internalized oppression. She is making connections between the readings and concepts. She connects the reading of "Shame" to the concept of colorism and the reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." Again, these connections illustrate Karen's evolving racial literacy.

She is making intertexual connections and critiquing important elements of the reading, as she critiqued the concept of social class and its connection to skin color bias.

In analyzing the participants, there is a parallelism between participants, but also between questions. Karen's responses tend to always come back to the issue of skin tone. This is evidenced when I asked Karen, "How did the author describe the physical characteristics of Helene, and how did he describe himself?" "How are both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exists in the story?" Karen responded with the following, as she is revisiting the reading:

KC: I noticed—or I know right here is where he said the light complexioned little girl with pigtails and nice manners, clean and smart in school. Um, so I guess that's all I really notice about the physical characteristics he described.

CF: And that's fine. And but how about how the way he describes himself?

KC: Oh, okay.

CF: Did you address that?

KC: Um, no. I didn't address that, I guess. Let's see. I do remember him saying that he was, like, really skinny, lanky. I don't know if that's the word he used, but that's what I imagined. And, um, I think by him saying—I don't know if it said that in here or if I just assumed because he called her light complexioned that I thought he was darker skinned. And, um, yeah. Like, really skinny, which is

probably because he was hungry all the time it sounds like. I thought—did think

it was interesting, um, how he talked about pregnant people.

CF: Yes. (Interview transcript, October 27, 2014)

In this stretch of discourse, Karen's visualization of the character aids in her

interpretive comprehension. She also reads very closely and is able to extract the racial

dimensions in the reading. She made the suggestion that Dick Gregory's reference to

Helene as being light complexioned in the beginning denotes Dick Gregory's use of a

binary in the presentation of the characters. This allowed Karen to make the assumption

that Dick Gregory was a darker skinned tone, because of how he described Helene. Her

discourse reflects how she was able to "see" Dick Gregory and why she visualized him as

she did.

Overall, Karen's discourse in the reading of "Shame" reflected expanding

racialized understandings, more so than in the other two readings of "Shades of Black:

Skin Color Discrimination" and "The Wife of His Youth." This point will be elaborated

on more extensively in the "Analysis across Participants" Her ability to express empathy

for the character resulted from her use close reading, ability to challenge preconceived

ideas, visualization and intertexual connections. The next participant similar to the others

had an empathetic response to the reading of "Shame."

Darla's Responses to "Shame"

Darla Covington is pursuing a Master of Education for her own professional development. She is an African American female in her thirties. "Shame" similar to the other participants evoked an empathetic response in Darla. She responded to the text with an array of responses. However, compared to the other participants, Darla appears to have a stronger mastery of the concept of intersectionality, as reflected in both her written and verbal discourses. In responding to the written response of, "How do you feel about the use of the term relief to describe these safety net program?" Darla responded by writing:

> I think using the term "relief" to describe safety net programs was used to
> downplay what the safety net programs were used for. It takes on a negative
> connotation once used in that form, and I feel that using "relief" in that way, is to
> make people who are on welfare feel that them getting assistance isn't a bad thing
> that it's just "relief" to help them (Darla's, Written Response)

Darla in the above response presents an interesting interpretation of the concept of "relief." In the first part of her dialogue, she discusses the term being used to downplay the original intent of the program. However, in the second part of the utterance she states, "I feel that using 'relief' in that way, is to make people who are on welfare feel that them getting assistance isn't a bad thing that it's just 'relief' to help them." Darla's response suggests the deceptive nature of language. She is challenging social welfare policy that presented "relief" as being helpful, but actually it was intended to be stigmatizing and keep poor people in a cycle of poverty.

Similar to the other participants, Darla responded to the prompt on, "What does the author mean when he writes, 'Everybody's got a Helene Tucker a symbol of everything you want' and "What personal attributes are associated with his use of the term symbol?" Darla responds by writing, "The author means that everyone has that one person in their life that they are infatuated by whether it's the way they dress, walk, talk, wealth, intelligence and so on. "Goodness, cleanliness and popularity."

Darla presents a positive appraisal of what constitutes a symbol. Similar to Esther, she discusses symbol in the context of admiration, as a catalyst for change. A symbol is emblematic of what a person could aspire to become. She uses a positive appraisal of what symbol meant to Dick Gregory. She uses the verb "infatuated," which denotes an "intense emotion" albeit shallow to describe Dick Gregory's feelings for Helene. Her use "infatuated" suggest that his intense feeling for Helene is a motivating force to want to better himself.

I asked Darla, "What are the connections between racism and shame for people of color and White people if there are any?" Darla responded with the following:

DC: Like he talked about his skin color. He talked about his hair. He talked about being on welfare. He talked about, um, not really belonging in a sense----

CF: Okay

DC: --because he was hungry and stuff, and they just sit him in a corner like he was stupid, but it really wasn't cuz he was stupid.

CF: Mm-hmm

DC: It was just cuz he was hungry, so. It forces shame on him where that lasted a long time throughout his life.

CF: Mm-hmmm (Interview transcript, October 27, 2014)

In Darla's meaning-making, she introduces Dick Gregory's feeling of being invisible. She is the first to make that connection to the reading, when she says, "He talked about, um, not really belonging in a sense----." In Darla's construction, Dick Gregory is being made to feel invisible because of his race and social class. Darla also discusses how he was made into the class clown and put in the corner, to be ignored, but also put on display at the same time. Darla makes note that he is acting out not because he was unable to learn, but because of his poverty. She gives a voice to his hunger. She equates his hunger with his shame. Essentially, she presents a social commentary on how society is ostracizing him because of his poverty. This is amplified, when she says, "It was just cuz he was hungry, so. It forces shame on him…" In this stretch of speech, she is rebuking a capitalistic society that perpetuates class inequality, based on a slanted distribution of wealth and services.

In responding to the second part of the question, she also connects his shame to the internalized oppression that results from racism. She introduces the light versus dark skin debate in the following dialogue, when she is asked, "Are there example of racism and shame for White people?" The following dialogue ensues:

DC: And in connection with whiteness, he connected that with a young lady that was light-skinned.

CF: Mm-hmm

DC: And so her upbringing was kinda different from his because he and his family was on welfare, and her ---she had a father and she was able to donate more money to the classroom's deposit than he could.

CF: But why did you connect that with whiteness as opposed to----

DC: Uh, because that comes back from my own personal thing of how we have different color hues and how we view lighter skin to be more powerful in a sense---

CF: Okay

DC: --than darker tones. It's kinda like the darker you are, the more stupid you are, the more poor you are, the more---you know, it's not glorified as being light-skinned. (Interview transcript, October 27, 2014)

Darla makes a personal connection when she states, "Uh, because that comes back from my own personal thing of how we have different color hues and how we view lighter skin to be more powerful in a sense." Darla connects her own experiences with skin tone discrimination to Dick Gregory's experience. She does not name it as internalized oppression, but her discourse suggest that it is intimately connected to colorism. Darla's ability to connect to Dick Gregory experiences is based on her own experience with colorism. Her language suggests that she also understands how social class and race intersect, as a form of oppression, because she has been the victim of this type of stigmatization.

Expanding on the concept of intersectionality I asked Darla, how do you feel about the way Dick Gregory was academically tracked in the story, she responds with the following dialogue:

DC: Hmm. I think he was tracked in the story due to his social class.

CF: Okay.

DC: Cuz, he grew up in a poor neighborhood. And his family was on welfare.

CF: Okay

DC: Everyone knew he was on welfare cuz by them giving children gifts of the same outfit---

CF: Yeah

DC: --it kinda was like this bright **red sign** of, "we get relief-----

(Interview transcript, October 27, 2014)

Darla reiterates the labeling effect of poverty.   In revisiting the text, she expands on her argument that she presented in the written response. In her interpretive comprehension, "relief" is not a harmless concept. Her meaning-making suggest that it was meant to be dehumanizing. This is exemplified when she says, "it kinda was like this bright red sign of, "we get relief-----." From a literary perspective, an appropriate connection would be Nathaniel Hawthorne's the "Scarlet Letter." In the "Scarlet Letter" the main character is forced to wear an "A" on her clothing. This lets the entire world know that she was guilty of adultery. Here in the reading of "Shame," the poor children

were all given the same type of clothing, which lets everyone know that they were on

"relief." Darla's commentary suggest that the clothes were meant to reflect the shame of

being poor. Another analogy would be like the Star of David on Jewish clothing in

Hitler's Germany. Again, Darla's social commentary illustrates her socio-political views

on this concept of "othering."

In closing, Darla succinctly summarizes the trauma that Dick Gregory must have

experienced from growing up black, poor and fatherless, with the following:

I could just imagine how traumatic that is

You know, like, I'm ashamed because I'm dark-skinned,

even though you have no choice in it, but it's like,

because I'm dark-skinned, people judge me.

Cuz my hair is nappy, people judge me.

because I wash my clothes and I'm cold

and I'm weak, people judge me.

Because I don't look the same way that they do…

I could just imagine how traumatic that is.

(Darla's Written Response)

In the above narration, Darla chronicles Dick Gregory's experience with poverty

and racism. She makes numerous empathetic connections and gives his experiences a

voice. Dick Gregory's powerful tale of living in shame, because of his race, social class

and gender allowed Darla to confront the issue of skin tone and class bias in her own life,

as evidenced by her responses to the text. Darla was able to make intertexual connections

between the readings and expand her own racialized understandings. The ability to

experience Dick Gregory's shame and confront internalized oppression, as a part of her

own evolving sense demonstrates her willingness to expand her racial literacy.

        In conclusion, "Shame" evoked a strong empathetic response in many of the

participants. The ability to experience empathy and imagine various racialized

experiences are intimately connected to racial literacy. Teacher education candidates who

are able to empathize with their students' experiences become more powerful, thoughtful

and effective teachers. Dick Gregory's narrative allowed the participants to understand

another's perspective or to live in their shoes. For teacher education students, empathy is

necessary for gaining diverse perspectives and building relationships, which is a critical

component of understanding race, racism, and anti-racism.

Chapter 7: Analysis across Participants

What should be clear so far is the variety of ways in which people approach and understand texts based on their racialized experiences and mental models. Throughout the dissertation so far, I have described and interpreted participants' range of responses to the various "critical reading tasks." Each chapter focused on a different reading, and I shared the various ways in which the participants made meaning of the text. In this chapter, I present a cross-case analysis of the participants to highlight the complexity and nuances of reading race. I use some of the constructs embedded within the critical reading tasks to structure this analysis, showing the similarities and differences across participants. Throughout the chapter, I draw on a set of tables/themes I developed to represent evidence of each of the constructs related to racial literacy. The tables/themes include "Awareness of Colorism-Contemporary and Historical Understandings," "Misreading of Race or Racial Dynamics in the Text," "Deficit Social Constructions," "Demonstration of Empathy," and "Willingness to Develop Literacy."

These themes provide a snapshot of the consistent and inconsistent ways of approaching racialized texts within and across the participants. I will highlight these nuances and complexity in each section. This intricate and detailed analysis of racialized understandings of the participants will be framed within each theme, so that the participants' collective voices can be heard, positioned and repositioned, as a result of exploration of the text. Baxter (2002) writes, "The self is not fixed in a set of socialized transferable roles, but is constantly positioned and repositioned through discourse" (p. 829).

Awareness of Colorism-Historical and Contemporary Understandings

In addressing the research questions of "In what ways do teacher education students evoke, interpret, construct or misunderstand race, racism and anti-racism," and How do these understandings change over time, as participants revisit the reading?" I analyzed and triangulated data to hear these voices. As indicated above, several themes emerged from the coded data. The first theme I will be addressing is named: "Awareness of Colorism-Historical and Contemporary Understandings." As a theoretical framework, racial literacy involves examining and critically questioning how race and racism inform beliefs and practices. In examining the concept of colorism, we must first acknowledge the concept as an outgrowth of racism. Historically, American society has been stratified in terms of Black and White, since colonialism. Indeed, from a global perspective, colorism exists around the world. America as a country has granted its highest status and opportunities to those with the lightest skin tone while denying status to those with darker skin tones. In examining the discourse patterns of the participants in the study, it was noted that the majority were able to understand the concept of colorism and its concurrent racial dynamics. However, perplexity arose around how the participants applied the concept in both contemporary and historical contexts.

In terms of the historical significance of colorism as was being depicted in "The Wife of His Youth," many of the participants had varying and often contradictory interpretations. Essentially, they failed to recognize the racial dynamics at play. For example, in examining the character of Mr. Ryder in "The Wife of His Youth," the responses of Matthew ignored the significance of colorism in a historical context,

compared to the contemporary context. In his appraisal of the text, Matthew ignored the role that colorism played in Mr. Ryder's social status.   In his discourse, he posits that Mr. Ryder was able to elevate himself based on hard work. In his responses to "The Wife of His Youth," he failed to interrogate the role that skin color may have played in Mr. Ryder's social status. However, in discussing the contemporary video of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," Matthew explicitly addressed the racial dynamics embedded in colorism. He noted, "Color as currency is something that is practiced within our society." He locates colorism as a socio-political category of domination and access to privilege. Similar to Matthew, Kyle's discourse ignored the racial dynamics of colorism in the reading of "The Wife of His Youth," compared to the contemporary reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." Kyle made purposeful and strong connections to the character of Mr. Ryder. In his verbal and written responses, he enumerated on Mr. Ryder's many considerable talents, his intelligence, and his outward appearance for his upward mobility. In the contemporary text, he explicitly addressed the material aspects of light skin privilege, when he says, "For me it seems that lighter skin equals more opportunity and acceptance."   The interesting point of divergence in both the discourses of Matthew and Kyle is the silencing or ignoring the role that colorism may have played in Post-Reconstruction America. In other words, in their discourse, they fail to interrogate the role that colorism may have played in Mr. Ryder's life or that of Liza Jane. However, in a contemporary context, both participants readily discuss the socio-political effects of colorism in American society.

Esther and Karen also had varying interpretations of colorism in the historical and contemporary context. In many of Esther's responses, she presented superficial responses, on the issue of colorism in a historical context. She discussed language patterns and class differences of the characters but did not critique colorism as a form of privilege in the life of Mr. Ryder, or other members of "The Blue Vein Society" in Post-Reconstruction America. Conversely, when addressing the concept of colorism as being depicted in "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," she provided more nuanced responses. She contextualized colorism in the broader global society and discussed how it manifested itself in other regions of the world from a perspective of power and privilege. Karen presented similar responses to those of Esther, Matthew, and Kyle. Karen struggled with the historical context and Chesnutt's use of African American Vernacular English in "The Wife of His Youth." She did not provide responses that reflected the depth of understanding on the cultural, social or political ramifications of colorism, given the historical context. However, in constructing her responses about colorism in the contemporary context, Karen's discourse gravitated around skin tone and the masculine versus feminine debate. In her discourse, lighter skin was denoted as a feminine quality in African American males and darker skin was associated with virility. In "The Wife of His Youth" her appraisal of Mr. Ryder centered on characteristics that were closely associated with the normative aspects of whiteness.

Interestingly, Jessica and Darla had congruent understandings on colorism in both the historical and contemporary context. More importantly, they saw internalized racial oppression as an outgrowth of colorism. Their understandings of the historical text and

contemporary text were marked by agreement on the privileging aspects of light skin dominance in the "critical reading tasks." They presented personal narratives on the role that colorism played in their individual lives and connected it across the readings. In the historical text, Jessica used the adjective of "fair" to describe skin tone, as a marker for light skin privilege. The use of "fair" to describe light skin privilege was also embedded in the discourse of Darla, in describing Mr. Ryder's fiancé Molly Dixon. Darla's use of "fair" has dominant racialized overtones, as it is being used to describe the characters in "The Blue Vein Society." In their analysis of "Shades of Black: Skin Tone Discrimination," both Jessica and Darla presented authentic versions of themselves. Jessica responses affirmed the socio-political ramifications of colorism when she stated, "I have been labeled as light skinned my entire life." In similar affirmation, Darla asserts her Black identity in the utterance "That chocolate isn't in for them." Also, in the responding to the reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," Jessica and Darla articulate social positions that demonstrate colorism is a social, political and economic reality for many African Americans.

In concluding thoughts, the majority of the White participants struggled with colorism in a historical context but had more facility in a contemporary context. However, both Jessica and Darla were able to negotiate the racial underpinnings, in both the historical and contemporary texts. In terms of frequency of occurrence or what would be considered their depth of understanding of historical and contemporary awareness, there were ranges from Low-High (See Table 4 below). This point will be elaborated on more extensively in the concluding chapter.

Table 4

Degrees of Understanding of Historical vs. Contemporary Awareness of Colorism-

Frequency of Occurrence = Low (L), Medium(M), High, (H)

Participants	Shades of Black	Wife of His Youth	Shame
Jessica	H	H	M
Matthew	M	L	M
Esther	M	L	M
Kyle	M	L	M
Karen	M	L	M
Darla	H	H	H

Misreading Race and Racial Dynamics in the Text

In "The Wife of His Youth" there were examples where some of the participants saw the main character of Mr. Ryder as being of White ancestry, even though the author explicitly stated he was "mixed-race." This demonstrated a lack of racial awareness or even a tendency to ignore the racial overtones in a historical text. Kyle and Karen created a social construction of the main character of Mr. Ryder as being White or least having the characteristics of a White person. Their responses illustrate a social construction of race that was based on phenotypical characteristics and the participants own mental modeling. Kyle morphed the character of Mr. Ryder into the familiar, which

incorporated his own views about whiteness ideology. Karen similar to Kyle misread Mr. Ryder as being White. Karen noted, "His hair was almost straight, "You know is uh, I guess it seems like, that make me think they're using the word refined to describe, um, characteristics of more of a white person." Karen's interpretation of the text context, and her own prior experiences resulted in her reading Mr. Ryder as possessing White ancestry.

In Chesnutt's short story, the overall genesis of the story was navigating the color line and racial identity. In extrapolating the racial nuances of the text, the majority of the participants struggled with the application of "The One Drop Rule," which when codified into law meant that any person having any degree of African ancestry was considered Black.

The majority of the participants misread the application of "The One Drop Rule," in their social construction of racial identity, in "The Wife of His Youth." Participants enacted different social stances on an application of "The One Drop Rule." As noted, Kyle called on the discourse of miscegenation when he wrote, "The marriage between Mr. Ryder and Liza Jane was not seen by society as a legal or culturally acceptable agreement." Esther and Darla called on the discourse of lineage in their interpretation of "The One Drop Rule." They connected the identity of a bi-racial child to the racial identity of either the mother or father of the child. For the majority of the participants, the text, context and their prior knowledge played a factor in their mental modeling, which resulted in them misreading the racial dynamics in "The Wife of His Youth" and the other "critical reading tasks."

In the reading of "Shame," Jessica also misread the main character of Helene, as being

White. Dick Gregory describes Helene in his personal narrative as being a "light

complexioned little girl with pigtails." In Jessica's appraisal of the character of Helene,

she noted, "I automatically assumed that she-she was white." Again, similar to

misreading the character of Mr. Ryder, by the other participants and "The One Drop

Rule," Jessica construed a mental model of Helene being White. Jessica's mental

modeling based on the text, context and prior knowledge produced a visualization of

Helene as being White.   Dooley and Woods (2010) suggests if there are

misunderstandings in a participant's racialized understandings, texts can manipulate a

reader because texts have ideological bases, biases and standpoints (p. 160). This type of

manipulation was noted in the responses of many of the participants in how they misread

characters, in the various "critical reading tasks" and concepts, such as "The One Drop

Rule" (See Table 5 below) for degrees of occurrence.

Table 5

Degree of Misreading Race or Racial Dynamics in the Text

Frequency of Occurrence = Low (L), Medium(M), High, (H)

	Shades of Black	Wife of His Youth	Shame
Jessica	L	L	M
Matthew	M	H	M
Esther	M	H	M
Kyle	M	H	M
Karen	M	H	M
Darla	L	M	L

Deficit Social Constructions

The discourse patterns of some of the participants denoted deficit social constructions in their interpretation of the characters in the text. Kyle in his appraisal of Liza Jane's language used disempowering terms, as when he stated, "Liza Jane's sentences were mix-matched…and words all out place…. there is a huge crevice between their language." He created a binary that juxtaposed Liza Jane's dialect against the language of Mr. Ryder, which positioned African American Vernacular English in a negative light, compared to the American Standard English, being used by Mr. Ryder.

There were also binaries that were created that expressed deficit social constructions, in the discourse patterns of Esther and Karen. Contrasting conditions were

demonstrated when Esther was describing Dick Gregory with the use of adverb "very."

She stated, "Dick described himself as very dark-skinned//Helene is light skinned."

Esther assumed an inverse relationship, which was socially constructed and based on her

perception of Dick as being very dark-skinned. In his narrative, the author Dick did not

describe his skin tone. Similarly, Karen presented her ideas with a binary relationship as

well in her visualization of Dick Gregory. She stated, "I don't know if it is said that or if

I just assumed because he called her light complexioned that I thought he was darker-

skinned." Karen was visualizing as she was reading and conjured up images that were

racialized in nature.

There were negative appraisals that were expressed with pronoun markers of,

"his," "he," and "they," as we saw in Matthew's previous discourse. In referencing Dick

Gregory's poverty, Matthew stated, "he had that poverty." In this utterance, there is a

negative connotation attached to poverty with the use of "that" as an adjective to modify

the noun of "poverty." In this expression, the use of "that" increases the intensity of

poverty." Also, the verb "had" as in a disease. The ownership of poverty is in the

person, not the cultural world.

In other discourses, deficit constructions were also observed, as in the responses

of Jessica and Kyle to the reading of "Shame." Jessica used the adjective of "dumb" to

describe Dick Gregory. She stated, "It is assumed that Dick Gregory is uneducated and

dumb." Related, Kyle, in his utterance, used the same level of ableism. He stated, "The

money is for individuals who are dumb, dirty and without the ability to achieve. The use

of "dumb" is indicative of what critical discourse analysts refer to as the big "D" of

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because it constitutes a social practice or their

position on the issue of cognitive ability in their responses to the character of Dick

Gregory, as presented in his retelling of his life story of "Shame."

In concluding thoughts, interestingly, while many of the participants had

discourses that denoted deficit social constructions, there was also evidenced much

empathetic social positioning noted in the discourses of many of the participants in the

study (see Table 6).

Table 6

Degree of Deficit Social Constructions

Frequency of Occurrence = Low (L), Medium(M), High, (H)

Participants	Shades of Black	Wife of His Youth	Shame
Jessica	**L**	**L**	**H**
Matthew	**L**	**M**	**M**
Esther	**L**	**M**	**M**
Kyle	**M**	**H**	**H**
Karen	**M**	**M**	**M**
Darla	**L**	**M**	**L**

Empathetic Responses to the Text

A fourth theme that emerged from the data across the interviews was the concept of empathy. McAllister (2002) indicates that empathetic people take on the perspective of another culture and respond to another individual from that person's perspective. In responding to the research question of, in what ways do the participants describe the emotionality associated with revisiting racialized text at different points in time? The majority of the participants' discursive construction of the text displayed a level of empathy across the "critical reading tasks."

There were stark similarities in the empathetic responses of both Jessica and Darla, across all three of the "critical reading tasks." In revisiting the text, Jessica empathized with the position of the respondent, Dereka Blackman in the video, as she described her encounters with colorism. Dereka discussed the use of derogatory words to describe her skin tone. Jessica was able to empathize with respondent Dereka's stance on colorism because of their shared personal experiences. Additionally, Darla's responses were in alignment with Jessica across all three readings. In many of Darla's responses, similar to Jessica, you can feel the pain and the impact of colorism on her life. While Jessica and Darla are polar opposites, in terms of skin tone, their empathetic responses to colorism are congruent across all three of the "critical reading tasks."

Interesting, both Jessica's and Darla's responses demonstrated how metaphors played a role in their empathy. This was exemplified when Jessica used a metaphor to describe Dick Gregory's hunger. In quoting Dick Gregory, Darla stated, "He said I was pregnant with poverty." In a parallel positioning, Darla used metaphors to describe Dick

Gregory's shame of wearing the clothes given by the government. Darla noted, "It's kinda like this bright red sign of we get relief." In both of their utterances, metaphors created mental models of those suffering the effects of shame and humiliation, due to their poverty. It allowed the interpretation of the event to become more concrete in both of their personal responses to his narrative.

Similarly, Esther and Karen both brought the concept of internalized oppression to the forefront in their discourses, which evoked an empathetic response in the participants. In their appraisal of light skin bias, they responded by presenting social stances that positioned them as advocates for those suffering the effects of internalized oppression, as when Esther stated, "If a person perceives themselves to be less attractive simply because of their skin color, it can be detrimental to their character." Karen amplified this argument and stated, "And um, that you know, and those are siblings…being treated differently just because of subtle differences in their skin." In both responses, they step into the collective identity of someone suffering the effects of internalized oppression.

Of the three readings, the reading of "Shame" evoked the most emotionality or empathy in the majority of the participants, particularly in Matthew. As noted, Matthew stayed on the periphery with the use of distancing language in the majority of the other readings. However, in the reading of "Shame" Matthew's empathy for the character of Dick Gregory was most evident. Matthew provided very descriptive detail of Dick Gregory's plight that was not observed in the previous two readings. In his written

response to the character of Dick Gregory, Matthew presented a thorough and emotional response to Dick Gregory's plight in life.

While Matthew displayed the most empathy in his responses to "Shame," he remained on the periphery in the other "critical reading tasks." Conversely, Kyle displayed the most empathy in the reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," but remained on the periphery in the other readings. These contrasting styles in terms of empathy or lack thereof, in terms of variance of occurrence (See Table 7 below) will be elaborated on more extensively in Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

Table 7

Degree of Displaying of Empathy

Frequency of Occurrence=Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)

Participants	Shades of Black	Wife of His Youth	Shame
Jessica	H	H	H
Matthew	L	L	H
Esther	M	M	H
Kyle	M	L	L
Karen	M	M	H
Darla	H	H	H

In concluding thoughts, the majority of participants demonstrated some level of empathy when responding to the "critical reading tasks." The most important theme that emerged from analysis of the transcripts was the willingness to expand their racialized understandings. Analysis of the transcripts across all of the participants revealed shifting social stances and evolving racial literacy.

Willingness to Develop Racial Literacy

Thinking about the text or making new connections between texts generated new levels of understandings among the participants**.** This exploration and rethinking about issues presented in the texts that produced changing social positions, in many of the participants' responses**.** Interestingly, some participants showed an expansion of racial literacy within the same passage and others demonstrated a willingness and awareness of racial literacy after re-reading the various texts. Matthew, in discussing the use of African American Vernacular English in describing Liza Jane, initially described society's rejection of African American Vernacular English as an acceptable form of language. Later, during the same discourse, he challenged that position and rejected the notion that one language pattern was superior to another language pattern.

In the case of Jessica, written and spoken discourses illustrated changing social positions, some within the same discourse or later after rethinking about a particular issue. Some of Jessica's responses reflected recognition of the privilege associated with light-skin. As she revisited the text, she started to critique her spoken discourse and the insidious nature of colorism.   This was observed when she critiqued the history of the color line and in her own personal narrative, when she stated, "And um I know that it

definitely came from slavery…You know dark skinned slaves being in the fields and under----you know treacherous conditions…. I just don't know why it continues." This sentiment demonstrated her critiquing the disturbing nature of internalized oppression, as was being observed in "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination." This same level of analysis was observed in the reading of "The Wife of His Youth," when Jessica wrote, "Due to that disturbing fact there is separation within the African American race." In responding to both readings, Jessica started to reorient her thoughts and began to challenge the insidious nature of internalized oppression. In both readings, she articulated her views on colorism, and you can see how the layered process and the intertextual connections created new levels of understanding.

In the case of Darla, you see the rethinking and intertextual connections across all three readings. Similar to Jessica, some of Darla's repositioning occurred during the same reading and others after revisiting the text.   Darla created a counter-narrative to black inferiority that allowed her to challenge her previous thoughts on the character of Mr. Ryder, after revisiting the text. In Darla' discourse, she argued that Mr. Ryder chose Liza Jane out of love and to resolve his own "double consciousness." This is an example of the fluidity of the self, as manifested in shifting social positions of not only Darla but the character of Mr. Ryder, as well. She was able to connect the meaning of colorism in a historical context to colorism in a contemporary context and understand the racial underpinnings of the concept.   More importantly, Darla extended her thoughts on the skin color debate into the reading of "Shame." She connected the concept of colorism in the two previous readings to the reading of "Shame." She was able to weave it into the narrative of Dick Gregory's life and its connection to poverty race and gender.

Through this process of rethinking and intertextuality, Karen's discourse also revealed connections between the readings. Karen was able to connect the issue of colorism in the historical context of "The Wife of His Youth" to the contemporary setting of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination" to Dick Gregory's "Shame." In addressing the racial dynamics in the reading of "Shame," she compared the racial elements to the other two readings. Karen began to appropriate new understandings, as she saw the concept of colorism as a systemic issue

In concluding thoughts, the participants were able to rethink and restructure their thoughts, in the process of reviewing and revisiting the text. Rogers and Mosley (2008) argue that "The use of narrative and literature can help readers imagine social spaces where racial justice is the norm rather than the exception" (p. 110). Through the process of challenging and critiquing preconceived bias, participants were able to create new levels of understanding. In addition to challenging preconceived biases, participants were able to connect to the reading on an emotional level, which also allows for new spaces of understanding, and presented with varying levels of "Willingness to Develop Racial Literacy" (See Table 8 below).

Table 8

Degree of Willingness to Develop Racial Literacy

Frequency of Occurrence=Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)

Participants	Shades of Black	Wife of His Youth	Shame
Jessica	**H**	**H**	**H**
Matthew	**M**	**M**	**H**
Esther	**H**	**M**	**H**
Kyle	**M**	**L**	**L**
Karen	**H**	**M**	**H**
Darla	**H**	**H**	**H**

Racial Literacy Applied in a Focus Group Discussion

While there was evidence of the creation of new spaces of understanding, as evidenced in the previous themes, it was most notable for focus group participation. In the focus group, participants took up different social positions. For example, in the discussion about colorism, Matthew took on a stance of promoting anti-racism and moved group members into a discussion of what constituted overt versus covert racism. Focus group members were asked; how would you address a colleague that made reference to someone as having refined features or being fair-skinned? The conversation morphed into what was an acceptable and unacceptable dialogue among colleagues and

how stereotypes come into play. Matthew provided the following commentary: "And the fact that it's not overt racism, in a way. You don't see that as often, or as portrayed, I think, but stereotypes are as strong as ever." Here, in this utterance, Matthew challenged group members to rethink their positions on overt and covert racism and daily microaggressions that reinforce stereotypes. He used the verb "portrayed" to execute his point. In other words, racism is mainly seen overt in nature. However, subsumed within his discourse is that covert racism is just as deleterious as overt racism. Some would argue more so because it is hidden and not conducive to being challenged.

During the focus group, Jessica introduced a counter-narrative to internalized oppression as she stated, "I think that within the African American culture, um, what I've seen there's more embracing of our natural roots///…Um, people are more so embracing their roots, and you know learn///learning more about their history and their culture and their background." Here in this discourse, she is challenging the dominant narrative of Black inferiority. She uses the pronoun of "our" which is meant to evoke a collective understanding on issues involving authentic attachment to African American heritage.

Darla aligned her thoughts with those of Jessica as she takes up a stance against the dominant narrative of Black inferiority. Indeed, during the focus group, Darla started to present a united front with Jessica on the issue of colorism and internalized oppression. She stated:

> So it's like—kind of like what she was saying about, you know wearing relaxed hair versus having natural hair, that now it's kind of like I'm team natural, so I'm gonna be like, "Oh, you---you—you think you're white because you—relax your

hair." And it's kind of like, okay, where does that—it turns from, okay, we don't wear our hair. We relax our hair. Now it's like, okay, no we don't relax our hair. We're wearing our natural hair. And it's just like this big cluster fxxx, if I could say that, [laughter] of crap. Cuz it just like, it goes down to the colors to me. It's like light-skinned versus dark-skinned. So now it's like natural versus relaxed. And it's just like, can we just love each other and be happy? You know, just like who cares? I don't care. (Interview transcript)

Darla and Jessica positioned and repositioned themselves to interrogate the narrative of internalized oppression, in the context of their authentic selves. Also, in this discourse, Darla used the modal verb of "can" to bring to the forefront this notion of black unity against the backdrop of the dominant narrative of embracing Eurocentric standards of beauty.

In the focus group, Matthew again took on a stance where he engaged with anti-racism. He was responding to the racial turmoil in Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting of an unarmed Black teenager.

MT: "It's/// yeah, it frustrating to see how that portrayal is. It's frustrating, you know, my uh, in laws live in Ferguson. I'm from Florissant.

CF: Okay

MT: Both families, um, and it's frustrating to see them portrayed, not just locally, but even nationally.

CF: Yes.

MT: You would think the place is a crater that doesn't exist anymore.

JM: Yes

DC: Mm-hmm

EH: Absolutely

DC: Yeah

MT: And that's not true. You do have community there. You have people who
have come together.

DC: Mm-hmmm

MT: That's not to say there isn't a lot of angry people…(Interview transcript)

In this dialogue, you can see how Matthew is challenging the dominant narrative

that the community is broken and there is continued racial strife.   In his social

positioning, he is becoming an advocate for the community and the school district that

lies within the borders of the community. Jessica and Esther both affirm his views, about

the community coming together to push back against a negative media narrative of the

community being torn apart on racial lines. Moreover, Matthew's discourse is suggesting

that he is becoming an advocate for those marginalized. Here you can see he has a vested

interest in how the mainstream media is portraying the community at large. He takes

ownership of his role in presenting a united front on how the community is coming

together.

During the focus group, Esther discussed how she used the uprising in Ferguson,

Missouri, as a teaching point for her students, who were mostly rural and white. Esther

stated:

EH: A lot of the students don't feel any of the situation going on in Ferguson connects to them whatsoever. They see that does---they feel that it does not impact their life, and they actually say some pretty, um surprising things about it, considering this day and age, that I would not have expected anyone to say, ever--

CF: Okay

EH: -Um, like openly in class discussions

CF: Okay

EH: So—

CF: Can you give an example, or would you feel comfortable in giving an example of----

EH: Um, [sigh] they make---I mean, like---am I allowed to say names in the room? Okay, well, like she was saying, um, unfortunately, my students make jokes about like watermelons and stuff like that.

CF: Okay

EF: Like racist jokes, and like with their friends in the hallways, and I overhear it. Any trying to have a class conversation, like a serious class conversation about why that's not okay, and um, trying to bring up the issues of empathy---

Here in this exchange during the focus group, Esther attempts to disrupt and challenge stereotypical and the dominant narratives about race. Her own evolving racial literacy provided a context, where she could disrupt whiteness and challenge the existing views of her students on race, racism, and anti-racism.

Similar to the other participants, Karen's discourse revealed new understandings. Karen began to appropriate new positions, as evidenced in her discourse. Initially, during the focus group, Karen sat back quietly as she listened to the other participants talk about the readings and the events going on in the local community. She then provided the following commentary:

KC: And it's what, I think has been so frustrating for me. It's like people don't look at anything with an open mind. Like, I feel like what's happened has just reinforced stereotypes.

CF: Yeah. Mm-hmm

KC: Like it's not only unfortunate, but it's like they find a way for it to fit their mold.

CF: Absolutely

KC: I mean, I can't even---I'm from Iowa. I went to school in Illinois, like a small town,

Small school. It's like I can't even get on my Facebook feed because I just delete people. Because like I can't even handle it. I'm like people that I thought I knew, like I can believe the things they put out there.

DC: Yeah, a lot of people losing friendships, Yeah.

JM: It's very frustrating

KC: You know, it's like---it's just---crazy, year and its--- weird. It-----you know, I was in---I was at my parents' house for all the week of Thanksgiving, which is in Iowa, you know, the decisions came down, you know, and everything. And it's like the things my parents were saying, I'm like "What?" [Laughter] You know, and then the things we talked about in class, it made so much sense. Like they've had no exposure to anyone different from them.

CF: Yes

KC: You know, and I---you know, I've had little exposure, but for some reason, I have a more open mind [laughter] than they do.

CF: Yes, Yeah.

KC: But, you know, it's just so frustrating that nobody is willing to change anything, you know. (Interview Transcript Focus Group, December 8, 2014)

In the above discourse, Karen acknowledges that interrogation of the text and discussions around issues that are racialized in nature, caused her to rethink her position on race, racism, and anti-racism. She is taking on positions that embrace and promote racial tolerance and admonishing those who have myopic views on race and racism.

During focus group participation, Kyle remained on the periphery of racial awareness. He remained silent and offered very limited commentary, during focus group discussion. Only in the reading of "Shades of Black: Skin Color Discrimination," did Kyle present any degree of evolving racial literacy. Overall, Kyle remained on the edges of racial awareness. However, additional interrogation of text that is racialized in nature

may open up additional areas of exploration for Kyle, as well as the other participants to

continue exploring their racialized understandings.

Chapter 8: Discussion

This research drew on four domains of knowledge: (1) Racial Identity Formation, (2) Whiteness Studies and Teacher Education, (3) Discourse, Race and Teacher Education (4) Racial Literacy and Teacher Education. These areas formed the basis of the inquiry into the racialized understandings of teacher education students' construction of written texts. In addition to these domains of knowledge, the following frameworks served as overarching lenses and undergirded the study: Racial Literacy, Critical Race Theory and Reader Response Theory. This process of integrating these domains with the theoretical frameworks provided a comprehensive analysis of racialized understandings of the target population. Grounded Theory coding identified themes in the data. Also, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical tool provided the mechanism for the exploration of language as a social practice. I examined the complexities of language patterns, and their application to the study of social interactions in the context of literacy education.

The participants brought their own individual interpretation to written texts, which was influenced by numerous social and cultural factors. Gee (2011) argues that individuals use language, "to build things in the world and to engage in world building" (p. 16). Essentially, Gee is arguing that language is the medium for the construction of social reality, and identities for many individuals. Therefore, the analysis of language reveals how individuals interpret their world through social practices. In this research, as presented in Chapter 3, I employed the use of the Faircloughian method (1992), which included the frameworks of "ways of representing," and "ways of being." Moreover, I

described how the participants were positioned or the various stances they took in responding to texts that were racialized. I also incorporated Van Dijk's (2001) position on the political, cultural and racial dynamics that were on display in answering the research questions of:

- In what ways do teacher education students evoke, interpret, construct or misunderstand race, racism, and anti-racism? And how do these understandings change over time, as participants revisit the readings?

- In what ways do participants describe the emotionality associated with revisiting racialized texts at different points in time?

- What might this layered approach to the reading of texts offer to the field's understanding of racial literacy?

Another significant aspect of the study involved the use of "critical reading tasks" to explore teacher education students' responses to text that were racialized. Rogers and Mosley (2008) argue that literature can help readers imagine social spaces where racial justice is the norm rather than the exception; this is particularly salient when addressing literature that has racial underpinnings. The examination of the participants' responses in the current research revealed that we could not separate talk at the individual level from the "Big D" (Gee, 2011) of social practices that tend to perpetuate systemic levels of racism.

The use of racial literacy, as both a theoretical framework, and pedagogical approach supported the transforming of understandings in many of the participants in the study on issues involving race, racism, and anti-racism. Indeed, the findings of this

research support other scholarship on how racial literacy acts as a mechanism to disrupt and challenge economic, political, and social systems of inequity.   More specifically, the finding of this research suggests that there is a recursive relationship between languages and discriminatory social practices. Moreover, how racial literacy can reconstruct an individual's social positioning, as was observed in the discourse patterns of many of the participants in the study. This framework of racial literacy offers the most promising of pedagogical approaches to reconstructing, and evolving social positions. However, before we elaborate on how racial literacy can transform ideas, it is also necessary to examine the denial of race, and racism that was prevalent in the findings of many of the participants in this study.

Denial of Race and Racism

In much of the discourse of the participants in this study, there was a denial of race and racism. One of the major theoretical frameworks that guided the study was Critical Race Theory. From an ontological perspective, Critical Race Theory views the social construction of reality as one that marginalizes some people and allows others to operate in positions of power. Critical Race Theory argues that society is fundamentally racially stratified and unequal (Hylton, 2012). This imbalance of power is an area that critical race theorists seek to challenge by disrupting the dominant narrative that perpetuates this cycle of oppression. Much of the discourse of many of the participants reflected the systemic imbalance of power and privilege. This was noted in the "critical reading tasks" in response to "The Wife of His Youth." The character of Mr. Ryder and other members of "The Blue Vein Society," held significant power over those with darker

skin. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that many of the participants did not recognize

racism in a historical context. However, it was also observed in "Shades of Black: Skin-

Tone Discrimination," where many of the participants discussed the imbalance of power

between those of lighter and darker complexions, under the blanket of colorism.   Finally,

it was noted in "Shame," where it intersected with the social factors of class and gender.

Some of the participants ignored how race, class, and gender created a level of oppression

for the character of Dick Gregory. In addressing the denial of racism, Van Dijk (1992)

writes:

> Denials of racism and similar forms of positive self-presentation have both an
>
> individual and social dimension. Not only do most white speakers individually
>
> resent being perceived as racist, also, and even more importantly, such strategies
>
> may at the same time aim at defending the in group as a whole: "We are no
>
> racists," "We are not a racist society." (p. 89)

Van Dijk's argument was observed in many of the White participants' responses

in the "critical reading tasks." This was explicitly observed in the discourse of Kyle, and

Karen, where they both presented with discourses that illustrated the lack of intentionality

of racist thought. Kyle stated, "I think a lot of individuals like myself who are—believe

they are not racist//uh//believe they treat everyone equally//use words and don't really

understand the weight they carry to individuals of other races." He used the verb of

"believe" to detract from the intentionality of racist thought. Karen, similar to Kyle, also

engaged with this idea of intentionality. Karen noted, "And you don't know, like, what

things you might say that are offensive." Essentially, in their discourse, they're

suggesting that it was not their intention to inflict harm in their speech patterns. Critical

discourse analysts would suggest that their discourse is emblematic of a form of

sociopolitical management (Van Dijk, 1992). By denying that it is their intention to

inflict any harm in their everyday conversations, they don't necessarily have to address

the broader systemic forms of racism. Van Dijk (2001) expands on this level of

understanding and writes, "It is not only relevant what participants know, but also what

they believe, and such beliefs may be shared and hence ideological" (p. 24). This sharing

of beliefs was not only observed in the responses of Karen and Kyle but other

participants in the study, as well.

Denial of Racism in an Educational Context

Many of the participants did not recognize the history of racism, its social,

cultural, and historical implications in the shaping of self-perception of people of color or

themselves. This was particularly observed in an institutional context. Institutionalized

and system-wide racism as manifested in the schooling experience of many oppressed

groups operates to maintain and perpetuate hegemonic practices. Institutionalized racism

perpetuates the imbalance of power by allowing certain groups to remain on the bottom

ladder of society while advancing the gains of the dominant group. The reading of

"Shame" illustrated how educational institutions are complicit in shaping class identities

and perpetuating social inequity. Indeed, the reading of "Shame" revealed the dynamic

intersection of poverty, race, and gender, as observed in the responses of many of the

participants in the study. The collective responses of the participants to the reading of

"Shame" and the other texts circles back to Vygotsky, and how "unfurling" or breaking

open the texts through different literacy events can cause participants to rethink their

preconceived biases and ultimately reshape or change their social stances. This is what

Fairclough (1992) references as "ways of being," which depicted a social stance for the

participants in the study.   For example, in examining the discourse of Esther in

responding to "Shame," she started to recognize the insidious nature of colorism.

Moreover, she was able to critique the resulting effect of internalized oppression when

she discussed the teacher's response to the character of Dick Gregory.   She was

dismayed by intra-racism in the African American experience. Her discourse revealed an

evolving understanding of colorism and its impact on the characters in the texts. Other

participants through this process of re-reading and connecting across different literacy

events also displayed changing social stances in their discourse. However, some

participants remained on the edges of awareness.

Edges of Racial Awareness

As noted the majority of the participants' discourse demonstrated changing social

stances. However, there were some participants who remained on the edges of racial

awareness. This was mostly noted in the discourses of Kyle, and Karen to a relative

degree. Kyle demonstrated at a level of indeterminacy in many of his social

constructions of the text. However, there were glimpses of potential racial awareness in

some sections of his discourse. For example, Kyle recognized there were many times

when he made racially insensitive comments as he was being interviewed on the issue of

colorism. Again, he stated, "individuals like myself who are—believe they are not

racist//uh//believe they treat everyone equally//use words and don't really understand the

weight they carry to individuals of other races." This type of awareness is an example of him being honest about his thoughts, and beliefs. Becoming conscious of misperceptions involves expressing one's thoughts without the fear of reprisal or being labeled as being a bigot. The need to be open and honest is a very important part of the evolutionary aspect of racial literacy. Kyle in his discourse was giving a "voice" to his feelings and beliefs. The ability to give "voice" can be a conduit to transformation or changing social stances. An expansion of someone like Kyle's racial awareness would involve additional involvement in this type of dialogue with texts that are racialized. Indeed, participants such as Kyle should be encouraged to be open and honest about any issues concerning race and racism. They should be encouraged to continue saying what they think, and not what they think others want to hear.

Another mechanism for those on the edges of racial awareness is a self-reflection journal. This type of journaling can allow for deeper probing of thoughts, and beliefs without fear of reprisal. This process of self-reflection can continuously help candidates track their thoughts, and reexamine their belief systems. A Participant such as Karen would also benefit from this type of self-engagement. During the interview process, Karen discussed growing up in a sheltered environment where she never really had to address or confront issues of race and racism. There were several instances when Karen's empathy was on display in her writing, which later transformed into an opportunity to experience the life of someone who was racially and culturally different. Karen's discourse suggested that she was very much impacted by the character of Dick Gregory in "Shame." In discussing Dick Gregory in her written response, you started to see a shift in Karen's social position which represented a window of opportunity to

expand her racial literacy. This was noted when she wrote about the teacher, "She completely ignored other character traits that would refute these ideas she had of him, such as how hard working he was, and instead focused on those outward categorical traits." In this written prompt, Karen's language suggested that by using a reflective journal it could yield an even deeper emotional, and catalytic response to individuals such as Dick Gregory. This ultimately would transfer into a deeper understanding of students who possess similar characteristics of the Dick Gregory's of the world.

This process of racial exploration presented new windows of opportunity for me to acknowledge the changing social positions of other participants in the study who initially remained on the periphery. This was aptly noted with the use of a focus group to facilitate inter-racial dialogue. For example, at the beginning of the study, Matthew appeared to be very uncomfortable with discussing race, racism, and anti-racism. However, as the literacy activities evolved, Matthew became more and more comfortable discussing the issue of race. In analyzing the transcripts of "Shame," there were not nearly as many pauses or hesitations in his speech patterns as was observed during the earlier reading of "The Wife of His Youth." During the focus group, Matthew was very eager and willing to discuss race and racism. Additionally, in an earlier discussion, he appeared to be very uneasy discussing the sexual objectification of African American women in literature and film. He made a conscience effort to use what he thought to be a more politically correct term when he substituted "voluptuousness" for "thick" in one discussion. However, these markers for discomfort tended to abate, as he became more comfortable talking about race over the different readings, and as the ending of the semester approached. When I reflect back on his rephrasing of language, it appears he

was trying to be more respectful of me as an African American woman and did not want to present what he construed to be a sexist remark. There were windows of opportunity for both me and the harder to reach participants to expand our racialized understandings as the study progressed.

Researcher Reflexivity and Racialized Epistemologies

This journey of understanding the racialized positionality of participants in this study ran parallel to my own racialized understandings. Through this process of racial literacy development, I started to recognize my evolving racialized perspectives. The study helped critique my own self-identity, and reflection on issues involving race, racism, and anti-racism. There were times in the research process where I had to rethink my position on race and racism. We all see the world through our distinctive lens. This process allowed me to reexamine my own preconceived biases and the social positioning that I brought to the text. It brought into perspective my ontological perspective of seeing the world from both an ethnic and gendered perspective. It reminded me of a class where we were discussing the intersections of identity, gender, and social class. I was the only African American female in the class. The other White females were discussing their identities as White women. When it was my turn to discuss my identity, I automatically stated, "I view the world through the lens of being African American first and a woman second." This statement appeared to be confusing to the other White women in the group, who voiced sentiments that they only viewed the world through the lens of being a woman. This conversation circled back to the normative nature of whiteness. Their race

shaped their perspective, similar to how my race shaped my perspective. This also

connects back to how the participants in the study were being by their race, as well.

Contributions to the Field

The research has revealed that the use of literature that is racialized in nature can

be a critical catalyst in the trajectory of teaching racial literacy. The use of re-reading and

revisiting of text provides a framework for educators as they attend to race, racism, and

anti-racism. The study not only documented participants' responses, but it also

documented how they said it. I described what racial literacy looked and sounded like as

it expanded, and developed for the participants in the study. The study contributes to the

existing field of racial literacy in four different ways. First, it increased the knowledge of

the participants in the study. Racism has morphed over the course of American history.

It has gone from being overt to covert and from being individual to systemic forms of

oppression. The recognition of these factors is very critical to understanding the racial

dynamics in our society. Second, it raised their level of racial awareness on issues such

as whiteness and White privilege. In interview transcripts, many participants discussed

never really having to think about the issue of race. This not having to think about race is

a hallmark feature of White privilege and the normative aspect of whiteness. For

example, Matthew and Karen both remarked how they had grown up in rural

communities which were very monolithic, and never had to address issues of race or

colorism. This process of exploration of racialized texts increased their understanding of

the broader context of race, racism, and anti-racism. Third, it increased their propensity

for becoming White allies by rebuking dominant narratives about race and challenging

preconceived biases.   For example, during the focus group, there was a shift in

Matthew's social positioning. He presented a positive rebuttal to expressions of intense

racial divisions in the community of Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting of

unarmed teenager Mike Brown by a White police officer. He admonished the media's

message that the community was irrevocably broken along racial lines. Indeed, Matthew

expressed optimism that the community was coming together along racial lines. The

focus group opened up spaces and stimulated consensus around inter-racial dialogue for

the majority of the participants in the study. This was observed in even the harder to

reach participants such as Kyle. The focus group also facilitated the racial literacy

development for those with limited exposure to issues involving race such as Matthew

and Karen.   Participants were able to support one another in advancing their racial

literacy as they presented new ideas, and incorporated multiple perspectives as they

challenged preconceived bias in a group format. It was this diversity of thought that

aided in the changing of social positions.

Future Research Directions

As noted earlier**,** Guinier (2004) views racial literacy as a set of tools that

functions as diagnosis and feedback**.** The framework of racial literacy as presented in

this study occurred in the context of a social justice course. There are several possible

expansions for future research. First, a follow-up study that tracks teaching practices of

participants in the study through their use of racial literacy in their classrooms. Second, a

study that examines the co-teaching of racial literacy in multiple disciplines, such as

English, Humanities, History, etc. In this context, racial literacy can be used as a

mechanism to explore misconceptions about race as reflected in literature and from a historical perspective. Third, a study that focuses on the use of drama pedagogy to facilitate racial literacy in young and middle school children. Drama pedagogy allows students to construct meaning from text in an active manner, whereby developing insight into the character themes, and themselves (Crumpler, 2007). Drama pedagogy as an activity anchored within a racial literacy framework can increase understanding, and empathy for disenfranchised communities, and bridge understandings across ethnicity and culture.

Scholarly research should focus more on the analysis of language of teacher education candidates. By using Fairclough's (1992) model of "ways of interacting," "ways of representing," and "ways of being," the discursive practices that each participant brings to the text can be more effectively explored. This methodology was able to effectively illustrate the changing social stances of the discourse patterns of many of the participants in the study. This changing of social stances constitute a form of action. Rogers (2008) writes:

> Actions include a broad array of elements including discussing racial issues, reading and writing about racial issues, bringing critical literacy to texts about racism, interrupting racism in talk and action, and educating oneself one the economic realities of institutional racism. (p. 126)

It is through the discursive practices of the participants in the study that we saw how thoughts in the written and spoken expression could be amenable to transformation. It is from this process that participants started to challenge and disrupt biases as they clarified

and extended meaning during these different literacy events. This type of unearthing,

revisiting and connecting learning across different context proved to be critical in

disrupting, challenging existing ideologies, and narratives for the participants in the

study.

One semester was not enough time to gauge the full impact of this study. If I

envisioned extending this research or teaching Part two of this course, I would support

the continued use of literature with racialized themes to answer the research question of

"In what ways do teacher education students evoke, interpret, construct or misunderstand

race, racism and anti-racism? And how do these understandings change over time, as

participants revisit the readings?" I would also envision designing a study that explored

the combined used of racial literacy, and the use of culturally response instruction. The

merging of a theoretical framework with a pedagogy approach would provide teacher

education students with a critical understanding of how culture is central to learning.

More importantly how it shapes the thinking process of individuals and groups. By using

a combined approach, teacher educators will learn to teach culturally diverse populations,

and also learn how to challenge preconceived biases simultaneously.   Moreover, I would

incorporate online discussions and a self-reflective journal into the course profile. All of

these activities are necessary components to prepare teacher educators for the task of

developing the racial literacy of teacher education candidates.

The ending of this dissertation has brought me full circle. I began this discussion

with a memory from a not so distant past, when my 10th grade Sociology teacher told a

story about how her teacher structured her elementary classroom. She placed all of the

light skinned students in the front of the class and the darker students in the back. Such

expressions of disparate treatment would not be tolerated in today's current classrooms,

but equally oppressive practices do persist. These remnants of past practices are still

very much embedded in the fabric of our society and the practices of some teachers.

While it may not be displayed overtly, such beliefs and attitudes can still present

manifestations through talk and text and other educational practices. Racial literacy

allows teacher education students to engage in sustained and systemic conversations

around race, racism, and anti-racism. More importantly, it creates new spaces for the

transforming of ideas and the shifting of social positions for those who are given a most

important task, the transforming of young lives.

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Appendices A-D

Short Responses to the Reading of "The Wife of His Youth"

"The Wife of His Youth" by Charles W. Chestnutt

Constructs	Written Response	Semi-structured Interview	Focus Group
RACE AND HISTORICAL TIME PERIOD	1. In class, you read a chapter from Springer's book which discussed the "One Drop Rule." How does the concept of the "One Drop Rule" pertain to the reading of "The Wife of His Youth?"	1. As we know, race, racism and anti-racism change based on historical time periods, drawing on evidence from the text, how did the reading make you feel about race and post-Reconstruction America? What are the parallels between post-Reconstruction during this reading and how many reference our current American society as being "post racial" under Obama's presidency?	1. In the reading, Chestnutt points out some of the controversies surrounding the Blue Vein society (see lines 10-20). What argument can you make for and against the role of the Blue Vein Society during this time period? In what ways do you see modern day manifestations of the Blue Vein Society?
RACIAL IDENTITY/RACIAL POSITIONING	2. How are issues of racial identity being depicted in this text?	2.What are your views when you witnessed people like Tiger Woods or Mariah Corey	2. How did revisiting the readings help with your understanding of the political and social realities, in terms of

		being placed in a position where they are forced to choose one racial identity over another??	racial identity for people of mixed heritage? Did you come to any new understandings about racial identity/positioning?
RACE/CHARACTER PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	3. How are physical appearances described in this story? In what ways are these descriptions linked to racial identity and positioning?	3. The term "refined" is used several times throughout text. For example on line XX and line XX. How do you feel about the use of the term "refined" to describe Mr. Ryder's features?	3. In what ways does society place value judgments on people based on their personal attributes, as it relates to race? What are ways in which this furthers racism or anti-racism? Follow up question: If you were to hear a colleague or friend refer to someone as having "refined" features or being fair-skinned, what would be your response to them? (Focus Group)
INTERSECTIONALITY	4. People carry with them diverse and intersecting social identifications. Among these are race, class, gender, language, ability, sexuality, religion, to name a few. In what ways did you see social identification	4. In your written response, you noted that XX and XX interacted in the text. Why did you choose to discuss these? Are there other interacting social identifications at play? (Probe them to consider a construct they may have missed such as gender or social class).	4. In earlier responses, you discussed the various social identifications at work for the characters in the text. Of course, our responses and understandings are shaped by the lenses we bring to the text. Please reflect on the following: In what ways did your positionalities influence how you read this text? After you have heard

	interacting in this text?		everyone share, would you add or change your initial description?
RACE AND LANGUAGE	5. What did you notice about the language used in the text?	5. In your written response, you noticed XYZ about the language in the text. What are your thoughts and feelings about the way that language was used in the story to signify social standing? [Prompt for the use of poetry to show class, the use of standard English to show pride in mainstream society, the use of AAVE to denote race and history with slavery, the choice of code-switching that Mr. Ryder engaged in?	5.In your interviews and in the written responses, you discussed how language was used to signify social status. Turning again to the text, reflect on line 243 where Chestnutt writes about Mr. Ryder retelling Liza Jane's story to his society. He writes, "He then related, simply but effectively, the story told by his visitor in the afternoon. He gave it in the same soft dialect, which came readily to his lips, while the company listened attentively and sympathetically." Reflect on Mr. Ryder's choice of language throughout the story. What language does he privilege and why? In what ways do you see this in today's society?
QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR	6. What would you want to ask the author to help you better	6. Turning our attention to the author of this passage, how do you feel about	6. Chestnutt and the character of Mr. Ryder both share similar characteristics.

	understand this text?	Chestnutt as an author?	Chestnutt himself was of mixed heritage, educated, author, lawyer, etc. Why would Chestnutt create a fictional character cloaked in the form of a love story to express his social and political

Short Responses to Reading of "Shame" by Dick Gregory

Short Responses

Constructs	Written Responses	Semi-structured Interviews	Focus Groups
RACE AND HISTORICAL TIME PERIOD	1.In the reading of "Shame" the author Dick Gregory references the welfare system as being on "relief," how do you feel about the use of the term "relief" to describe these safety net programs?	1.What evidence does the text provide that supports the time period and setting of this particular story?	1. How do you feel about the treatment of families that were struggling with poverty, during the Great Depression and do you see any similarities in our current society?

RACIAL IDENTITY/RACIAL POSITIONING	2. Are there examples of psychological trauma that the author suffered as a result of his race and social class?	2. In reflecting back on the reading, what are the connections between racism and shame, for people of color and White people?	2.The author overcame his shame through education and self-improvement. Thinking about contemporary youth, how might educators help them overcome the shame that is inflicted upon them?
RACE/CHARACTER PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	3. What does the author mean when he writes, "Everybody's got a Helene Tucker a symbol of everything you want?" What personal attributes are associated with his use of the term "symbol?"	3. In reflecting back on your written responses, you indicated XYZ. Can you describe how the author describes the physical characteristics of Helene Tucker? What about how he describes himself? How are both of these descriptions indicative of the racial disparity that exists in the story?	3.How is the teacher in this story showing signs of internalized oppression and/or White privilege, in terms of the racial dynamics playing out in the reading?
INTERSECTIONALITY	4.People carry with them diverse and intersecting social identifications. What is the relationship or intersection between race, class, gender and ability in the reading?	4. In the readings from class, you have been exposed to the tracking of students by race, ability or language. How do you feel about the way Richard was tracked in the story?	4. As a follow-up to question#3, how do you think gender played a role in Dick Gregory's educational experience, in terms of tracking?

RACE, CLASS AND LANGUAGE	5. What does the teacher mean when she says, "We are collecting this money for you and your kind?"	5. What evidence does the text provide that supports how Dick Gregory feels about his circumstance and overall poverty?	5. What are your views on using a classroom as a forum to solicit donations for less fortunate students?
QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR	6. If you had a chance to interview Dick Gregory, what questions would you ask him to help you better understand his narrative?	6. Some people have accused Dick Gregory of being radical or militant, how would you describe his character to someone who has not read the story?	6. Dick Gregory was known as someone committed to human rights according to or because XYZ. How do you think growing up in St. Louis with its history of racial, political and social division in public education aided the author's commitment to human rights?

Short Responses to "Shades of Black: Colorism, Skin Color Discrimination"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3IzTyjhHLc

Constructs	Written Responses	Semi-structured Interviews	Focus Group

RACE AND HISTORICAL TIME PERIOD	1.What is the central message regarding issues of racial identity that is being depicted in the video?	1.What particular comments resonated with you in terms of how the participants see this concept of "colorism?"	1.What are your personal views on the impact of "colorism" in the African American community?
RACIAL IDENTITY/RACIAL POSITIONING	2.One of the participants in the video states that "color is currency" what are your views on the social or cultural capital attached to "colorism?"	2. In what ways do you see "colorism" at play in your everyday life (university, school, home, community, religious affiliation, etc)?	2. In the video some of the participants talk about jobs and skin color. What are your views on the relationship between employment opportunities and skin color?
RACE/CHARACTER AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	3. One of the participants in the video states, "light is more attractive," what are views on this matter and how prevalent is this notion?	3. In the beginning of the video one of the participants (Dereca Blackmon) states, "I have been called a lot of different names relating to skin color…most of the time people think the things they are saying are a compliment, even when I find them to be really offensive." What are you views on this quote?	3.How might educators interrupt "colorism" in a reading or class discussion?

INTERSECTIONALITY	4.People carry with them diverse and intersecting social identifications. Among these are race, class, gender, language, ability, sexuality, religion, "colorism," to name a few. What interactions did you see occurring between these different identifications in the video?	4.In your written response, you noted that XX and XX interacted in the video. Why did you choose to discuss these? Are there other interacting social identifications at play? (Probe them to consider a construct they may have missed such as gender, social class and "colorism").	4.In earlier responses, you discussed the various social identifications at work for the participants in the video. Of course, our responses and understandings are shaped by the lenses we bring to the text or video. Please reflect on the following: In what ways did your positionalities influence how you viewed the video? What thoughts or emotions arose for you as you watched the discussion or now in the focus group?
RACE, CLASS AND LANGUAGE			
QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR	5.If you had a chance to interview the producer of the video, what questions would you have for him?	5. After viewing the video have you come to new understandings regarding the issue of "colorism" in the African American community?	5. Across the two readings and video, you have explored issues related to race, racism, anti-racism, "colorism", etc. What connections do you see that permeate across these various constructs?

Appendix E

Analysis of Data	Data Collected	Purposes
Grounded Theory Strauss & Corbin (1998)	Field Notes Written Responses Semi-structured Interviews Autobiographical Surveys	Open and Axial Coding
Critical Discourse Analysis Gee, (2011);Flairclough, (1992);Van Dijk	Audiotaping of and transcription of Semi-structured Interviews (60-90 minutes)	Examine sociocultural influences of language used by teachers to interpret, construct, evoke, understand race. Build, refine and reconstruct theory.

Appendix F

Appendix F: Autobiographical Questionnaire

1. How long have you been in the teaching profession?

2. What significance does race, as a part of your identity, have in your work with students of color?

3. What significance does race, as a part of your identity have in your work White students?

4. How significant is race, as a part of your overall identity?

5. Describe your school district.

6. How does the type of environment you work in impact your work with students of color?

7. How does the type of environment you work in impact your work with White students?

8. What are your views on embracing a "color-blind" ideology?